

# Social Marketing to Protect the Environment

*What Works*



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# Social Marketing to Protect the Environment

# Foreword

As the size of our global society climbs rapidly toward 7 billion, there is an ever more pressing need to help people, communities, and nations live more sustainable lifestyles. Many of us have high hopes that technological innovation will eventually provide the world with vast quantities of cheap, clean renewable energy; dramatically improved agricultural yields; and the means to keep the earth's waters clean, but this currently appears to be more of a long-term vision than a near-term reality.

Technologist and philanthropist Bill Gates—in his 2007 commencement speech at Harvard University—said that the process of finding solutions to wicked problems such as those posed by human civilization's currently unsustainable lifestyles runs through four predictable stages: (1) determine the goal; (2) find the highest-leverage approach to achieve the goal; (3) discover the ideal technology for that approach; and (4) in the meantime, “make the smartest application of the technology that you already have—whether it's something sophisticated, like a drug, or something simpler, like a bednet.” This book—*Social Marketing to Protect the Environment: What Works*—represents the best available thinking about how to make the smartest use of the technologies that we already have to address the challenges of sustainability.

Social marketing has been around—at least in concept—for 40 years now, since two young marketing professors named Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman first proposed it in 1971. Regrettably, four decades later, it remains a poorly understood and highly underutilized method for helping people embrace behaviors that are in their and society's best interest, including behaviors that can move us toward more sustainable lifestyles. I have high hopes that *Social Marketing to Protect the Environment* will prove pivotal in advancing a more widespread application of social marketing, at least with regard to influencing more sustainable lifestyles.

Chip and Dan Heath—in their terrific book called *Made to Stick*—made the case that useful ideas can be made “stickier.” Specifically, they suggested that stickier ideas are better remembered and are more likely to be used when it is useful to do so. The means by which ideas can be made stickier is to explain them in SUCCEsSful ways: *simple, unexpected, concrete, credible, emotional*, and based in a good *story*. In *Social Marketing to Protect the Environment*, Doug McKenzie-Mohr, Nancy Lee, Wesley Schultz, and Philip Kotler have rendered the concepts of environmental

social marketing in a manner that is indeed SUCCEssful. They have described the principles of community-based social marketing (CBSM)—Doug McKenzie-Mohr’s uniquely insightful adaptation of social marketing techniques to the task of fostering sustainable behaviors—simply and clearly, laying bare the essential steps of the process so that others can understand and apply them. Through a range of concrete case studies—each a compelling story unto itself—they have shown us how others have applied these principles to identify unexpected and effective ways of fostering sustainable behaviors at home and in our businesses. The unrivaled credibility of these authors—all of whom are veritable rock stars of social marketing and/or social influence—has produced a book that does not merely have an aura of authority but rather possesses genuine expertise, experience, and wisdom. And lastly, it is a book that evokes an important emotion—hope. Specifically, it gives me a sense of hope that by applying methods described in this book we can turn many of our sustainability challenges into opportunities.

This book is likely to become a favorite of both the current generation and next generation of sustainability program developers. Its greatest gift to the field of sustainability may, however, go beyond its direct instructional value for practitioners. The book closes with a set of recommendations to federal, state, and provincial governments and philanthropic funders who have the potential to create important economies of scale for environmental social marketers. If implemented, these recommended investments in audience research, materials development, and program pilot testing can change the social ecology of sustainability programs, such that it will become easier, less costly, and less risky for program managers to implement effective sustainability behavior change programs. In short, McKenzie-Mohr and his coauthors have proposed a promising “upstream” social marketing initiative that may enable social marketing to finally live up to its fullest potential with regard to promoting more sustainable communities.

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# Preface

**A**t a small cafe in a hotel in Brighton, England, on September 29, 2008, three of the authors of this book (Doug McKenzie-Mohr, Nancy Lee, and Philip Kotler), as well as the author of the Foreword (Ed Maibach) met to discuss a common passion and shared vision. We were attending the first World Social Marketing Conference and were struck by two major “missings.” First, relatively few of the presentations for the 2-day event related to influencing behaviors to protect the environment. As with most social marketing conferences and publications to date, public health topics and cases dominated the agenda. Secondly, we had each heard the call from colleagues at the conference, as well as “back home,” for references to find a variety of solid case examples using social marketing to influence environmental protection behaviors—especially ones that involved audience research, utilized more than communications and advertising, and included rigorous evaluations confirming success. We have written this book to fill this void and address this need. Subsequently we included P. Wesley Schultz on the writing team, who has expertise in CBSM, social psychology, and program evaluation.

We believe this book is a first of its kind. Many readers may be familiar with CBSM and others may be more familiar with the traditional social marketing approach. We have blended these two models and point out where they complement, as well as enhance, each other. We have included success stories from around the world. We selected them based on their focus on influencing a behavior, versus awareness and attitude change. We looked for cases that included insights into target audience barriers and benefits and then developed strategies using a variety of tools to address them. We wanted cases where a pilot had been tried before full-scale implementation and where a formal evaluation had been conducted.

A quick glance at the table of contents indicates we have the following cases: Reducing Waste (Chapters 2 and 8), Protecting Water Quality (Chapters 3 and 9), Reducing Emissions (Chapters 4 and 10), Reducing Water Use (Chapters 5 and 11), Reducing Energy Use (Chapters 6 and 12), and Protecting Fish and Wildlife Habitats (Chapter 7). About half of the cases involve influencing behaviors in the residential sector, while the remaining cases target the commercial sector. Global examples include cases from Australia, Canada, Western Europe, Ireland, Jordan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Vietnam.



The cases explored in this text may span the globe and the commercial and residential sectors, but as authors, we endeavored to present each chapter in a uniform and accessible format.

- Every chapter begins by presenting an environmental challenge and exploring the nature of the problem and relevant environmental trends.
- Each chapter then explores potential behavior solutions that could be used to address the problem.
- Two to three case studies are included in each chapter to highlight examples of “what works” in addressing the particular environmental challenge under consideration. Within each case study, readers are provided with
  - background information on the organization being examined and its social marketing endeavors,
  - an account of the target audience and its desired behaviors,
  - an explanation of the barriers and benefits unique to the environmental problem being addressed,
  - a description of the program that was implemented, and
  - a critical review of the program’s outcomes.
- All chapters include a discussion of other notable programs to illustrate how the principles explored in the chapter extend beyond the specific cases examined.
- A summary at the end of each chapter helps readers to make connections between the cases explored in the chapter.
- Questions for Discussion engage readers in examining the cases and investigating how their principles apply to other environmental scenarios.

Our intention is that current and future practitioners charged with influencing behaviors to protect the environment will find these cases and their critical reviews informative, instructional, and inspiring. Our hope is that the next time we compile a list of potential success stories, it is “a mile long.”

We would like to acknowledge and thank the reviewers who assisted in reviewing our manuscript: Nancy Artz, *University of Southern Maine*; Ken Donnelly, *Lura Consulting*; Darrin C. Duber-Smith, *The Metropolitan State College of Denver*; Gail H. Kirby, *Santa Clara University*; Thomas A. Klein, *The University of Toledo*; Jennifer Lynes, *University of Waterloo*; Christie Manning, *Macalester College*; Keith McDade, *Green Mountain College*; Catherine Ray, *Natural Resources Canada*; Doug Rice, *King County, Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Water and Land Resources Division*; Marsha L. Walton, *NYSERDA*; Dave Ward, *Snohomish County Public Works*; Don Wayne, *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)*; Tina Woolston, *Tufts University*.

We would also like to thank the many who shaped this book by providing information for the case studies, sharing their research, or offering suggestions for the chapters.



And finally, our deep gratitude goes to those who supported our efforts during the writing of this book: Amanda Kilburn, Nancy Kotler, Terry Lee, Sue McKenzie-Mohr, Lori Schultz, and Sunshine.

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## **SECTION I**

# Introduction



## CHAPTER 1

# Fostering Sustainable Behavior<sup>1</sup>

The cornerstone of sustainability is behavior change. Sustainability requires that we tackle diverse goals, such as increasing water and energy efficiency, protecting water quality and biodiversity, reducing waste, and altering transportation choices. If we are to hasten the transition to a sustainable future, we must encourage the adoption of a wide array of behaviors that support these goals. To date, most initiatives to foster sustainable behavior have relied primarily upon large-scale information campaigns that utilize education and/or advertising to encourage the adoption of sustainable actions. While education and advertising can be effective in creating awareness and in changing attitudes, numerous studies document that behavior change rarely occurs as a result of simply providing information as information alone cannot address the diversity of barriers that exist for most sustainable behaviors (Environment Canada, 2006; Geller, 1981; Geller, Erickson, & Buttram, 1983; Jordan, Hungerford, & Tomera, 1986; Midden, Meter, Weenig, & Zieverink, 1983; Schultz, 2002; Tedeschi, Cann, & Siegfried, 1982). In contrast, community-based social marketing (CBSM) has been demonstrated to be an attractive alternative to information-intensive campaigns for the design of programs to foster sustainable behavior (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011). Thousands of programs are now utilizing this methodology—often with remarkable results. To learn more about CBSM, read *Fostering Sustainable Behavior: An Introduction to Community-Based Social Marketing* (McKenzie-Mohr, 2011; McKenzie-Mohr & Smith, 1999). Also visit the CBSM website ([www.cbsm.com](http://www.cbsm.com)), where you can find articles, case studies, and discussion forums related to fostering sustainable behavior.

CBSM is based upon research in the social sciences that demonstrates that behavior change is often most effectively achieved through initiatives delivered at the community level that focus on removing barriers to an activity while simultaneously enhancing the activity's benefits. CBSM merges knowledge from the social sciences with knowledge from the field of social marketing (see, for