

COMMUNICATION FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE, VOL.2

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TELEVISION
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Topics

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POPULARITY OF THE VISUAL MEDIA

In the modern world, the visual media (film and television) are universally popular and are becoming increasingly available in developing countries. People everywhere love to go to a movie or to watch a TV show. It seems valid, therefore, to consider employing these media as part of a Behavior Change Communication project to encourage positive social change in individuals and societies.

There is no denying the popularity of television. In remote rural areas of developing countries where individual television ownership is virtually unknown, television programs can still be seen through the medium of the video van. Many development projects make use of video-vans on a regular basis, and the video showings always attract a great deal of interest. The presentation of well-made social development programs through video vans or through television can be a very powerful motivator of behavior change. Even in places where both film and television are part of everyday life, there is a continuing attraction to the visual media that cannot and should not be denied. Indeed, as Miguel Sabido says, "television has become the big moral guide in today's world" (Sabido 1999). While words alone (radio, print, oral storytelling) can be compelling because of their appeal to the imagination, it remains true that in many cases "a picture is worth a thousand words." Television and film can present visual role models who spark in viewers the will to emulate desired behavior change. The visual media can **demonstrate** to a chosen audience exactly how to undertake activities that can improve their lives and the visual media can **show** an audience, in inspiring pictures, how their lives can be better as a result of making changes.

*Miguel Sabido. 1999. "Social Uses of Commercial Soap Operas", *Journal of Development Communication*, Vol. 10.

For example, a film that carries a message on the advantages of proper nutrition for children can show, graphically and dramatically, a comparison between the appearance, health and demeanor of children who are properly fed and those who are not. The prospect of the same positive health and appearance being possible in their own children can be a powerful motivator in encouraging audience members to change behavior.

THE ENTERTAINMENT-EDUCATION FORMAT

There are many ways of using visual media to bring important knowledge to audiences. Jingles, spots, and advertisements are commonly used to remind viewers of such things as the immunization days or the importance of Vitamin A. Documentaries can present audiences with impressive facts such as how new farming methods can increase their crop production.

Perhaps the most powerful use of television or film for motivating social development is the Entertainment-Education format. "Entertainment-Education is the process of purposively designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members' knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior" (Singhal and Rogers 1999).^{*} In other words, the Entertainment-Education format combines an engaging form of entertainment with a relevant educational message. Entertainment appeals to the **emotions** of the audience. Once the audience is engrossed in the entertainment, the relevant educational message can be blended in gradually, naturally, and subtly. The educational message appeals to the **mind** and the **logic** of the audience. The Entertainment-Education format, therefore, employs a combination of emotional appeal and relevant knowledge to demonstrate and communicate the benefits that can result from a change in personal behavior and social norms.

Entertainment = Emotional appeal
Education = Relevant knowledge

At the same time, it must be remembered that the Entertainment-Education format is not a guarantee of behavior change and there are those who are likely to oppose its use. The most common criticisms of the format are:

^{*}Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers. 1999. *Entertainment-Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

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- It is expensive when film or TV is the medium being used. The creation of a film or TV drama serial does cost money, and there are those who will argue that the money could be better spent on cheaper methods of knowledge dissemination, such as print or face-to-face discussion.
- Many of the most common behavior change topics are considered inappropriate or too sensitive to show on public airwaves. Such topics as safe childbirth, HIV and AIDS prevention, Adolescent Reproductive Health, etc., do require fairly direct discussion of personal matters and some cultures are not comfortable with such topics being shown on television or even in cinemas.
- There are critics who are concerned that writers, directors and others might enter into the Entertainment-Education field for the wrong reasons: to draw attention and fame towards themselves.

All those involved in an Entertainment-Education project should be aware of the possible weaknesses of the format and be prepared to offset these weaknesses whenever necessary. The likely criticisms should be kept in mind when planning an Entertainment-Education project. Response to these particular criticisms might suggest:

- While the creation of visual media is expensive, it can be re-used in many ways. Well-made dramas can be re-broadcast or re-shown many times using video vans in remote areas of the country.
- Careful message creation can avoid the problem of offending the media outlets. Including media policy makers in the message design is an essential first step in ensuring that programs will be approved and shown. Careful writing is another important aspect in overcoming this criticism. By their presence at the Design Workshop (see Chapter 3), writers can learn from the policy makers just what can be said and shown. They can learn from audience members and content specialists how to provide essential information in a non-offensive manner.
- Commitment to the goals of the Entertainment-Education project is a prerequisite for all those involved in it. This is particularly true of those involved in the creative aspect of the project. They should understand from the outset that the project is not about making them famous, but about improving the lives of ordinary people.
- A further important consideration is that the Entertainment-Education medium (be it film, television, community theater) should never be a stand-alone product. There should always be other interventions to support and replicate the messages it delivers. The main asset of Entertainment-Education is that it reaches out primarily to people's emotions and thus engages their attention to learn more about the recommended behavior change.

DRAMA

There are several ways in which the Entertainment-Education format can be used; perhaps the most popular of these is drama. All the world loves a good story. A drama is a story that is acted out in front of the audience by a number of actors (either on a stage or on a screen), rather than being told to them by one narrator or storyteller.

The Advantages of Drama

- Drama can be entertaining; that is, it can attract and hold the attention of an audience.
- It can provide the audience with vicarious emotional experiences, allowing them to feel and express emotions that they might otherwise have to repress in real life.
For example, they can express open anger at a political “character” in a drama in a way that would be impossible, or even dangerous, in real life.
- The characters of a drama can act as role models and demonstrate the benefits of the proposed behavior change in a natural way.
- Audiences can see people like themselves and with lives like their own learning about, considering, accepting and even advocating social change, thereby providing a powerful call to action.
- Visual drama can reach audiences who are illiterate or semi-literate.

Types of Drama

Drama usually occurs in one of three forms: the stand-alone drama; the drama series; the drama serial.

The Stand-alone Drama

This is complete in one showing. Like the average movie, the stand-alone drama is typically 60–90 minutes long and contains one major plot.

The Drama Series

This is a collection of short dramas (typically each drama in the series is 20 or 30 minutes long) broadcast on a weekly basis. The same main characters appear in each program of the series, but they are engaged in a separate and complete plot (story) every week. The drama series can be compared to a regular newspaper comic strip: the same characters

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appear every week, but they are involved in a different activity each time they appear. (The Design Document sample that is given in Appendix B was created for a drama series.)

The Drama Serial

This is an ongoing story divided into episodes (much like the chapters of a novel) that are shown on air regularly: day by day or week by week for a period of six months, a year or even more. At the end of each episode the story is left incomplete, closing on a question or a note of suspense so that viewers are encouraged to watch the following episode to find out what will happen next. Typically the Entertainment-Education drama is shown at the rate of one episode per week for 6–12 months. In some cases the drama is extended and becomes a part of regular entertainment for viewers. The famous, award-winning South African series *Soul City* has been on the air since 1994 with a once-a-week TV serial. In the last few years the social change efforts of this series have been enhanced by a radio drama that is aired every day, and the addition of a children's television and radio series, *Soul Buddyz*.*

Any of these drama formats—the stand-alone drama, the drama series or the drama serial—can be comic, tragic, mysterious, adventurous or can combine two or more of these emotions. The serial drama, which usually contains three or more separate plots, can represent a number of emotions so that it can be, for example, tragic in one plot, amusing in another (which might also contain a love story) and frightening in yet a third plot. Similarly these separate plots can be designed to appeal to different audiences (adolescents, rural workers, city dwellers) but subtly blended in a way that gives the message universal relevance.

Drama is, therefore, a powerful medium through which to demonstrate positive social change to an audience and to encourage audience members to improve their lives by making this change themselves. It must be understood, however, that behavior change drama (or Entertainment-Education drama) is different in a number of ways from drama designed purely for entertainment. The major difference is the natural and subtle integration of the accurate educational message into the entertaining story, and in order for this to be successful, there must be careful planning from the outset of the project.

*The Soul City Institute for Health and Development, led by its founder, Garth Japhet, is a non-governmental organization based in Johannesburg, South Africa. Known generally as Soul City, the institute was established in 1992 to employ mass media—especially Entertainment-Education dramas—for health improvement and social development. Details of the program types and the remarkable success of Soul City can be found on www.soulcity.org.

STARTING UP THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Steps in the Entertainment-Education Project Development

Film or television drama (or other types of programming) for a social development project can be initiated in one of two ways: by the Behavior Change Communication (BCC) project management or by the independent video or filmmaker. In either case, the film or television project is developed through a series of steps that are demonstrated by the 10 carriages of the A train (see Figure 1.1): Audience; Analysis; Access; Articulation; Artistry; Auxiliaries; Advocacy; Advertising; Assessment; Adjustment.

Each of the carriages represents an essential element of project development and all elements (carriages) must be linked securely and smoothly. The train runs on the wheels of competent Administration, led by the program manager or executive producer. The 10 main steps in an Entertainment-Education project development are as follows:

1. Audience

Any project that aims to change social norms relies on, and is led throughout its development by a thorough, precise and empathetic understanding of the audience(s) for which it is intended. A detailed analysis of the geographic, demographic, economic, cultural and social factors that shape audience behavior is necessary. These factors can include current knowledge, attitudes, practices, and methods of advocacy related to the desired change. Other important factors include age, sex, literacy, income, personality, lifestyle, cultural and social values, individual and community variables and media exposure, etc. Only a very close understanding of the audience(s) whose lives can be improved by behavior change can help to determine the behavior change theories, specific motivators and role models that can be used to encourage change.

2. Analysis

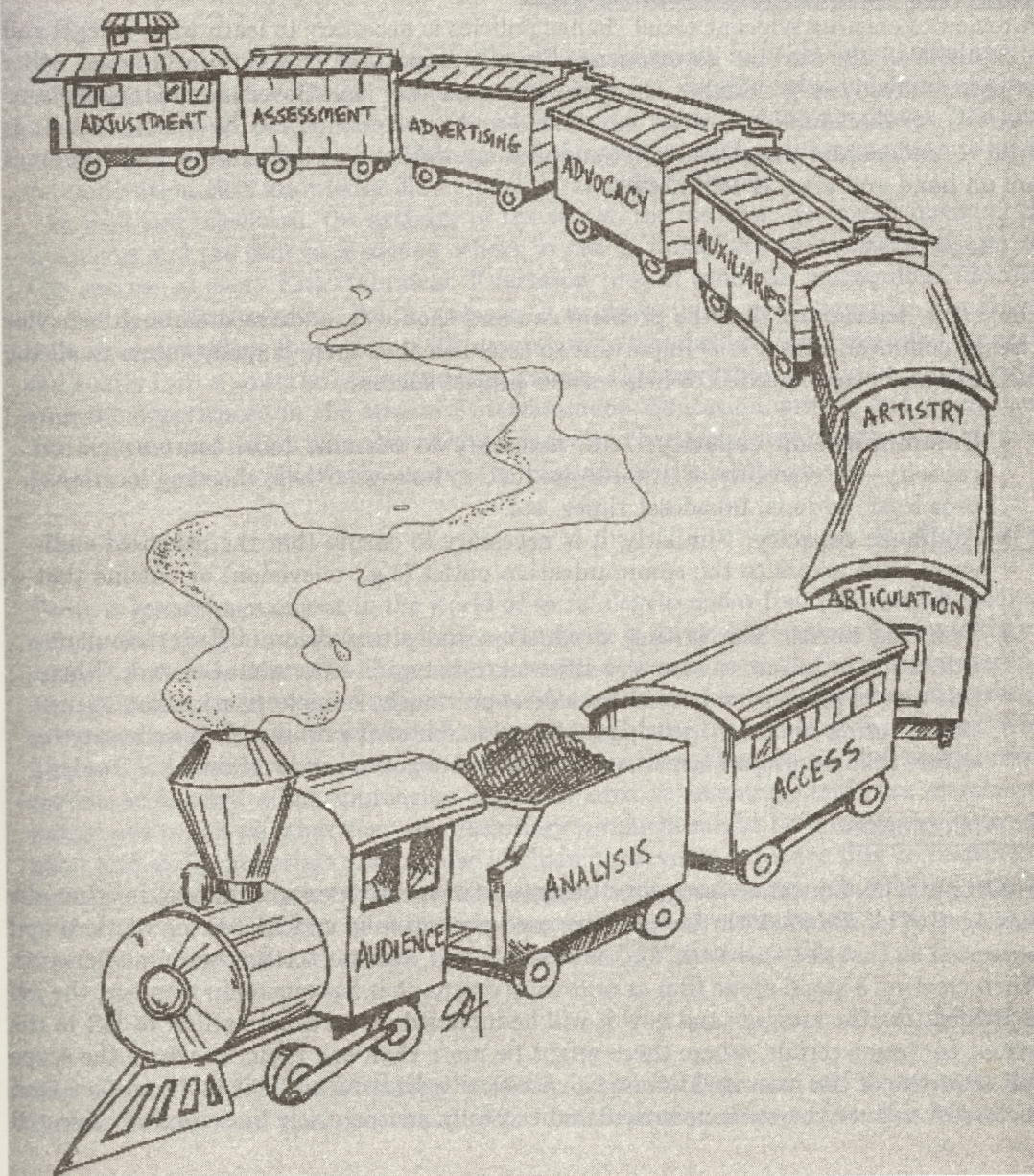
Changing health behavior or other types of knowledge, attitudes, and practice through a communication strategy requires accurate information and in-depth analysis of several important factors:

The problem

There must be a clear and carefully researched analysis of what the project directors see as the problem to be addressed. This analysis can be started by a review of existing health and demographic data, survey results, study findings, etc. It should be enhanced by specific base-line research of the problem, to help determine the causes and the real possibility of bringing about change. If, for example, resources such as health clinics are

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required for the change, and they are not available to the audience, then no amount of behavior change communication will be effective. Similarly, effecting change can be extremely challenging if the current behavior is based on long-held cultural or religious beliefs.

Existing programs, policies, and resources

A review of existing relevant social change policies is necessary to learn what is legal and acceptable to the current government. Equally important is determining what other programs already exist, whether run by the government or Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), so that duplication can be avoided and partnerships can be established. It is vital to understand where and what supplies are available, what services and resources are on hand and what is still needed.

3. Access

Once it is determined that the problem can and should be addressed through behavior change communication, it is important to establish that there is ready access to all the facilities and people needed to help ensure project success.

- **Communication capacity:** It is necessary to examine local communication capacity—accessibility of suitable production houses, artists, shooting locations, broadcast stations, broadcast times, etc.
- **Audience capacity:** Similarly, it is necessary to ensure that the proposed audiences have access to the communication outlet (e.g., television) or cinema that will be used.
- **Training needs:** The writing, production and presentation of Entertainment-Education programming are very different from typical entertainment work. Where this type of production has not been done previously, it might be necessary to provide training in design, writing and production of the drama. It is necessary to ensure that the project has access to and the budget to pay for training as needed.

4. Articulation

Entertainment-Education programs designed for social development require that the messages to be shared with the audience are very carefully articulated (or worded) and presented so that they are both understandable and relevant to the chosen audience(s). When creating a stand-alone film or television drama that has one main message, the job of articulating the message and how it will be included in the drama might be left to the writer. In drama serials, where there might be more than one topic, or where the scope and sequence of the message(s) must be specifically determined, it is more relevant and successful to have the message articulated carefully and precisely by a specially selected

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Message Design Team. The members of this Design Team can work together during a Design Workshop to determine and record the agreed-upon message details in a Design Document which then becomes the reliable reference for all those working on the project. Chapter 3 provides details of the design team, workshop and document.

5. Artistry

The knowledge contained in the behavior change messages is of obvious importance in bringing about social change, but knowledge alone is usually not enough to motivate permanent change. Entertainment in one of many forms, including drama, can provide emotional stimulus, role modeling, and thought-provoking demonstration to evoke the motivation that knowledge alone may not be able to inspire.

In film and television, the **artistry** of the writer, the director, the actors (artists), the musicians and the film crew among others, is just as important as message articulation. The success of every Entertainment-Education project relies on harmonious blending of artistry and articulation. For this reason, it might be necessary to organize a workshop for writers, providing them with guidance on how to blend educational messages naturally and subtly into a powerfully entertaining drama. This workshop should be conducted by someone experienced in the area of Entertainment-Education writing and production. The director and actors may also need guidance on character interpretation and message delivery in order to effectively convey the message to the audience.

6. Auxiliaries

There is general agreement in the world of social development that one medium alone is usually not enough to maintain behavior change. It is always advisable to have auxiliary or support materials that will enhance the messages delivered through the primary medium. The question of what type of support materials would be most appropriate and attractive to the audiences is one that should be kept in mind from the outset of the project. When film or TV drama has been selected as the main medium, there should be careful consideration as to what other approaches might be used to encourage audience members to watch and to act on what they see. Auxiliary products might be posters, brochures, or print and audio materials making use of characters/events from the film to reassert the message. Alternatively, activities such as competitions, road shows, school visits, musical presentations, etc., might be seen as appropriate ways of encouraging viewers to recall, consider and act upon what they have seen in the TV drama serials.

7. Advocacy

The ultimate aim of social change projects is to establish new and permanent social norms, rather than just occasional individual behavior change. For this reason, the

encouragement of **advocacy** is important; that is, encouraging those who view, understand, and are motivated by what they learn from the drama to share their ideas with others and encourage others to accept the changes as well. Advocacy of this nature can be demonstrated within the drama, but it can be encouraged in other ways as well. Listener groups can be established that invite people to get together to listen to the drama and discuss it after the broadcast. If funding permits, leaders from listener groups can be trained to encourage discussion and motivate group members to bring other family members and friends into the group to listen and learn with them.

Advocacy is also important in motivating community leaders and others in positions of power to believe in and encourage the desired behavior change. In some projects—such as those related to adolescent knowledge of life skills and appropriate sexual behavior—special materials (pamphlets, booklets) can be prepared to share with community and religious leaders in order to help them to understand the need for behavior change and to motivate them to support the aims of the project.

8. Advertising and Promotion

Advertising and promoting the drama are essential activities, which are usually best handled by an experienced advertising agency. Agency representatives should be present at the design workshop (see Chapter 3) and have a clear understanding of the kind of social development the project is promoting. They should also be well acquainted with the drama and its characters, in case the characters can be used in the promotional and advertising campaigns.

9. Assessment

Ongoing assessment or monitoring is always necessary, and very possible, with a drama serial. Pilot testing of the storylines and the characters should be done with two or three of the early episodes before the serial goes on the air, and appropriate changes made if necessary. In order to save money, the pilot testing can be done with audio versions of the video scripts (see sample in Chapter 12). While audio scripts do not give the full picture of what the film or TV will present, they can help determine if the audience accepts and believes in the characters, and is aware of and has interest in the important behavior changes being recommended.

Once the drama serial is on the air, regular monitoring can be carried out through Listener Groups, focus group discussions, or requests for feedback from viewers. Even if several episodes have been completed (recorded and edited) in advance of going on the air, it is always possible to make small changes if the ongoing assessment shows this to be necessary. However, if the whole project has been carefully planned, and if there have

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10. Adjustment

Successful films and TV serial dramas often suggest, or even demand, a follow-on series. If this is possible, then one must ensure careful re-assessment of all aspects of the project so that adjustment(s) can be made, as necessary, either to the messages or the drama presentation, or to other aspects of the project. Appropriate and timely adjustment can help to maintain the success of the first presentation, or to improve upon it.

There are many people involved in the creation of a successful Entertainment-Education TV or film production. Leading the project will be the program manager or executive producer. This person can be seen, perhaps, as the chief engineer who ensures that the train is well-fueled and running smoothly and that all carriages are firmly connected.