

Getting to Yes! The Art of Persuasion

We here at the Tobacco Control Evaluation Center are always talking about how evaluation is meant to be used -- to inform your program (and other key players) about where people are in terms of awareness or support of the issue, to serve as evidence which can be conveyed to decisionmakers, and to leverage this evidence into action. However, data alone does not create social change, as many of you know firsthand. People have to be persuaded to act upon their feelings, and it is up to organizations like yours to build public will into action.

A nifty little guide called ***Discovering the Activation Point: Smart Strategies to Make People Act*** from <http://www.activationpoint.org> offers a number of ideas to consider as you begin thinking about how to use your outreach, data collection and messaging most effectively in order to achieve your project objectives. It could be a particularly useful resource as your organization develops its communication plans -- including use of social media. (See related news about the Social Media manual currently being written.)

Here are the main points from chapter 1 which relates to evaluation and use of data collection results:

The target is likely smaller than you think. Often you only need to motivate a few key people to achieve the change you want. Most efforts are aiming too broadly at too large of an audience.

Ask the decisionmakers how many is enough to get their attention and change their behavior. Find out what their pressure point is (through key informant interviews or other means). Identify who they pay attention to and are influenced by.

Focus on those you can actually persuade. Find out who is with you and who is against you and then start with those who are not actively opposing you -- people who might listen to what you have to say.

Segment audience targets until you can't segment anymore. It's critical to understand who is in your target audience and what characteristics they share and differ in. Find out what they care about so that you can choose the approach that will resonate best with them.

Target the audience(s) with the greatest influence over your decision maker. Identify the decision makers first and figure out who do they listen to most. While using youth as spokespeople can attract media interest, they hold less sway over public officials than adult constituents because they can't vote. On the other hand because of their consumer habits and buying power, they are very influential with business leaders.

Find and activate social reference groups. Target those who others look to for leadership and determination of when to take action. When you persuade these folks, others will follow.



Show strong public support by picking audiences that are willing to show (not just voice) their support. People who are willing to go public with their support create the perception that there is broader support for an issue.

Test the activation point before launching a full-scale campaign. People's actions don't always match up with their beliefs or opinions, so it's important to figure out what they will actually carry out to ensure your efforts to build momentum work. One way to maximize this is to align your issue with what they care most about and then ask small test groups to respond in some way. Then you can replicate the strategy that worked best with your larger audience with better results.

For more details about framing your advocacy messages more persuasively, you can obtain a download of the publication by registering at the site through the link above. It just may give you some fresh ideas!

Photos from I & E days