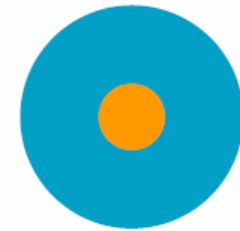


INFORMAL PERSPECTIVE ON SCIENCE COMMUNICATION

Holly Truitt, Associate Director
The University of Montana
spectrUM Discovery Area



spectr**UM**



spectrUM Discovery Area

- Hands-on science museum located in the heart of The University of Montana.
- Design and development funded by Montana NSF EPSCoR Program.
- Home to exhibits, activities, and Super Science Squad.
- Opened doors in October.



“Museum without Walls”

- Launched Science Learning Tent in 2006.
- Brings hands-on science to Montana festivals, fairs and powwows.
- In tent’s first year, estimated it was attended or seen by over 27,000
- Spring of 2007, decided to broaden impact in Western Montana
- Launch innovative social marketing campaign, *Science. Try it.*



Share About



The Science. Try it. campaign and the universal communication lessons we have learned from it.



Social Marketing in a Nutshell

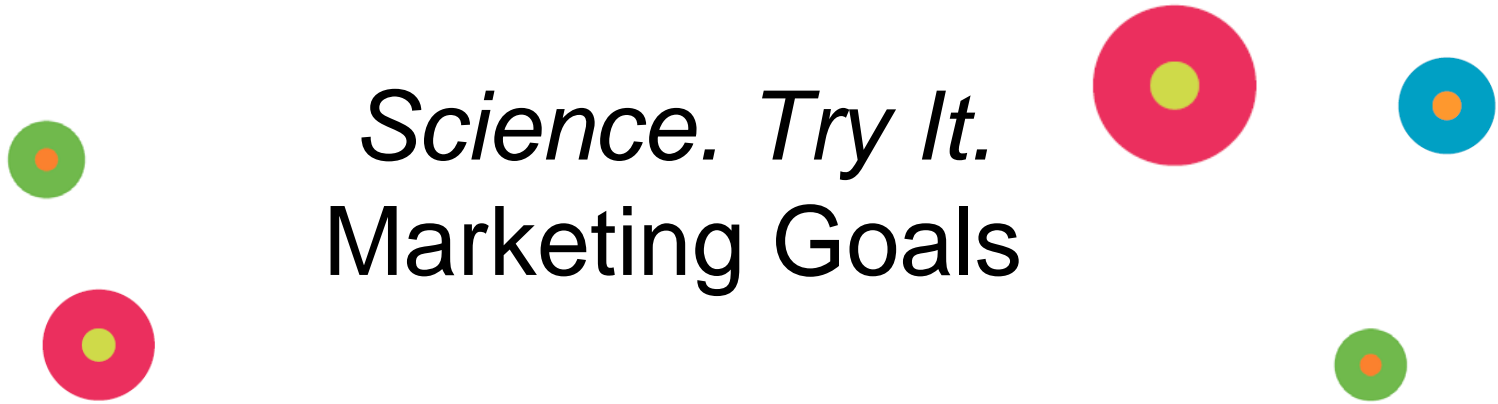


Social marketing uses traditional marketing tactics to influence the voluntary behaviors of a target audience in order to improve their personal welfare and that of the general society. (Smith, 1999)



Like traditional marketing, it pays lavish attention to its audience values, interests as well as perceived barriers to and benefits from behavior adoption .





Science. Try It.
Marketing Goals

- Motivate Western Montana families and children to seek and regularly engage in science.
- Promote science literacy.

Barriers and Benefits to Target Audience Adopting Science Learning



Barriers to adopting science learning:

- Many Western Montanans live in rural settings (*Nearly 75% of all Montana public schools are located in rural areas*).
- Poverty is high. (Why Rural Matters)
- National research revealed: public is frequently intimidated by science. (Beetlestone)
- Museum field research found: well educated seek out museum experiences; for other public audiences cost, lack of familiarity can be barriers. (Falk)

Perceived benefit to adopting science learning:

- Informal surveys of teachers, parents and children found they desired and valued hands-on science. (Peavey)



Science. Try it.

Audience Driven Campaign Strategy



- All marketing products (ads, etc) provide a fun, hands-on science learning experience.
- Deliver marketing products to our audience rather than asking them to come to us.
- Rely on diverse, playful marketing tactics to better reach our audience.




Tactic One:

Science. Try it. Exhibits







- Exhibits in nontraditional venues
 - Southgate Mall
 - Missoula Carousel
 - Sushi restaurant
 - Powwows
 - Missoula and Bozeman Children's Museum
- We estimate exhibits in first year will be experienced by over 130,000 visitors.

Tactic Two: *Science. Try It.* Newspaper Ads



HOMEMADE SLIME




WHAT YOU NEED: Elmer's glue (most kinds of white craft glue will work) | Two disposable cups | Food coloring (you pick the color) | Water | Borax (available at most large grocery stores near the laundry detergent) | A small plate, dish or plastic wrap | A plastic spoon (for stirring) | A tablespoon (for measuring) | A pair of disposable gloves (for handling dye)

WHAT YOU DO: **1.** Beforehand: Mix about a teaspoon of the Borax into a cup of warm water and stir (it usually doesn't fully dissolve). **2.** Fill the plastic cup with about 1/2 inch of glue. **3.** Add three tablespoons of warm water to the glue and stir. **4.** Add a few drops of food coloring and stir again. **5.** Add two tablespoons of the Borax solution and stir well. **6.** Lift out the spoon with the goo and place it on the dish. **7.** Let it sit for about 30 seconds and then pull off the slime and play with it!

WHY DOES IT HAPPEN? When the Borax/water solution is mixed with the glue/water solution, Borax molecules grab on to parts of the glue molecule, linking them together and forming a kind of three-dimensional web or chain called a cross-linked polymer. Solid molecules are linked tightly together while liquid molecules spread out and break apart more easily. But polymer molecules can stretch and bend and turn into shimmery slime. **Pretty cool, huh?**

WARNING: The polymer you made should be kept in a sealed plastic bag or container when you are not playing with it. Do not eat or let your pets eat the slime. Do not use the slime on furniture, fabrics, or carpets.

 THE SPECTRUM DISCOVERY AREA AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA.
FOR DIRECTIONS AND A COMPLETE SCHEDULE: WWW.UMT.EDU/SPECTRUM OR 243.4828

POWERED BY
MT NSF EPSCoR

- Developed four simple hands-on activities.
- Appeared in Western Montana papers.
- Ads ran 10 times a month for roughly 2 months.
- Estimated readership: over 102,000 a day.



Tactic Three:



Science. Try It. Activity Bags



- Developed thematic science activity bags.
- Explore 7 science phenomena from Neurons to Friction.
- Free to the public.
- 700 placed in family gathering places – restaurants, coffee shops, Aquatics Center and Library.

Tactic Four: *Science. Try It.* Guerilla Marketing



- Science movie montages shown on side of downtown buildings for Gallery Night.
- Logo magnets:
 - Stuck on sign posts, bike racks for people to take.
 - Spotted on cars, bikes, fridges.
 - Followed by bringing magnets with an explainer and magnetism activities to local gatherings.



Tactic Five:

Science. Try It. Handouts



- Promote special events on Möbius strips.
- 6,000 strips distributed.



Tactic Six:

Science. Try It. Partnerships



Build strategic partnerships with community organizations and businesses by involving them in the campaign.



Science. Try It.

Immediate Outcomes

- **Peaked Audience Interest:**
 - 500 plus visitors to grand opening
 - Over 15 fieldtrips, 1500 visitors in first 40 days
- **Media Buzz:**
 - 5 articles in Western Montana papers
 - 7 television and radio interviews
- **Key Decision Maker Buy-in:**
 - Brian Schweitzer and Nancy Schweitzer
 - Institutional support
- **On the Road to Sustainability:**
 - Membership and user fee revenue is higher than expected
 - Invitations by partner organizations to collaborate on grants
 - Local foundations and national corporations interest



Science. Try it.

Communication Lessons

- Know your audience!
- Research perceived barriers and benefits to behavior adoption.
- Be audience-centered: meet them where they are - not where you want them to be.
- Be creative in message and marketing tactics.
- Up play the benefits and downplay barriers.
- When you're tired of your message, your audience is probably just recognizing it.