Strategies for Successful Public Health Messaging

Tim Church
Communications Director
Washington State Department of Health
Information Overload?

It’s hard to know what to believe. A pandemic or other public health emergency is a real possibility. It’s important to plan and prepare.

- Practice good handwashing. Wash your hands, cough and sneeze into your elbow, and stay home when you’re sick.
- Stock up on food and supplies. Have enough for a week or more.
- Have an emergency plan for your family.

Breaking Through the Clutter

Identify audience, Get their attention, Get them to listen to your message

- Hear and see it a lot
- Understand it
- Believe it
Whooping Cough Epidemic. Get Your Tdap Shot.

www.doh.wa.gov

Epidemia de tos ferina. Vacúnate ahora.

www.doh.wa.gov

Behavioral Change Modeling

3-4 times recognition
Behavioral Change Modeling

- 3-4 times recognition
- 7-9 times recall/awareness
- 15-20 times behavior change
There Is No “One Size Fits All”

Earned media  Web

Social media  Paid media

Choose Your Words Carefully

pathogen
varicella
4:3:1:3:3:1
surveillance
rhinorrhea

What would you say instead of rhinorrhea? Type your suggestion in the chat box.
Choose Your Words Carefully

pathogen → germ
varicella
4:3:1:3:3:1
surveillance
rhinorrhea

What would you say instead of rhinorrhea? Type your suggestion in the chat box.

Choose Your Words Carefully

pathogen → germ
varicella → chickenpox
4:3:1:3:3:1
surveillance
rhinorrhea

What would you say instead of rhinorrhea? Type your suggestion in the chat box.
Choose Your Words Carefully

- pathogen ➔ germ
- varicella ➔ chickenpox
- 4:3:1:3:3:1 ➔ 15 dose series
- surveillance
- rhinorrhea

What would you say instead of rhinorrhea?
Type your suggestion in the chat box.
Choose Your Words Carefully

- pathogen → germ
- varicella → chickenpox
- 4:3:1:3:3:1 → 15 dose series
- surveillance → tracking and monitoring
- rhinorrhea → runny nose

Who Do People Trust?

Gallup Poll’s 2012 survey of most honest and ethical professions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>% Very High/High</th>
<th>% Average</th>
<th>% Very Low/Low</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nurses</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmacists</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical doctors</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school teachers</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telemarketers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car salespeople</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lobbyists</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of Congress</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Determines Credibility?

Low Concern Settings

- Competence/Expertise: 80-85%
- All other factors: 15-20%

High Concern Settings

- Listening/Caring/Empathy: 50%
- Competence/Expertise: 15-20%
- Honesty/Openness: 15-20%
- All other factors: 15-20%

Source: Randall Hyer, National Immunizations Conference, 2005
Social Media

Pertussis Focus Group Findings

• It’s more important to be understood than precise
• TV and radio news still a big info source
• Info overload a continuing/growing problem
• Personal stories get people’s attention
• People often need to feel threatened to take action
• Public health can’t do it alone
• Make it local
Questions?

Timothy.church@doh.wa.gov
360.236.4077

Rising Above the Tide
How to stay on top of public communications

James Apa
Communications Manager
Here’s what we’ll cover

• Knowing when it’s time to step up public communications beyond the routine
• Having effective relationships in place
• Examples of putting them into action

Is it a sixth sense?
Your experts
(the easy one)

Media coverage –
from local to global
Contact points with the public
More sentinels

Other health departments  Key partners  Family & friends

Look out for exceptional or emotional events
• Other sentinels
  – Key partners
  – Family and friends

Build relationships

Poll Question
Can you identify a key partner in your community?

Type your answer into the text chat.
Seasonal flu 2013

• Local activation of health and medical response
• Messaging to promote local clinics
Seattle windstorm 2012

- Providing messages and alternatives to stay safe
- Using high-tech and low-tech strategies
Think outside the box.
Questions?