



The 5 Ps of TV PSAs

by Bill Goodwill

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When strategically planned and executed, Public Service Advertising campaigns can broaden the reach of your mass communications program, create greater credibility for your organization, and strengthen your brand image. They have also been used to: recruit volunteers into the Armed Forces or Peace Corps; encourage people to write for specific information on an issue; participate in a special event; or just visit a website to get additional information. In a longer term context, they have helped to reduce the incidence of drunk driving by half, when combined with stronger enforcement. To see mini case histories of how PSAs have been used to accomplish a variety of objectives, go to: www.psaresearch.com/cafe_home.html

To make it easier to remember the key points for a well orchestrated effort, we have developed what we call the Five P's of PSAs: **Planning, Promotion, Placement, Performance and Professional Competence.**

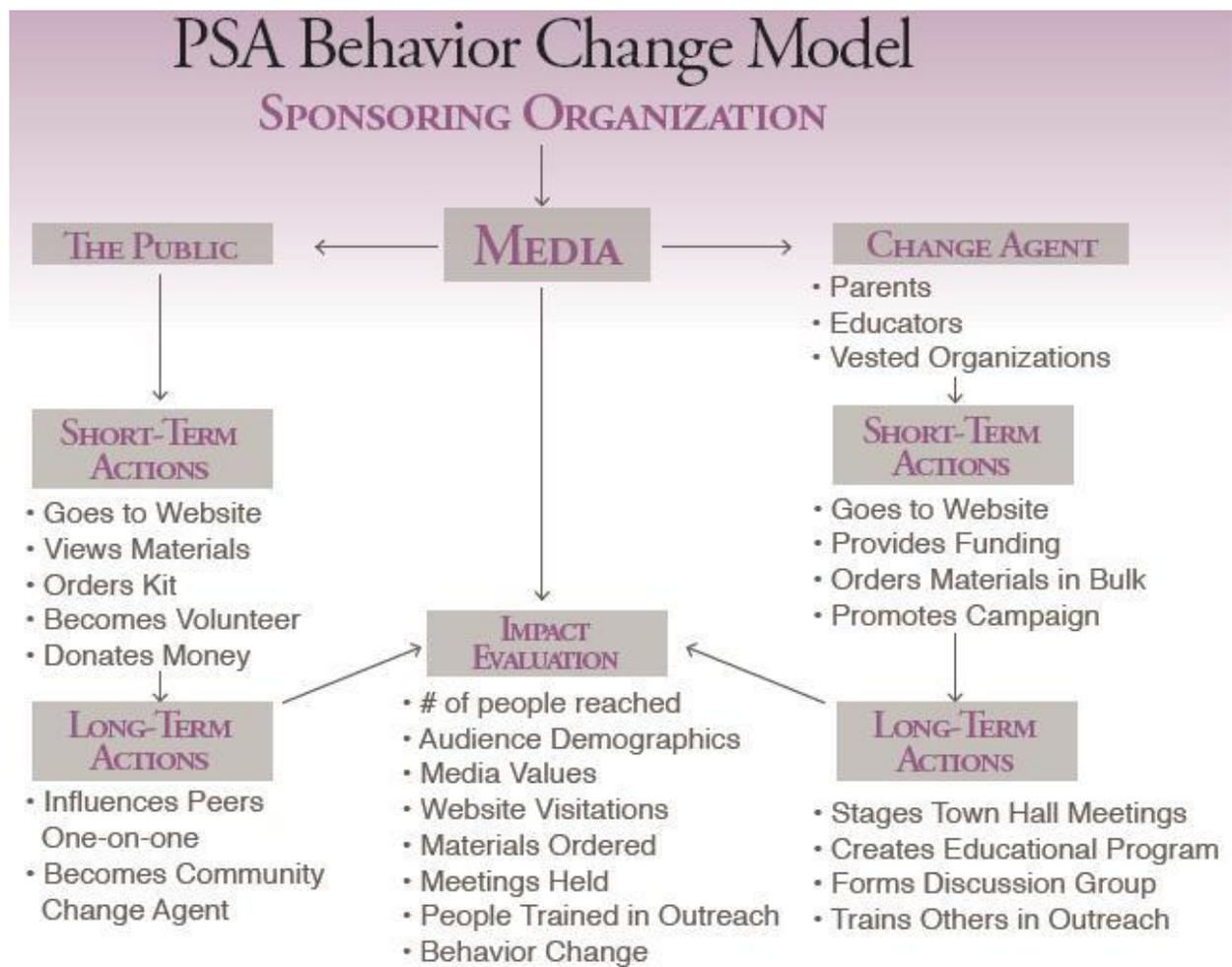
Planning

Unfortunately many public education campaigns are launched without serious thought or research about campaign objectives. If your budget permits, you should test your message among your target audience with focus groups, often referred to as qualitative research. They will help you sharpen your message, make sure your target audience understands your key points, and keep you from possibly offending your audience. For more information on the basics, go to: <http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/focusgrp.htm>.



If your issue or cause is in the least bit controversial, or if there is any concern how your audience will react, you should definitely survey the media in advance. There are a couple of inexpensive ways to do this: send draft storyboards to the media and ask them for their feedback, or do a brief survey among the media to gauge their reaction to your approach, perhaps sending scripts for your proposed PSA.

After you've completed the research phase of your campaign, it's time to develop your formal, written plan, which ensures you do not omit a key element. You should involve your entire public affairs staff in drafting the plan or anyone who can make a contribution to the ultimate success of the campaign. This graphic shows the key audiences you should include, and anticipated actions for each group.



Here are some questions you should address in the planning phase of your campaign:

- What are you trying to accomplish via the campaign...create general awareness, drive people to a website, call a toll-free number, raise funds, recruit volunteers?
- How about your primary and secondary target audiences - where do they live, what are their ages, what are their media habits?

- What are your plans to involve other stakeholders such as the media and your own internal audiences such as community partners?
- What are your creative options? Will you produce the campaign elements with your internal staff, or will you hire external producers? What is the cost vs. benefit for each option?
- What is the campaign scope - is it TV only or will it involve other media?
- What is the one single message you want your audience to remember and what is the call to action?
- What's your timeline? Are there special events you can tie into to leverage your exposure? When do you plan the launch and how much time before that date to you have to start planning in order to make your deadline?

Finally, you need to establish a budget and determine who will need to approve all major components of the campaign as it is implemented. By thinking through all your options in advance, it will save from making costly mistakes and guide you through production and implementation.

Promotion

Promotion is critical to the success of a PSA campaign, but it is often overlooked. Here are some tactics that could make a huge difference in the ultimate impact of your PSA:

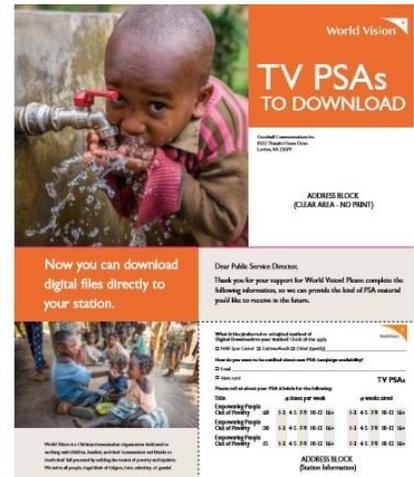
✓ Cultivate contacts at the TV networks-primarily the *big four*. ABC, CBS, NBC, and Fox Networks. While they rarely broadcast PSAs on their networks these days, they may feed your PSA to their affiliate stations. See the article, “*Network Clearance-A Producer's Checklist*” at: <http://www.psaresearch.com/networkclearance.html>.

Don't overlook the various cable networks which may be perfect for your message. Currently there are 200 national cable networks to which we distribute our client PSAs. For one of our clients national networks generated 70 percent of all values for their campaign, so it is particularly important to get usage on them. Either have your staff contact them and pitch your PSAs, or have your distributor do it, because it could one of the most successful things you do.



✓ Try to get media support from some of the major media associations such as the National Association of Broadcasters, the Cable Television Association, or even some of the leading radio networks such as Clear Channel. They may agree to let you use their logo on your PSA packaging, implying endorsement, and perhaps even send a blast fax or email to their member stations about your campaign.

✓ If you're launching a new campaign that is particularly time sensitive, or has some other compelling argument, consider a *pre-campaign alert*. These alerts can be blast emails, postcards, or some other creative approach to the media-typically aimed at media gatekeepers. This gives them a *heads-up* on your new campaign and helps them schedule your PSAs, particularly if they are keyed to a special event. **Now that all TV PSAs are distributed digitally via online platforms, you must use some type of promotional tactic to let the media know where they can download your PSAs such as these examples.**



Left: TV PSA blast email. Above: TV PSA alert card.

✓ Each state has its own broadcasters association, which you can also engage in your campaign via pre-campaign alerts or news releases. For a complete list go to: www.askcbi.org/resources/state-broadcasting-associations/

✓ And remember the Web. Consider using online distribution services such as PR Web for distributing your release online <https://www.prweb.com>. One of the advantages of PR Web is that it allows us to embed the TV PSA in the news release so journalists who want to view the PSA don't have to go to another site. It reaches 30,000 online journalists; provides metrics in terms of who has read the release; and helps elevate your Google rankings when people type your key issue into searches.



✓ Find a special commemorative event that you can associate with your campaign as there are special events for just about every cause or concern.

✓ If you coordinate your campaign with a special event, - or create one if you can – you could generate more publicity and public attention.

✓ If you have community partners, be sure to include them in your plans and share your creative with them. Your regional or local public affairs staffs can help immeasurably in engaging local media in your campaign. Ask them to tag materials for local use, make local media visits, or give you feedback on local concerns. For ideas on how to do this, go to: www.psaresearch.com/gap.html and read the article titled: *Involving Your Community Partners in PSA Program Development.*

STOP DISTRACTED Driving AAOS

APRIL 2014

APRIL IS DISTRACTED DRIVING MONTH
American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons
Launches PSA Campaign in Washington, DC
To Reduce Distracted Driving.
Co-sponsored by Orthopaedic Trauma
Association and the Auto Alliance

GET THE FACTS!
THE STATISTICS ON DISTRACTED DRIVING ARE STARTLING.

- U.S. Department of Transportation statistics indicate that in 2008 more than half a million people were injured in crashes associated with distractions of all types.
- Among the various distractions, texting stands out as one of the most dangerous. Research from Virginia Tech has found that

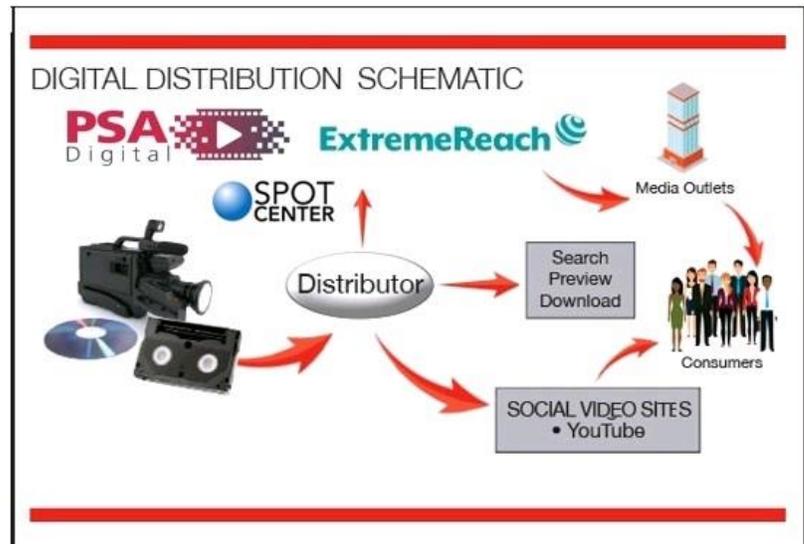
It is estimated that up to 500,000 people are injured annually in car crashes caused by distracted drivers - injuries that are entirely preventable through public education. What makes these statistics even more serious is that cell phones are just one of many forms of distractions in today's high tech vehicles, which are equipped with GPS, video

Take the pledge to drive cell free

Placement

Placement includes all the activities involved in getting your PSA on the air. We use three different platforms where our client PSAs are posted – our own internal site called PSA Digital, the Spot Center created by the National Association of Broadcasters and Extreme Reach, the premier distributor of video assets in the country.

To view a Powerpoint presentation on how to distribute your TV PSA in the digital age, go to: www.goodwillcommunications.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Distribution.pdf.



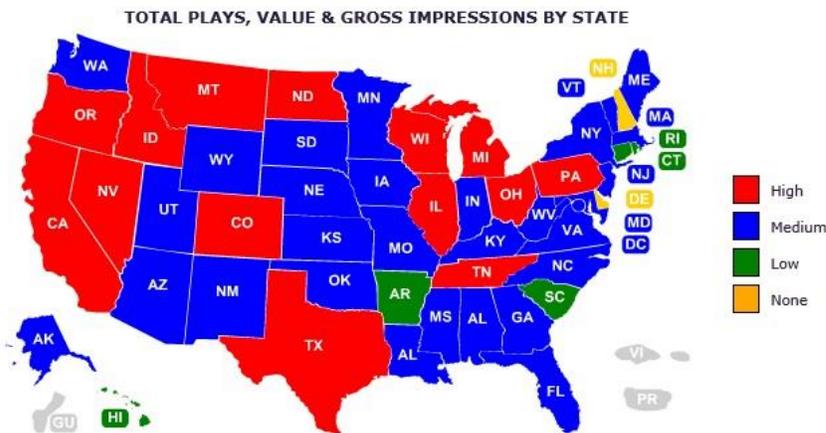
Performance

Collecting data just for the sake of creating a report, is a meaningless exercise. You've got to massage the data, look at it from various angles, and merchandise it to the fullest extent. For example, make sure your creative team knows what works and what doesn't.

Send evaluation reports to all your stakeholders so they can see the results you are generating.



Analyze your data at least monthly and find out how your campaign compares to others (your distributor can help you with this.) By analyzing your PSA usage data as your campaign progresses, you will be able to address weaknesses as they occur, rather than waiting until the end of the campaign, when it is too late. We provide a map with each of our weekly client PSA reports that shows where you are, and are not getting usage according to four levels of exposure.



There are lots of different reasons for evaluating your campaign:

- It identifies areas of weak usage and provides the basis for correcting these trends before it is too late.
- It provides data to demonstrate you are meeting your organization's critical mission or Key Performance Indicators.
- You can use evaluation data to calculate cost-benefit ratios (production, distribution and evaluation costs divided into the amount of advertising equivalency value the campaign generated).
- It can help show how you've engaged the media in your issue.
- An analysis of phone calls or Web site visits can demonstrate the level of public involvement.
- Over time you can demonstrate how your campaign is achieving greater public awareness or changing attitudes.
- You can use evaluation data to thank the media for all the time and space they devote to your campaign.
- It will help keep your community partners engaged.
- And evaluation can help sustain future funding, because your boss will want to know about your results.

For more specifics on how you can use evaluation data, you may want to read the article: *"How You Can Use Evaluation Data To Fine-Tune Your PSA Program"* www.psaresearch.com/bib4401NEW.html

Professional Competence

In a book published by Advertising Age entitled: Advertising in America, one of the deans of advertising, David Ogilvy, had this to say about advertising in the public interest: "Advocacy advertising is not a job for beginners, but there is a tradition of it within the profession."



Just like anything else in life, if you want to be really good at your craft, you have to work at it. You need to do the research, and a lot of reading to find out what works and what doesn't with PSAs, and the only way to know that is to study the "science" literature.

Like any other mass communications technique, it takes time and effort to learn everything there is to know about producing PSAs that get used. Even experienced advertising agencies and consultants often overlook the basics. On the other hand, given the data that is available on PSAs, there's no excuse for creating PSA messages and campaigns that are off-target, in the wrong format, or directed to the wrong media people.

Before you even think about designing your campaign, talk to as many experienced people as you can. Call your distributor, go to workshops, call media people, talk to your advertising agency, and read about the subject. There are many articles on media and PSAs, as well as media links at: www.psaresearch.com that can help you stay abreast of the changing trends in the field.

When it comes to PSA professional competence, ***what you don't know will hurt you***. What you don't know will cause costly mistakes and missed opportunities, which in turn, could be worth millions of dollars of lost exposure for your cause. So the next time you are ready to launch a major national campaign, think about the 5 P's of PSAs and make sure you incorporate them into your plans.

(Updated 7/5/19)