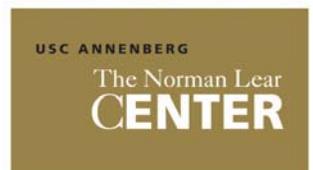


# How Pro-Social Messages Make Their Way Into Entertainment Programming

A Report to the Carnegie Foundation on  
Media, Citizens & Democracy

A Project of the Center for Excellence in Government and  
The USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center

MEDIA  
CITIZENS &  
DEMOCRACY



## 2 Media, Citizens & Democracy Project Final Report



### How Pro-Social Messages Make Their Way Into Entertainment Programming: A Final Report of the Media, Citizens & Democracy Project

Media, Citizens & Democracy is a joint project of The Norman Lear Center and the Council for Excellence in Government, funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. The project aims to develop an effective message and communications strategy that will engage citizens, especially young Americans, in government and democracy, through the examination of the portrayal of government and public service in entertainment media. The project's final report summarizes its findings on effective methods used by advocacy groups to influence entertainment content.

#### The Council for Excellence in Government

The Council for Excellence in Government works to improve the performance of government at all levels and government's place in the lives and esteem of American citizens. With its experienced staff, network of experts and members and diverse partners, the Council helps to create stronger public sector leadership and management, driven by innovation and focused on results; and increased citizen confidence and participation in government, through better understanding of government and its role. Founded in 1982, the organization is nonpartisan, nonprofit and national in scope.

#### The Norman Lear Center

Based at the USC Annenberg School for Communication, the Norman Lear Center is a multidisciplinary research and public policy center exploring implications of the convergence of entertainment, commerce, and society. On the USC campus, the Lear Center builds bridges between eleven schools whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through scholarship and research; through its programs of visiting fellows, conferences, public events, and publications; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice in the field.



<b>How Pro-Social Messages Make Their Way Into Entertainment Programming</b>	
<b>Table of Contents</b>	
Introduction	Pg 4
History of Media Advocacy Efforts in the Entertainment Community	Pg 5
Our Approach for This Project	Pg 6
Project Purpose	Pg 7
Review of Current Media Advocacy Projects	Pg 8
Analysis: A Review of Effective Techniques for Working with the Entertainment Industry	Pg 35
Lessons Learned from Communication Campaigns	Pg 40
Application for Other Pro-Social Messages: A Final Note	Pg 45
Endnotes	Pg 47
Appendix	Pg 49

## **How Pro-Social Messages Make Their Way Into Entertainment Programming**

**A Final Report of the Media, Citizens & Democracy Project  
By Mandy Shaivitz**

### **Introduction**

The past two decades have seen an upsurge in the use of entertainment programming for the dissemination of pro-social messages. Since the early 1980s, more than twenty organizations have appeared in Hollywood with the purpose of altering or improving portrayals of particular issues in television and film. Certainly these organizations and campaigns assert that they are necessary as countless messages concerning medicine, public health, law and government among others, are embedded in entertainment media and because of the truism that people learn from the programming they watch.

The present work provides a review of the literature and practices of organizations that seek to work with the entertainment industry through different means; the organizations are typically referenced as “entertainment education” or “advocacy groups,” although the terms are often interchangeable. The key elements of interest, however, are the strategies and activities employed by such efforts, along with measures and evidence of success.

While there is a great deal of information-sharing among the various organizations that seek to work with the entertainment industry to influence content, this information is not readily available to the public. Organizations hoping to enter the field of media advocacy face a sizeable, time-consuming initiation and development process in order to get “up and running.” This project reviews the activities of nineteen representative groups and presents suggested techniques for working with the entertainment industry.

### History of Media Advocacy Efforts in the Entertainment Community

Organized efforts to work with the entertainment television industry to “educate through entertainment” first came on the radar screen in the early 1970s. Several activities have been identified as prominent examples of these efforts.

In 1970, David Poindexter, a Methodist minister, arrived in Hollywood where he lobbied entertainment programming to include social and environmental issues. Seven years later, Poindexter went on to develop pro-social programming internationally, eventually founding Population Communications International. In 1972, Smith and colleagues reviewed 130 programming hours and found that “70% of health-related content was ‘inaccurate, misleading or both’.”<sup>1</sup> Also in the early 1970s, television producer and writer Norman Lear hired a staff person who was solely responsible for ensuring the accuracy and appropriateness of social messages depicted in his television series *All in the Family*.

Around the same time, an early indication that entertainment programming could affect behavior change presented itself via the popular show *Happy Days*. One evening’s episode depicted the character Fonzie visiting the library and receiving a library card. For an extensive period of time following the episode, libraries around the country reported record numbers of new library card requests. Similarly, in 1981, Warren Breed and James DeFoe formed an advisory board (DeFoe was a member of the Writers Guild of America), to help them develop and conduct research about the portrayal of alcohol and drinking in entertainment programming. Subsequently, the pair began a formal process called “cooperative consultation,” through which the authors accessed industry decision-makers and met with them to encourage “a more realistic and less glamorizing portrayal of drinking.”<sup>2</sup>

Twenty years later, these activities have blossomed into an effort in which numerous groups work to influence depictions of a number of pro-social issues (both general and specific), there is a constantly evolving awareness of the issues by industry members and considerable research on the effects of entertainment programming on people of all ages has been conducted. The years have seen a variety of activities, and a

## 6 Media, Citizens & Democracy Project Final Report

careful review of these efforts is vital to understanding the strategies for working successfully with entertainment media representatives.

### Our Approach for This Project

While there are a number of groups that have conducted entertainment industry outreach activities, we have chosen to focus on the following nineteen groups/programs. For the purposes of this project, the review only examines those activities that directly affect the entertainment industry—those organizations for whom the entertainment industry is the primary audience. Not included in this report are policy efforts/government lobbying (which a number of the organizations use in their work—for example, Children Now works to build coalitions of advocates and address politicians in Washington) or watchdog activities that address the entertainment industry in an effort to convince them to adhere to particular media policies or refine entertainment program content based on moral considerations or interest in particular topic areas.

Although the focus of this work is not solely “media advocacy” *per se*, a worthwhile classification of these efforts comes from advocacy expert, Laurie Trotta (2001), who suggests seven categories of activities from which child advocacy organizations develop their campaigns and take action. Included are:

- 1) positive or collegial work ‘within’ the entertainment industry—where groups sponsor briefings and seminars and positively reinforce excellence in depictions of social issues (The Media Project is an example of such work)
- 2) independent research—where groups conduct and present content analyses and other scientific studies regarding media issues (Children Now)
- 3) technical or educational consultancies—where groups provide referrals to accurate information via experts, Web sites and academic literature searches (MediaScope)
- 4) consumer-based initiatives—where groups organize activities of their audience to speak out against what they view to be inaccurate depictions in programming through letter writing, protests, and boycotts (GLAAD)
- 5) some organizational use, public policy and government—where groups use government channels to bring about change on the policy level
- 6) media literacy, advocacy, and awareness—where groups “focus on publishing, training, and education to inform parents, teachers and children of the hazards of media consumption”

## 7 Media, Citizens & Democracy Project Final Report

- 7) news media campaigns—where groups use “tactics to orchestrate campaigns in the popular press against individual programs, networks, or issues have been used to help build awareness among the general public and advertisers, as well as to pressure broadcasters to effect change”<sup>3</sup>

While these categories may comprehensively cover those efforts adopted by child advocacy groups, health communication/advocacy programs provide two additional categories worthy of consideration. For the purposes of this project, particular attention focuses on the first four listed by Trotta and proposes two additional categories:

- 1) production partnerships--in which organizations fund production of entertainment programs on major television networks (Example: The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation)
- 2) academic media campaigns—through which academic institutions develop more formal communication campaigns to implement in the entertainment media community and conduct a structured evaluation to document changes in knowledge, attitudes and behavior (Examples: The Harvard Alcohol and Hollywood Immunization Projects)

### **Project Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to develop a compilation of research about past and ongoing communication, advocacy and “entertainment education” campaigns that have attempted to influence particular types of portrayals in entertainment television. Upon review of this research, an analysis of effective models identifies those techniques that should be considered in the implementation of upcoming projects that seek to work with the entertainment industry.

### Review of Current Media Projects

#### HARVARD ALCOHOL PROJECT

National Designated Driver Campaign

[www.hsph.harvard.edu](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu)

Initiated in 1988

Location: Cambridge, MA

#### History and Goals:

The earliest large-scale effort to mobilize the Hollywood entertainment community, the Harvard Alcohol Project was launched in November 1988, spearheaded by the Harvard School of Public Health Center for Health Communication. The goal of the campaign, using Social Learning Theory, was to shift social norms with respect to drinking and driving. Three distinct social norms were promoted: “If you choose to drink (reinforcing social legitimacy of nondrinking), drink only in moderation (addressed to the driver’s companions) and choose a designated driver who doesn’t drink at all (promoting the norm that no drinking is acceptable before driving).”<sup>4</sup>

#### Strategies and Activities:

Three components structured the campaign: news, advertising and entertainment programming.

##### 1) News-related activities:

- a front page feature article and editorial praising the campaign in *The New York Times*
- major stories in the *Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times* (in addition to favorable coverage in other newspapers and television news shows)
- a special four-minute report on ABC’s *World News Tonight* with Peter Jennings and complementary local level community-based and restaurant campaigns

##### 2) Advertising efforts:

- public service announcements (PSAs) on ABC, CBS and NBC ran for several years at peak periods ten-twenty times/week
- a PSA about drunk driving featured the President of the United States each December during the period of the campaign

## 9 Media, Citizens & Democracy Project Final Report

### 3) Entertainment programming:

- meetings held by Center staff with over 250 decision-makers from all the leading primetime shows, an action supported by SAG and WGA, west. The result: the casual insertion of Designated Driver messages into scripts of popular shows like *The Cosby Show*, *Cheers* and *LA Law*, with characters modeling behavior in a subtle way.

### Evaluation:

#### Quantitative evaluation:

- content analysis: quantification of the number of shows that included subplots, scenes, dialogues or full episodes supporting the campaign
  - audience research: audience size, the percentage of adults that noticed messages, percentage of adults that were familiar with the program
  - audience favorability ratings, like scoring story likeability on a 100-point scale
  - behavior change indications, such as the number of people who had been a designated driver and the annual drunk-driving fatalities

#### Qualitative evaluation:

- the campaign was "transformed into a national movement" and was endorsed by renowned leaders in virtually every professional field in the country
- the phrase "designated driver" was included in Random House Webster's College Dictionary
- a national policy statement was issued in June 1993 by the U.S. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention and National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

### HOLLYWOOD IMMUNIZATION PROJECT

Initiated in 1996

Location: Westwood, CA

#### History and Goals:

In 1996, the UCLA School of Public Health and Department of Film and Television formed a collaborative effort with the California Department of Health Services, Immunization Branch, to develop a campaign to raise awareness of immunization by inserting messages into entertainment television.

#### Strategies and Activities:

Similar to the Harvard Alcohol Project Designated Driver program in its use of Social Learning Theory to shift societal norms, the campaign produced messages that included simple, specific claims such as “immunizations are important across the lifespan” and “the benefits of immunization far outweigh the risks.” Four criteria for working in the storytelling medium were established:

- “true stories about immunizations or vaccines and their impact on real people would help to establish the authenticity of the issues and the project”
- “although [they] could not control the content of television scripts, [they] could favorably influence industry gatekeepers and decision-makers by presenting ideas with entertainment value”
- “arranged stories that they would fit into the context of entertainment programs”
- “as shows typically focus on characters and their relationships, and characters represent certain socio-demographic groups, [they] arranged the stories in the following categories to maximize their relevance: children, teens, adults, pregnant women, controversies and myths and misconceptions”<sup>5</sup>

Story ideas were collected through qualitative interviews with health professionals and through online news databases searches, and they were summarized into simple paragraphs with headlines, called "story lines." These materials were mailed to industry decision-makers along with clippings, lists of experts and a catalogue containing photos of various immunization posters.

### Evaluation:

- Content analysis measured:
  - the percentage and broadcast dates of shows contacted that included information about immunization (either story lines or posters)
  - type of program during which the information was addressed
  - the immunization information that was featured
  - length of the immunization information
  - program rating
  - ad rates during the program
- qualitative analysis to determine whether the project was implemented as planned and to identify the type of contacts (with decision-makers) that were most likely to result in story placement
- cost analysis of message dissemination through entertainment programming

The evaluation found the following:

- public health professionals provided more usable stories
- comedic stories were most easily incorporated into programming
- media packets had an excess of information (recipients were overwhelmed by quantity and were less likely to review materials)
- industry members disliked the staff members' use of the phrase "story line" when referring to the information they provided as there is an element of proprietary interest with respect to what's written, and the writers found the phrase to be an "infringement on their creative territory"<sup>5</sup>

### CHILDREN NOW, Children and the Media Project

[www.childrennow.org](http://www.childrennow.org)

Initiated in 1994

Locations: Oakland, CA, and Los Angeles, CA

#### History and Goals:

Children Now's Children and the Media program was created with the goal of improving messages that children receive via news and entertainment media. For the past four years, the program has focused on race, class and gender issues.

#### Strategies and Activities:

Children and the Media's general activities include research, outreach to media leaders and policy work. The project:

- develops national youth opinion surveys and content analyses that assess the media's impact on children
- holds briefings for television writers and producers whose programs deal with children's real-life issues
- runs symposia for media industry leaders to discuss how their work affects children
- analyzes the messages media send children
- has "developed public policies to improve television for children," "lobbied for federal legislation requiring V-chips in new TVs" as well as "testified before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee on ratings survey findings"<sup>6</sup>

Recently, the project has addressed issues of diversity and media representation of people of color. In order to do so, Children and the Media:

- convened an advisory board to plan its research
- conducted a national poll of children's perception of race in the media and reviewed relevant academic literature (Using Social Learning Theory to guide their research, the researchers found that many ethnic groups are underrepresented and this has a detrimental effect on the self-esteem of children)

- presented study results through meetings and presentations for executives, writers and directors at Disney and MTV, and presidents and top executives at NBC, ABC, FOX and CBS (Although the project conducted annual conferences during its first six years, industry members found such high frequency excessive, and Children Now now conducts conferences only when they are relevant to particular timely projects.)

Evaluation:

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs, Children and the Media:

- conducts an annual industry study (past three years) in which staff perform qualitative phone interviews with industry leaders regarding the success of conferences as well as changes in industry members' attitudes
- holds focus groups with kids to help guide their survey questions and their policy work

In addition to formal evaluation, there are a number of factors that contribute to the success of their program:

- the group is not antagonistic in its communication with the entertainment industry
- the group enters meetings/relationships well aware of the research needs of the decision-makers with whom they are meeting
- the group explains how the inclusion of informational concepts it provides can be a win for producers and writers, thus creating a "win-win" relationship
- Children and the Media program also shows its praise and appreciation to the groups/individuals that have accurately depicted children's issues through articles in their newsletters
- Children Now informs industry professionals of recent study results at a hosted dinner before results are released to the public. As part of this effort, Children Now provides the different media groups with a summary of how their group fared in terms of media representation, and it does not compare them with other groups

### S.T.A.R.S. PROJECT

[www.saclung.org](http://www.saclung.org) (click Tobacco)

Initiated in 1998

Locations: Sacramento, CA and Los Angeles, CA

### History and Goals:

The S.T.A.R.S. (Seeking Tobacco Alternatives with Realistic Solutions) Project was initiated in 1998 out of the American Lung Association, Sacramento-Emigrant Trails. The group works with the entertainment industry to reduce the unintentional glamorization of smoking in film and television, provides media education to the general community regarding pro-tobacco messages and conducts research regarding the impact of the tobacco industry on the entertainment community and acts to reduce this impact.

### Strategies and Activities:

S.T.A.R.S. activities include:

- production and premiere of the award-winning documentary, *Scene Smoking: Cigarettes, Cinema and the Myth of Cool* (2001), which features writers, directors and actors speaking about social responsibility as it pertains to tobacco depiction in film
- “speakers bureaus” comprised of panelists from the entertainment and public health communities (participants have included producer Bonnie Bruckheimer, tobacco industry whistleblower Jeffrey Wigand, actor Grant Show and numerous others), which screen the documentary and host forums at film schools and festivals to provide an opportunity for discussion about the film
- the convening of a Blue Ribbon Advisory Committee, a “high level Hollywood task force that collaborates with health care advocates” to discuss “the future of tobacco depiction in entertainment productions”<sup>7</sup>
- placement of various ads regarding tobacco depiction in film in *Daily Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter*, which show actors and directors considering the necessity of smoking in a production.

For example, in one ad, a director-type is pictured saying “Can we lose the cigarette? In another, an actor is lighting a cigarette and asking “What’s my motivation to smoke?”

The approach adopted by S.T.A.R.S. with respect to the entertainment industry has been affable and cooperative. S.T.A.R.S. partners have worked closely with high-level

Hollywood decision-makers to understand the workings of the industry in order to best communicate with industry members and to affect change.

**Evaluation:**

Somewhat unique to this project, S.T.A.R.S. has worked with a formal evaluation group from the UCLA School of Public Health to document the effectiveness of their program. UCLA has conducted impact evaluations of *Scene Smoking* at both the premiere and the AFI Speakers Bureau and determined that the sixty-minute documentary changed viewers' attitudes regarding responsibility of actors, directors and producers in depicting smoking in film.

In the past three years, the project has met successfully its goals of establishing long-lasting relationships with members of the entertainment industry, of achieving positive and extensive visibility and encouraging entertainment professionals to reflect on the need and potential impact of making the choice to depict smoking in film.

**THE MEDIA PROJECT**

[www.themediaproject.com](http://www.themediaproject.com)

Initiated in 1980 (previously called The Center for Population Options)

Location: North Hollywood, CA

**History and goals:**

The result of a collaborative effort between Advocates for Youth and the Kaiser Family Foundation, The Media Project provides current, socially relevant and accurate information about sexual health (family planning, sexuality and reproductive health) to entertainment industry professionals.

**Strategies and Activities:**

The Media Project activities include:

- one-on-one personal briefings
- group briefings
- a phone Help Line
- bimonthly informational mass mailings

- SHINE Awards (Sexual Health in Entertainment)
- numerous personal meetings with writers and executives secured through staff persistence and the industry contacts of the group's director, Robin Smalley (who worked in entertainment production for twenty years prior to her current position at The Media Project). Once meetings are set, The Media Project attempts to empower their hosts and convince them of their influence to affect what's shown in programming and what children eventually see on television. The Project works with approximately twenty television shows on an ongoing basis and regularly records their programs to evaluate the success of their meetings. In order to acknowledge shows for incorporating the appropriate information into their story lines, The Media Project sends praising letters calling attention to their positive actions.

**Evaluation:**

While The Media Project has conducted quantitative online viewer polls that have illustrated a change in knowledge and behavior—because it is difficult to identify a causal relationship between what children see on television and their attitudes and behavior—most of their evaluation is anecdotal. Examples of evaluation include:

- maintaining a record of shows that have applied information received through meetings, briefings and mailings
- compiling an ongoing list of organizations which with they have maintained an enduring relationship
- conducting focus groups and informal interviews with teens to collect feedback on the work the Project creates (such as videos on teen issues)

**ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES COUNCIL**

<http://eiconline.org>

Initiated in 1983

Location: Burbank, CA

**History and Goals:**

The Entertainment Industries Council (EIC) encourages promotion and accurate depiction of issues such as drug, alcohol and tobacco use; gun violence, firearm safety and injury prevention; and mental health and HIV/AIDS prevention by leveraging its intimate and evolving familiarity with the entertainment industry.

### Strategies and Activities:

The group focuses its attention on four areas:

- “First Draft”—a technical resource service that provides information on request
- “Spotlight on Depiction”—writers’ resources, debriefings (both information-based, smaller briefings and dialogue-based, larger forums with industry members) and news briefs
- “Generation Next”—educational resources for film school students, which includes film school seminars, access to First Draft and other written resources and a fellowship writing program that matches students with experts and creative mentors
- PRISM—annual awards that recognize accurate and current depictions of drug, tobacco and alcohol use in film and television

EIC coined the phrase “depiction suggestions” and has developed two full volumes of depiction books; one volume covers drug, alcohol and tobacco use, and the other focuses on gun violence and safety. In addition, the group creates numerous individual topic fact sheets with suggestions about how to include these issues into storylines.

### Evaluation:

To evaluate program success, EIC recently conducted a study through Roper Starch to assess industry satisfaction with their various services. Questions were written to gauge whether industry professionals enjoyed the programs and found them informative and interesting as well as whether the topics addressed were current and appropriate.

EIC also measures success by:

- looking at the number of programs submitted as entries to the PRISM awards
- the quality of these submissions
- both the increase in submissions and quality over time

POPULATION COMMUNICATIONS INTERNATIONAL

[www.population.org/programs.htm](http://www.population.org/programs.htm) (Click U.S.)

Initiated in 1985

Locations: New York, NY and Studio City, CA

History and Goals:

Population Communications International (PCI) has been working both internationally and domestically, via the medium of soap operas, to affect change on such pro-social issues as family planning, health, and women's empowerment. On the international front, PCI joins and informs production teams regarding these issues in order to develop serial dramas. In the United States, the group works to educate already existing teams about current pro-social and health-related issues. PCI has chosen to concentrate its efforts on soap operas since the longevity of these programs provides an opportunity for viewers to identify with characters, thus allowing for greater likelihood of adapting the modeled behavior (Albert Bandura's Social Learning theories). And, as new characters join the show, there is occasion for a natural and unforced introduction of new issues.

Strategies and Activities:

PCI Los Angeles convenes invitation-only "Soap Summits" (two-day panel events in which the soap opera industry and health professionals meet) that enable them to work with head writers, executive producers and network executives behind soap operas to "encourage them to make stronger connections between the content of their story lines and issues Americans face in their daily lives, particularly in the areas of personal and public health."<sup>8</sup> Summit discussion panels join together experts in the field of interest (topics have included teen pregnancy, reproductive health, violence against women, world population, body image and suicide, among others) to raise awareness about various health issues, stimulate dialogue and interpersonal communication, and to encourage more accurate depictions of these issues.

Evaluation:

The Los Angeles group looks to a number of factors to determine program success:

- attendance by entertainment industry executives and writers at Soap Summit events
- presence of storylines in their programming
- attitudes of writers and producers in terms of their self-efficacy (do they know they have the power to change television content?)
- removal of material that could have been problematic
- anecdotal “validation stories”

The organization gathers stories from attendees regarding the impact of attending PCI’s conferences, and these stories frequently demonstrate PCI’s “seed planting” approach, as Sonny Fox, Senior Vice President of U.S. Programs describes it. PCI’s approach is to introduce facts and ideas regarding issues to decision-makers, but there is often a delay between the introduction of these ideas and the screening of storylines. In addition to these evaluation activities, an evaluative research study was conducted in 1996 to measure the effect of the conference. Overall, PCI attributes a great deal of its success to the positive, long-term relationship it develops with key players in the industry and the recognition by invitees that PCI consistently presents expert speakers at its events.

ENVIRONMENTAL MEDIA ASSOCIATION

[www.ema-online.org](http://www.ema-online.org)

Initiated in 1989

Location: Los Angeles, CA

History and Goals:

Founded by two prominent entertainment industry couples – Lyn and Norman Lear and Cindy and Alan Horn – the Environmental Media Association was developed to follow in the footsteps of Norman Lear’s 1970s efforts to accurately portray issues in entertainment television. EMA aims to “mobilize the entertainment community in a global effort to educate people about environmental problems and inspire them to act on those problems now.”<sup>9</sup>

**Strategies and Activities:**

EMA's primary activity is to convene meetings with executive producers and television network heads to provide them with story beats, plot lines and character arcs for their shows that incorporate environmentally friendly concepts. Extensive research is conducted prior to the meetings to ensure familiarity with the characters and to suggest only those ideas that are appropriate to the well-established characters. EMA carries out a wide range of activities to fulfill its mission including:

- industry-wide briefings on current environmental issues
- individual meetings with writers, producers, directors, performing artists and others,
- public service announcements featuring high-profile celebrities (R.E.M., the actresses Amy Smart, Cameron Diaz and Gwyneth Paltrow)
- mail briefings to inform production offices where they can purchase environmentally friendly office supplies
- A special "Environmental Protection Week" episode *Hollywood Squares* during sweeps
- an environmental research library for industry writers, directors and producers
- an awards program to "honor film and television productions that increase public awareness—check word on Web site of environmental problems and inspire personal action on these problems"<sup>9</sup>
- work with makeup and costume designers encouraging them to use more eco-friendly products
- a clipping service to clip environmental stories in the news media to send to writers and producers
- a comprehensive library of environmental books
- referrals to environmental experts
- environmental research and fact-checking

**Evaluation:**

Unlike a number of the other groups, EMA tries to address many different demographics with different approaches. The organization evaluates these efforts in terms of raising awareness of the various issues among members of the entertainment industry and by inserting them into programs (television, film, music videos, etc.).

Success is measured by:

- number of entries received from the various entertainment programs for the EMA awards
- diversity of the entries
- A number of high-profile shows, films and individuals have been recognized by EMA awards. Individuals honored in the past few years include Olivia Newton-John, Jayni and Chevy Chase and Keely Shaye Smith and Pierce Brosnan. Shows and films receiving EMA awards have included *The Distinguished Gentleman*, *Erin Brockovich*, *Dr. Doolittle 2*, *The Practice*, *Boston Public* and *King of the Hill*.
- quality of the entries in terms of the accuracy of information provided and the entertainment value of the various television programs and films

#### LAST ACTS Writers Project

[www.lastacts.org](http://www.lastacts.org)

Initiated in 1999

Location: Los Angeles, CA

#### History and Goals:

A coalition-based project funded by the prestigious Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Last Acts strives to assist the entertainment community in producing factually appropriate and compelling stories that address death and dying in America. Coalition partners, such as health care professionals, consumer groups, religious organizations, educators, disseminate Last Acts materials to their constituents in order to raise awareness of issues around death and dying.

#### Strategies and Activities:

Last Acts has adopted a proactive approach that includes keeping close watch on upcoming programming and advocating for accuracy in the programs' depictions of death.

The group provides:

- consulting services offering research facts and referral to medical, psychological, legal, financial and other experts in end-of-life care to writers, producers and directors
- a great deal of readily available information on its Web site

Its Web site includes:

- end-of-life vignettes to suggest story ideas
- a review of industry professionals who are addressing issues concerning death in film and television and a description of their approach
  - a list of awards given out to groups touting their efforts
  - links to other sites that contain facts and relevant materials
  - a simple contact page which can be used to request additional information

### Evaluation:

Last Acts identifies success through a number of measures:

- reports on the number of briefings held, paying particular attention to those groups that request second meetings (suggestive of ongoing relationships)
- review of the visibility and size of the Last Acts partnership (including third-party endorsements/recommendations)
- communication with key writers and key producers
- anecdotal reports to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation regarding meeting successes.

### HOPKINS-KAISER TV DRAMA NEWS PEG MODEL

<http://er.jhsph.edu>

Initiated in 1996

Locations: Baltimore, MD and Menlo Park, CA

### History and Goals:

The result of collaboration between the writers of the popular primetime show *ER*, the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, "Following *ER*" was a series of 90-second health news segments broadcast on the local TV broadcast affiliates' news programs immediately after the weekly nationwide broadcast episode of *ER*. The goal of the series was to "link scientific information and community resources as a means of educating and motivating viewers to take action on a series of important personal and public health topics." At its peak, the news segments had an estimated viewership of five million people nationwide. This project is the "first time in television's history that a top-rated entertainment series has been linked to a comprehensive and continuous multimedia educational effort."<sup>10</sup>

### Strategies and Activities:

"Following *ER*" segments have addressed violence prevention, organ donation, doctor-patient communication, childhood cancer, glaucoma, eating disorders, nursing home care, among many others. The theory that supports the series is the TV Drama News Peg Model, which suggests that the dramatic plot of *ER* is a "peg" on which accurate, critical health information can be disseminated to the public. Using the power, visibility and preference for the show allows the project partners to capture and hold the attention of viewers in order to provide them with information they require to live healthy lifestyles. The format of "Following *ER*" was carefully designed to optimize the appeal of the segment as well as the relationship with *ER*, including:

- a beginning segment that includes a theme song similar to that of *ER*
- a local television reporter who presents the story in "newspeak," or dialogue delivered in a journalistic format
- an on-camera expert who presents the health facts (providing expert credibility to the story)
- the presentation of additional resources (phone numbers and Web sites of leading national organizations as well as Hopkins experts)
- the on-screen display of the project's phone number and Web site

### Evaluation:

A thorough academic study was conducted by Deborah Roter and colleagues at the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health to assess whether there was a change in "viewer attention, satisfaction, information recall and willingness to make health-enhancing lifestyle changes" as a result of watching "Following *ER*." Investigators found:

- the "*ER* tie-in enhanced the attention and satisfaction of viewers"
- the "primetime link added value by elevating the importance and relevance of the commonplace topic"<sup>11</sup>

In addition, the Kaiser Family Foundation hired an independent media research firm to:

- survey weekly viewership in the top seventy-five US television markets
- count Web hits to [www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org)
- tally calls to a toll-free number used to offer a special public health booklet

Also, due to the success of “Following ER,” a new program called “Living with Hope” was developed on CBS to follow the also popular program *Chicago Hope*. The two shows combined attract a viewership of over eighty million people nationwide.

HOLLYWOOD, HEALTH & SOCIETY  
<http://www.entertainment.usc.edu/hhs>  
Initiated in 2001  
Location: Beverly Hills, CA

### History and Goals:

What originally began as a pilot activity of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Office of Communication in 1998 turned into a collaborative agreement between the CDC and the University of Southern California Annenberg School for Communication Norman Lear Center in 2001. Titled Hollywood, Health & Society (HH&S), the CDC-funded program at USC serves as a resource to television writers and producers on a wide range of public health issues with the goal of encouraging accurate and timely health messages in entertainment programming.

### Strategies and Activities:

HH&S works with television writers and network executives to:

- host panel discussions at the Writers Guild of America, west
- focusing on timely health topics
- conduct outreach to network executives, show runners and writers to inform them of HH&S activities
- hold briefings with television writers by identifying experts to address health issues that are most relevant to each show’s unique audience demographic
- respond to inquiries from television writers for health-related information by connecting writers with experts from CDC as well as local physicians and university faculty
- conceive and maintain “Tips for TV Writers and Producers,” informational tip sheets on over 100 specific public health issues, on the CDC Web site
- develop a research agenda for entertainment-education and multicultural audiences

- produce an annual award show, Sentinel for Health Award, that recognizes exemplary health-related storylines in daytime drama

**Evaluation:**

The Hollywood, Health & Society program measures its success through several evaluation activities. The program engages in the following:

- summarizes responses from feedback forms that are distributed to panel attendees (includes questions about knowledge, attitudes and intended behavior)
- tracks inquiries from television writers
- tracks health content in television shows
- conducts qualitative phone interviews with awards show attendees
- documents attendance at panel discussions, awards shows and other activities

**AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS—MEDIA RESOURCE TEAM**

[www.aap.org/mrt/about.htm](http://www.aap.org/mrt/about.htm)

Initiated in 1994

Locations: Washington, DC and Los Angeles, CA

**History and Goals:**

The Media Resource Team is a group of physicians from Los Angeles and across the county that provides accurate information to the entertainment industry on health issues for children from birth to age 21 and encourages more accurate depiction of these issues. Initiated in response to letters and emails from concerned parents and physicians regarding entertainment programming content, the Media Resource Team works both proactively, by promoting health issues to the entertainment industry, and reactively, by presenting itself as a reliable resource on a wide variety of issues.

**Strategies and Activities:**

While the team depends most heavily on one-on-one meetings with industry decision-makers, it uses a number of other methods to disseminate information, including:

- sending mass mailings to industry members and placing ads to raise awareness of children's issues within the entertainment industry
- hosting an extensive Web site with a number of interactive pages:

- “Writer Bytes,” which presents various issues pertaining children accompanied by stories that illustrate real-life applications of individual issues
- “Just the Facts,” which provides factual information on a wide body of issues
- a Contact page that allows AAP members to address questions, comments, concerns to the writers and producers of shows
- a Kudos page that provides AAP members opportunities to express their praise regarding specific shows and their accurate depiction of children’s issues
- a Feedback page that allows visitors to provide suggestions for improving both the site and services provided by the group

**Evaluation:**

Though the program has been in existence since 1994, the Team focused on developing the program for the first six years and has just recently started actively branding itself within the entertainment community. Due to very limited funding for its work, evaluation is especially limited, however, the group does identify through its Web site the number of times its interaction with a show has resulted in a more appropriate depiction.

**GAY AND LESBIAN ALLIANCE AGAINST DEFAMATION (GLAAD)**

[www.glaad.org](http://www.glaad.org)

Initiated in 1985

Locations: New York, NY, and Los Angeles, CA (as well as other chapters throughout the U.S.)

**History and Goals:**

The Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation describes its relationship with the entertainment industry as wearing two hats. When GLAAD was first formed, its primary goal was to act as a watchdog organization—to alert and mobilize the viewing community to speak out against inaccurate depictions and to approach creators of inappropriate portrayals to encourage them to correct their work. During the past several years, however, GLAAD has focused on presenting itself as a resource to members of the creative entertainment industry.

**Strategies and Activities:**

GLAAD's Entertainment Media Director convenes one-on-one meetings and lunches with people in film and television. The current Media Director has an extensive background in the entertainment industry and a large personal network of connections. He attends various industry meetings to introduce GLAAD to the industry, and he emphasizes the fact that GLAAD works cooperatively with the industry to pre-read scripts for studios, to be present on set during certain sensitive scenes and to provide notes on scenes that have already been shot. GLAAD's suggestions to industry members are based on the key words "fair, accurate and inclusive."

GLAAD also hosts an annual awards program with ceremonies in New York, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C. and San Francisco to "honor individuals and projects in the media and entertainment industries for balanced and accurate representations of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community."<sup>12</sup> Recent winners have included Elton John, Margaret Cho, Anne Heche, the comic strip "Doonesbury," the film *Boys Don't Cry*, and the television show *Will & Grace*.

**Evaluation:**

GLAAD relies on anecdotal evidence (news stories, word of mouth, etc.) to report on the success of their activities. No formal evaluation is conducted.

**MEDIASCOPE**  
[www.mediascope.org](http://www.mediascope.org)  
Initiated in 1992  
Location: Los Angeles, CA

**History and Goals:**

MediaScope was founded to "provide tools and information to assist the creative community to be more socially responsible without relinquishing creative freedoms." Known as a "resource for scientifically-based insights and perspectives on media issues,"<sup>13</sup>

MediaScope addresses such issues as: media ratings, teen sexuality, children's television, diversity, media violence, effects of video games, artists' rights and responsibilities and substance use.

**Strategies and Activities:**

To provide current, scientifically relevant information to the entertainment industry and future journalists, the group works in entertainment, academia, public health and public policy arenas to:

- conduct extensive research on social issues and contribute publications to the existing body of literature
- facilitate regular roundtable discussions on these social issues in New York and Los Angeles for journalists and other members of the media
- provide access to top experts in the field, upon request, to entertainment industry members
- write issue briefs for the entertainment industry that "review topical subjects concerning the entertainment industry," covering issues such as "Tobacco Placement in the Movies;" "Violence, Women and the Media" and "Video Game Violence"
- develop press packets and provide informational materials to various groups (including television networks)
- maintain [www.drugstory.org](http://www.drugstory.org) an online informational resource for writers and feature journalists developed as part of the National Youth Media Campaign by the Office for National Drug Control Policy. The site is the product of collaborations with NIDA, DEA and other federal agencies and non-profit organizations. Created in response to requests from entertainment professionals for a twenty-four hour resource for drug-related information, [www.drugstory.org](http://www.drugstory.org) offers a wide variety of data/statistics and links to scores of informational resources. MediaScope placed great importance on formative evaluation during the Web site development process. A pool of experts in both the medical and entertainment fields carefully reviewed materials, materials were revised appropriately and Web site content was rewritten. Information categories on the site include:
  - "Web links to federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and other information" annotated with a description of what will be found on linked sites
  - "publications, with an emphasis on brief fact sheets and other user-friendly lay publications"
  - "contact information and links to experts"

In addition to these categories, individual drug updates include “drug information, drug effects, drug stats, prevention & treatment, drugs & crime, international and features.”<sup>13</sup> The site also allows writers to email specific questions to experts or to contact a representative who can assist them in locating the most appropriate expert for their needs.

### Evaluation:

MediaScope gauges its success through the following means:

- collection of evaluation forms from roundtable attendees
- monitoring event attendance (number of attendees)
- holding conversations with roundtable attendees and other MediaScope information-consumers to gather feedback
- internal critique by team members (including other agencies and non-profit organizations) to determine whether their end product was the best it could have been and how the project could have been improved
- discussions with experts listed on [www.drugstory.org](http://www.drugstory.org) site to determine number of questions they have answered as a result of being listed on the site as well as the type of questions they were asked
- Web site traffic reports
- reviews of suggestions and input from Web site visitors through the feedback page

### ROCK THE VOTE

Initiated in 1990

[www.rockthevote.org](http://www.rockthevote.org)

Location: Los Angeles, CA

### History and Goals:

Rock the Vote, a non-profit campaign-oriented organization founded by members of the recording industry “in response to a wave of attacks on freedom of speech and artistic expression,”<sup>14</sup> is perhaps best known for its expansion into the empowerment of young Americans and its campaign to encourage youth to vote.

### Strategies and Activities:

A wide range of activities have been conducted during the past decade. Examples include:

- PSAs by popular recording artists (such as Queen Latifah, R.E.M. and Aerosmith) on MTV, VH-1, BET and Fox
- production of a one-hour television event hosted by Queen Latifah and featuring numerous film celebrities
- conducting Teen Summits where voting is discussed
- creation of the Patrick Lippert Awards to “honor those making a significant contribution to the future through extraordinary achievements in empowering young people”<sup>14</sup>
- development of pamphlets, brochures and print PSAs to empower youth
- design of an online voter registration site (with MCI) with pop-up ads, links, Web casts and email reminders to vote
- bus tours to educate and register new voters around the country

**Evaluation:**

The primary measure of success was that of youth voter registration at national Rock the Vote events and on the Internet.

**THE HENRY J. KAISER FAMILY FOUNDATION, Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health**

[www.kff.org](http://www.kff.org) (Click on Entertainment Media Studies)

Initiated in 1996

Location: Menlo Park, CA

**History and Goals:**

Kaiser’s Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health was established to “work with entertainment media writers, producers and executives to help them convey important health messages to the public.” The three main issues addressed by the program are reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and health policy. “Of special interest are television depictions of sexual activity and sexual health issues, family planning, teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, managed care, the uninsured, Medicare and Medicaid.”<sup>15</sup>

**Strategies and Activities:**

The program “emphasizes building constructive relationships with the many people in the entertainment industry who want to play a positive role, and who

understand that it is possible to entertain, educate and succeed in the entertainment industry at the same time.”<sup>15</sup> These ongoing relationships (and constant cultivation of new relationships) with broadcast networks and cable channels like MTV and BET are crucial to the program’s success.

Kaiser’s partnerships thrive as the result of a number of program activities:

- “providing information to those in the entertainment media who are incorporating public health issues into their programs”
- “offering both groups and one-on-one briefings to media writers and producers on health issues as a way of encouraging more storylines on these issues”
- “conducting surveys of the public”
- “working with top media researchers to measure the content and the impact of media depictions”
- “helping to produce and evaluate public service announcements”
- “engaging in partnerships with media producers to create special products and to provide toll-free telephone numbers and fulfillment pieces for special media campaigns”<sup>15</sup>

**Evaluation:**

The Program for the Study of Entertainment Media and Health conducts the following quantitative and qualitative evaluations:

- random-sample surveys of viewers who called toll-free telephone numbers (these are broadcast on Kaiser health specials on MTV, BET, etc.) for additional information
- “call-out” surveys to MTV and BET viewers, in which viewers respond to interviewers’ questions about their knowledge and attitudes via telephone
- audience research: dial-testing of produced shows
- written questionnaires completed by viewers about their understanding of health issues before and after viewing Kaiser co-produced specials
- focus groups conducted with viewers of the various programs to gather qualitative feedback about health information

In addition to extensive evaluation, characteristics that contribute to the program’s success include:

- Kaiser’s close monitoring of broadcast and cable networks to identify its audience

- the highly collaborative fashion by which content is developed
- the many years spent developing for itself a credible, authoritative and helpful brand for which it is identified in the entertainment industry and around the world.

LIFETIME TELEVISION—STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

[www.lifetimetv.com/our\\_commitment/violence/index.html](http://www.lifetimetv.com/our_commitment/violence/index.html)

Initiated in 2001

Location: New York, NY

History and Goals:

In cooperation with a number of advocacy organizations that address the issue of domestic violence, Lifetime Television created “Our Lifetime Commitment,” (previously known as “Stop Violence Against Women”) a campaign that raises awareness of the issue of violence against women through entertainment programming.

Strategies and Activities:

In February and March of 2003, Lifetime aired special episodes of three of its regular programs that confront violence against women. To be aired as part of the campaign, Lifetime has also produced:

- a documentary hosted by Brooke Shields, *Fear No More: Stop Violence Against Women*
- several *Intimate Portraits* of women who have taken a stand against violence
- the premiere of the feature *We Were the Mulvaney's*, based on a story of a woman’s rape

Web-based resources include:

- an online petition that can be signed by Web site visitors
- poll results with scientific research on the frequency and impact of domestic violence (including misperceptions and legal ramifications of violence against women)
- links to partners’ sites
- the option to send a letter to Congress on the issue
- true stories of women who overcame violence
- suggestions for women about how to take action against a violent relationship and how to seek protection after an attack

#### ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY GUILDS

The Writer's Guild of America: [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org)

The Screen Actors' Guild: [www.sag.org](http://www.sag.org)

American Federation of Television and Radio Artists: [www.aftra.org](http://www.aftra.org)

Actors' Equity Association: [www.actorsequity.org](http://www.actorsequity.org)

Locations: New York, NY and Los Angeles, CA

#### History and Goals:

The various entertainment industry guilds were developed to represent those working in the various areas of the entertainment industry. Several of the entertainment industry guilds have used their clout to encourage accurate representation of pro-social issues.

#### Strategies and Activities:

The Writer's Guild of America (WGA) Web site provides:

- a catalog of experts in various fields (such as government, religion, medical authorities, among others)
- a lengthy list of resource links for writers

The Screen Actors Guild (SAG):

- commissioned a study on diversity (and followed up by recent update)
- launched a campaign promoting diversity in casting characterized by an ad series
- maintains a Web site that includes:
  - contact information of network and studio executives to encourage members to speak out on issues
  - a short list of links to organizations that address issues of diversity
  - a report on its study of guild employment statistics on representation of women, people of color and seniors
  - a question/answer-formatted piece on working with people with disabilities (which was funded by SAG, American Federation of Television and Radio Artists and Actors' Equity Association)

#### Evaluation:

There is no formal evaluation for these programs.

THE MORE YOU KNOW

[www.nbc.com/nbc/footer/tmyk](http://www.nbc.com/nbc/footer/tmyk)

Initiated in 1989

Location: New York, NY and Burbank, CA

History and Goals:

This public service campaign provides an example of efforts initiated from within the entertainment industry. NBC's "The More You Know," operated by the broadcast network, is a public service campaign designed to educate and raise awareness about important societal issues, including child abuse, domestic violence, violence prevention and drinking and driving.

Strategies and Activities

Activities include PSAs and resource information including:

- 800 numbers for additional health information
- printed materials with educational information
- a comprehensive Web site with links to organizations that can provide additional assistance and educational supplements and local community outreach programming

Evaluation:

The reach of the campaign is significant—millions of viewers watch NBC primetime, daytime, late night or Saturday teen programming and the use of over 250 celebrities suggests diversity and potential appeal to a greater number of viewers. The program has received numerous awards, including both Peabody and Emmy Awards. In addition to viewership, campaign success is evaluated using a number of methods including:

- monitoring calls to toll-free hotline numbers
- an advisory board that oversees and evaluates the choice and quality of topics and the development of messages
- the use of individuals in the educational system to consult on message content and expression

#### OTHER WAYS MESSAGES GET INTO ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMING

There are a number of additional means by which accurate portrayals of social issues are incorporated into television episodes and films.

- *The Agency*, a CBS program about the CIA, pays a consultant who was previously employed by the CIA, to review storylines and scripts and make suggestions about how to make stories more realistic
- The former executive producer of the show *ER*, Dr. Neal Baer, continues to practice medicine in addition to his Hollywood career
- Writers and writers' assistants from many of the shows utilize online resources to research and expand upon ideas that are discussed in the writers' room

Though the manner by which these accurate portrayals end up on-screen is not systematic, the fact that the entertainment community is aware of the importance of presenting truthful information, that its representatives recognize the need to present information that is supported by facts, is a significant statement about the need for resources that make this information readily available to members of the entertainment industry.

#### **Analysis: A Review of Effective Techniques for Working with the Entertainment Industry**

Each of the projects has experienced "success" in its own right. There are clear commonalities in terms of how they have achieved success in realizing their organizational goals. What follows are ten of the most important lessons that came out of the project review.

##### **1. Understanding the infrastructure of the entertainment community is essential to developing relationships within the community.**

Reaching out to Hollywood is like any other communication campaign — one needs to be intimately familiar with the audience in order to communicate most effectively with its members. Program planners should understand how the industry works — the entertainment industry is a business that values artistic and creative freedom but must turn a consistent profit. As is the case with any community, those attempting to work within

the Hollywood community must understand what motivates community members, what constitutes the hierarchy of membership in the community, who the real decision-makers are and how these decision makers respond to “outsiders,” among other things. Robert Pekurny succinctly summarizes the approach necessary for developing productive relationships with members of the entertainment community.

Rather than rejecting outright what writers and producers create, such groups must learn of the processes, values, pressure and reward structures involved in the creation of programming. Advocates must demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the challenges creators face to show that they warrant admission to the marketplace of ideas in the production process.<sup>16</sup>

Pekurny also suggests that in order to effectively capture the attention of writers and producers advocacy groups need to “appeal to...[their] senses of taste and responsibility.” After all, despite the ownership advocacy groups often assume with the issues they promote, writers and producers ultimately decide what content makes it into the script and what does not. EIC states simply on its Web site: “The entertainment industry sets and implements its own agenda. Acknowledgement of this fact will put any organization ahead of the game” ([www.eifoundation.org](http://www.eifoundation.org)).

The directors of The Media Project and Environmental Media Association are both very much aware of the need to understand the Hollywood community in order to accomplish their goals. Both directors are veterans of the industry and possess not only a deep-rooted understanding of the infrastructure but also a wealth of connections with industry decision-makers. These connections have assisted them considerably in their attempts to affect portrayals in entertainment programming. Also related to this, both directors emphasized the power of developing and sustaining ongoing relationships. Ongoing relationships drive the entertainment industry.

2. In working with Hollywood, cooperative approaches are far more effective than hostile ones.

While watchdog activities are at times successful in the political world, they are not effective in dealings with the entertainment community. The entertainment industry is a unique institution and those who have successfully penetrated the system often attribute their success to an awards-oriented approach. As a result of many years of working with the industry, the Entertainment Industry Council lists as one of its Basic Organizational Operating Principles: "recognize that members of the entertainment industry make positive contributions addressing health and social issues."<sup>17</sup> Thus, awards and recognition are important strategies in this arena.

3. Research by well-known and well-respected institutions is highly regarded by industry members and is a powerful method for capturing their attention.

Organizations that have used this truism to their advantage have seen impressive results in establishing collaborative relationships within the industry. Having branded itself as an organization that conducts quality research in a number of health-related areas, the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation has established for itself a natural segue for working with the production community. Larger networks recognize the visibility and credibility that Kaiser provides and are very much willing to form partnerships with such a reputable institution.

4. Informing the industry of recent studies before public release opens doors to communicating with the industry.

When Children Now's Children and the Media program completes a study of the industry, its first step toward publicity is to host a dinner for industry members to internally announce the results of its study prior to public release. This action immediately establishes the trustworthiness of Children Now and also demonstrates to industry leaders that Children and the Media respects them and the institution as a whole and wants to work collaboratively with them to accomplish common goals.

5. Keeping a finger on the pulse of the industry is invaluable in informing media advocacy work.

New entertainment programming is developed every day. New ideas are dreamt, new scripts are optioned and new films go into production regularly. In order to stay current, media advocates must be tuned in to the comings (and goings) of innovative shows, fresh stars and up-and-coming executives. Last Acts is vigilant in its ongoing examination of the industry as a strategy to identify those news shows that address issues of death and dying. Reading the trade publications such as *Variety* and *The Hollywood Reporter* and staying in touch with industry decision-makers, are just two examples of how the group keeps current on the ever-evolving entertainment industry.

6. Individual one-on-one meetings are ultimately the most convincing of settings.

One method used by several of the organizations is an approach in which an organization's director contacts the industry decision-maker and arranges a one-on-one meeting. The director prepares extensively for the discussion, often making him- or herself exceedingly familiar with the show's characters, and therefore, is able to approach the meeting with considerable expertise. This expertise is easily recognizable and can capture the attention of any decision-maker. Also, it is widely recognized in behavior change theory that one-on-one meetings are capable of affecting significant change in knowledge and attitudes. In such interactions, the advocate can pay close attention to the individual's style and needs and the educational message can be quickly tailored to suit the lone decision-maker present.

7. A win-win approach is often the most effectual method of persuasion.

The attitude with which advocacy members approach industry decision-makers is critical to the success of their activities. In order to develop collaborative, lasting relationships, a win-win approach has proven most victorious. In a win-win approach,

advocacy group members present industry members with a straightforward statement explaining there are “no strings attached” should they agree to use materials provided by the advocacy group and that they indeed have no obligation whatsoever to the group. Being forthright about the terms of their relationship often puts industry members at ease and allows them to listen more attentively to the types of information the group can provide them. The ultimate goal of many of these groups is to encourage accurate depictions in entertainment programming and it is in their best interest to make it clear to the industry member that the group is available to them and happy to assist them in any manner. It is also very important for the groups to bear in mind they are providing the industry with a service, recognizing their goals with the help of industry members should be considerably less vocalized.

8. Industry members like to be offered options...but not too many.

As part of the Hollywood Immunization campaign, staff members compiled a database of 108 abstracted story lines regarding immunization and then presented these materials to industry members. In their follow-up with the industry members, staff quickly learned that the sheer number of stories was entirely overwhelming and this likely deterred the industry gatekeepers from considering the information they received. On the other hand, included in their presentation to the industry members, staff provided a catalogue of posters that could be obtained and used for production design on sets. Whereas many writing staffs were not interested in using story lines provided, several did agree to hang posters. A good example of respecting and working with, rather than against, creative freedoms of industry members, the presentation of both story lines and posters increased the probability of getting messages into the entertainment programming.

9. Online materials are the most readily available means of dissemination.

Writers in the entertainment industry work within the constraints of extremely tight deadlines and often work into very late hours of the evening. Advocacy group staff

members typically work from 9-5 and are not always available to answer questions that arise in the middle of the night around the writing table. Writers rely heavily on writers' assistants to research topics and often writers' assistants turn to the Internet for answers. Online materials are invaluable to these people. While a Web site does not have the persuasive ability of an established advocacy director, it can provide an accurate response to an important question that might otherwise go unanswered, or answered incorrectly.

10. Persistence, persistence, persistence.

Perhaps the most frequent comment made by interviewees in this project is that persistence is key when working with the entertainment community. Change in any field takes a great deal of time and the entertainment industry is certainly no exception. Industry members are often extremely busy and the work of advocacy groups is not their first priority. Perseverance in setting meetings, in encouraging industry members to attend briefings and in establishing and maintaining lasting relationships with industry members is critical to creating a successful communication campaign.

**Lessons Learned from Communication Campaigns**

The science of developing health communication campaigns is constantly evolving. Many authors suggest lessons learned from previous health communication campaigns that can dramatically benefit new programs. Those lessons that are most commonly agreed upon and have the greatest potential impact on a campaign have been organized into the following comprehensive list.

Population Communication Services (PCS) at The Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health has been developing international health communication campaigns since the early 1980s<sup>18</sup>. In *Health Communication: Lessons from Family Planning and Reproductive Health* (1997), PCS leaders Piotrow, Kincaid, Rimon and Rinehart list nearly seventy lessons for designing effective campaigns—several of these

lessons are addressed below. Most important to campaign design, PCS presents a strong structural outline to developing advocacy campaigns, called “A” Frame for Advocacy<sup>19</sup> — this outline is used to organize the lessons from the multitude of writers who have written on communication campaigns.

### Analysis—Step 1:

Solid formative research is the foundation of any effective communication campaign. Formative research, also referred to as a needs assessment, allows those designing campaigns to identify their specific, intended audience; learn about their current knowledge, attitudes and behavior; understand the audience’s language (verbal language is just one very small component of language) and discern obstacles that might serve as barriers to change. DeJong and Winsten (1990) suggest “campaigns should address the existing knowledge and beliefs of the target audience that impede adoption of the desired behavior.”<sup>20</sup> Powerful message development demands that extensive formative research has been conducted.

Another critical step of formative research is review of the many theories that attempt to explain behavior change. Singhal and Rogers (1999) maintain it is “the theory-based nature of entertainment-education [that] increases the audience effects of this strategy.”<sup>21</sup> In order to affect change, one must understand how change is affected. Behavior change theories present clarification for how changes are brought about. It is in the analysis stage that campaign designers should begin considering a theory (or theories) they feel will support the change they intend to shape.

How the campaign will be evaluated should also be planned from the outset. Based on the behavior-change theory/theories agreed upon, objectives and sub-objectives can be identified. From these objectives, specific evaluation measures should be defined and can subsequently be addressed in process and impact evaluation instruments. Leaving the evaluation until the end is a sure sign it will be incomplete and will likely not inform designers of campaign successes and failures.

### Strategy—Step 2:

During the strategy stage, campaign staff develop what Wallack refers to as an “overall media strategy.”<sup>22</sup> It is in this stage that staff set reasonable and well-defined campaign goals and frame or position the goals they would like to accomplish. PCS defines positioning as:

the process by which a specific image or niche related to a health practice, service, or product is created in the minds of individuals and at the level of society/community as a whole. An image that is easily recalled and, therefore, has the capacity to influence an intended audience over time. This image must express a value—or important benefit, relevant to the culture and aspirations of the intended audience. More importantly, the selected value has to be strong enough to spark consensus and gain constituency very rapidly.<sup>23</sup>

In their discussion of framing, Wallack and Dorfman suggest it is the “media advocate’s goal is to frame the content of the story to reflect the social justice perspective.” Components of this process include “translat[ing] individual problem to social issue” and “shift[ing] primary responsibility away from the blaming of the individual.”<sup>24</sup>

Other lessons regarding strategy development include:

- The importance of developing “S.M.A.R.T.” objectives. S.M.A.R.T. stands for “Specific, Measurable, Appropriate, Realistic and Time bound.”<sup>18</sup> Each of these characteristics is invaluable in setting the program up for success.
- “Repetition of the educational content in an entertainment-educational message increases its educational effects.”<sup>21</sup>
- “The perceived credibility of a communication source or channel enhances the effectiveness of a communication campaign.”<sup>25</sup>
- “Use of celebrity spokespersons must be approached cautiously”<sup>20</sup>
- “A multichannel approach can have a synergistic effect.”<sup>21</sup>

### Step 3—Mobilization

The mobilization stage includes coalition building—emphasizing the importance of working with partners and encouraging them to take an active role in the partnership—and informed message development.

Singhal and Rogers (1999) stress the importance of developing a community infrastructure to support the communication campaign. Developing and running a campaign are only the first steps to a successful campaign; if there is no infrastructure to support viewers upon seeing messages, those messages will quickly fall by the wayside.

In order to develop powerful, effective campaign messages, there are many factors to consider. James Williams (1992) suggests the 7 C's of effective communication as a guideline for developing messages. The 7 C's are Command Attention—grab the audience through your message, Clarify the Message—present the message using simple and straightforward words and phrasing, Communicate a Benefit—tell/show the benefit that will result from the change, Consistency Counts—be consistent with messaging, Cater to the Heart and the Head—“an emotional appeal is often more persuasive than the rational facts,” Create Trust—establish source credibility from the outset, and Call for Action—tell the audience what you want them to do.<sup>26</sup>

Other lessons for high-quality Message Development include:

- Create “messages that build from the audience’s current knowledge and satisfy its preexisting needs and motives”<sup>20</sup>
- “Campaigns promoting prevention are less likely to be successful than those with immediate positive consequences.”<sup>25</sup>
- “Target audience’s attention should be drawn to immediate, high-probability consequences of behavior”<sup>25</sup>
- “Fear appeals should be approached with caution”<sup>20</sup>
- Humor is often a good way to capture and retain the audience’s attention
- Wallack and Dorfman suggest the development of story elements which includes: “Create compelling pictures and images,” “do the social math” (provide meaningful numbers rather than just big numbers for impact), and “identify authentic voices and compelling symbols”<sup>24</sup>
- “Encourage interpersonal communication”<sup>27</sup>; Rogers suggests four ways to do this: “show people talking about the topic, make the show emotional, use the epilogue, and leave unanswered questions, motivating people to find closure for themselves”<sup>28</sup>

### Step 4—Action

Once the campaign has been initiated, it must not be left to its own doing. The campaign should be monitored closely and necessary adjustments should be made in a timely fashion. There are several important lessons for the action stage as presented by PCS:

- Monitor campaign events—respond quickly to opposition and be flexible
- Stay on schedule
- Keep partners informed of events and changes
- Monitor successes and failures and keep detailed records
- Publicize positive changes.<sup>18</sup>

### Step 5—Evaluation

Evaluation is an exceptionally important component of any communication campaign. Intuitively, it is critical to “obtain knowledge of campaign effects.”<sup>27</sup> Tom Valente suggests eight reasons for evaluating communication campaigns:

1. to “help determine the degree [to which] the campaign reached its objectives
2. “the existence of an evaluation plan often prompts project planners to establish goals and objectives for a campaign
3. “campaign evaluation helps planners and researchers understand why a particular campaign worked
4. “data can be used to specify who was influenced by the campaign”
5. “evaluation provides an opportunity for social scientists to understand our world better”
6. “evaluations are often conducted simply because they are required by many granting agencies”
7. “evaluation provides information useful for planning the next set of activities”
8. “campaign evaluation can be interesting to do.”<sup>29</sup>

There are three main stages of evaluation: formative, process and impact. Formative evaluation is conducted during the Analysis stage of any campaign; process evaluation monitors the implementation of the campaign; and impact evaluation is conducted at the end of the campaign to determine the outcome of conducting the campaign. Valente (2000) reports that process evaluation provides “information about how a program is implemented;” “documentation for that implementation;” “program corrections mid-

implementation;" "information useful for determining impact" and "information needed for replication."<sup>29</sup> A Technical Assistance Bulletin from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1998) proposes outcome evaluation allows program planners to: "guide administrative decisions, refine the program, see concrete results, prove to funders the value of their investment, gain credibility, support replication and advance the field."<sup>30</sup>

#### Step 6—Planning for Continuity

Often overlooked due to limited funding, shortsightedness or sheer exhaustion of the campaign staff, planning for continuity is an integral step in designing campaigns. It is through this planning that audiences are given a chance to continue in their shift of knowledge, attitudes, and behavior—and it is often this extended exposure that solidifies these changes. A long-term commitment to the communication campaign should be planned from the beginning.

#### Application for Other Pro-Social Messages: A Final Note

This report has addressed the power entertainment media has to affect change in societal norms regarding health behaviors (as it most clearly did in the Harvard Alcohol Project) and other pro-social issues such as the accurate portrayal of gays and lesbians in media. Also, "entertainment media can play an important agenda-setting role, making the public aware of certain public health problems."<sup>27</sup> This potential evokes the possibility of setting agenda for other pro-social issues, such as the health of democracy in the United States, via changes in entertainment programming. However, Montgomery (1990) also observes that "public health issues that have become highly politicized are particularly problematic for entertainment television."<sup>27</sup> This suggests that in addition to the techniques presented above, campaign planners would need to tread carefully to avoid the politics that might arise in a conversation on democracy. One way to speak to this challenge is through the presentation of very subtle, yet clear messages that support democracy.

The 9/11 tragedy may open or close doors to democratic “U.S. proud” messages. Currently there are at least two films in production concerning the tragedy, which seems to suggest there is a “market” for such ideas in Hollywood. Extensive formative evaluation with the entertainment media community would provide an understanding of how such ideas might be best approached.

### End Notes

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## Appendix

Information regarding the various organizations was collected through Web site and literature searches as well as through phone interviews with individuals employed by the organization. Sites listed with the individual programs above were used as a jumping off point for Web-based research. Interviews often provided more detailed, up-to-date and accurate information regarding groups' activities than Web site materials. A literature search was conducted as well to gather insight from the published literature on more formally structured communication campaigns.

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