

# EVALUATING YOUR CAMPAIGN: Questions and Answers

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**Panel: Ann Dorwaldt, Communications Consultant**

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## **1. How do you tell if E-media is a good way to reach the target audience? (Parents)**

Anne D: I think you have to ask/survey a representative group of parents from your target audience. You could do brief intercept surveys (just a couple of questions) at events where your target parents might be (sports team events at your school, etc. I know that radio stations for example have data/demographics about their primary audience and reach, but I'm not e-media savvy enough to know if there are ways to get that info about E-media.

## **2. Considering limited time and resources, are there things you feel we should absolutely do or include to have a successful campaign?**

Anne D: Pretesting your messages in a draft form with intended audience is to me the most important piece to insure that your message(s) will reach and resonate with your audience. You can't just ask about appeal, it's important to ask what they see as main message of anything you produce as there may be an unintended message "lurking" in the piece, whatever it is, that is contrary to your intended campaign message(s).

Also, be aware of audience segmentation. You may want a more specific message that is just targeted to a segment of your audience that is not even contemplating change to try to move them to that next stage or a different message to a segment of the intended audience who seem ready for change but need information/skills to do so. With limited resources it becomes even more important to focus on a smaller segment of your audience with a more targeted message. I'd advocate for focusing for example on parents who are interested in change but just don't quite know what to do rather than on that audience who isn't even thinking about the issue. You are more likely to be able to reach this group with your message because they are more open and interested, also more connected most likely to community and to using the various media that you may have access to in order to reach them.....and you should be more likely to show some change with your limited resources than you would be to try to focus on the more difficult hard to reach segment who are not really thinking about the issue. *(This was a long-winded response. Sorry!)*

Bob: The other thing I would mention is that it's important to tie your campaign into the other components of your community's ongoing prevention strategies - use the campaign to draw attention and support to other prevention activities that are also underway.

## **3. How do you determine the best sample size for a survey?**

Bob: I will assume that we're talking here about a general survey of community residents, or possibly a particular age group of residents, and not about a specialized target group such as key informants. Unfortunately, the answer in most cases is that the larger sample size you can get, the more accurate will be the results. You do eventually get to a point of rapidly diminishing returns, but that is not until you have many hundreds of respondents. Have you noticed that most national opinion polls usually are based on about 1000 respondents? That sample size

yields a "plus/minus number" of 3.1 percentage points, at the 95% confidence level, for an evenly split yes/no question. The formula to calculate that number is fairly straightforward: 1.96 times the square root of .25/N. Most polling organizations have decided that plus or minus 3.1 percentage points is acceptably accurate for their purposes and the kinds of questions they ask. They also know that further increases in sample size yield progressively smaller increases in accuracy.

For community surveys, it will be very difficult (and costly) to achieve sample sizes anywhere near 1000, and results that are less precise should still be useful. For those reasons, **I suggest that communities aim for survey sizes of 200; if that doesn't work try very hard to get at least 100; and be extremely cautious about using results from any survey with less than 50.** Keep in mind also that the level of precision for a survey depends on what the purposes of the survey are (e.g., providing rigorous evidence that the prevalence of a problem behavior has changed, as opposed to getting a general idea of where community residents stand on an issue).

One caveat to the above guidelines is that if you get close to surveying most or all of the target population (e.g., 50% or more), the sample size becomes unimportant - in this case you have close to a census as opposed to a sample, and question of sampling error become increasingly moot.

One other point about survey samples that is equally as important as sample size..... It should be as representative as possible of the target population you are trying to describe. A sample that is highly unrepresentative, no matter what the sample size, can yield biased results. That is why rigorously conducted surveys randomly sample from listings of the entire target population. Surveys of community residents do not need to go to that length, but **whatever recruitment strategies are used should attempt to draw from as large and diverse a group from within the target population as possible.** (Yikes, this response is even more long-winded than the last one. The really key points are in bold).

#### **4. How do I time my surveys relative to campaign activity?**

Anne D: Important to do a pre-campaign survey and then one not too long after the end of your campaign (I'd say within 3-6 months after the end of the campaign. (*Bob F. may have had a slightly different take on when to do the post campaign survey? I'd see what he says on this. My response is based on what we tried to do with our large media campaigns.*) IF you have resources to do any checking in with your target audience mid-media campaign, it could be helpful in determining if you are actually reaching your intended audience as if not... you could still try to make some adjustments in either the message or the various channels you are using to get the message out.

Bob: I agree with the 3-6 month interval following the conclusion of the campaign, and also agree that mid-point assessments are also useful - especially if the campaign is a longer than a few months.

#### **5. How does one conduct an effective pre/post survey of target population (parents of teens) without spending a lot of money?**

Amy: Web-based surveys (like Survey Monkey) are a low-cost way to survey populations. A con to this approach is that not everyone in the population (especially in rural areas) has internet access. Another option would be to do intercept surveys at community or school

events, and/or other locations in the community. These should be brief, and attempt to get as diverse a sample as possible from the target population. It is also not always necessary to conduct a campaign-specific pre/post survey, depending on what other data sources already exist and could be analyzed with your program's objectives in mind. For example, even if your intervention is aimed at parents, there are questions on the YRBS that ask about parental approval of alcohol use, access to alcohol at home, etc. and could be used to measure impact of such a campaign.

Bob: I would just add that if you can obtain access to lists of parents, either directly or through an intermediary such as the high school that would contact parents on your behalf, that can be very helpful in efficiently reaching parents and inviting them to participate (whether administered as a web-based survey or a traditional paper and pencil survey).

## **6. Reaching 21-25 year olds. What media? What message? How do we evaluate changes?**

Anne D: You have to try to ask them to get the best possible answers to your first 2 questions. Worksites and bars may be the best sources for finding this group (also local softball/baseball and other sports leagues and I think a few other ideas were offered on Nov. 20.) The message has to resonate with the target audience so it needs their input. I assume however, that the main message you would be attempting for this audience has to do with high risk/binge drinking rather than just drinking in general. Your main message is likely to need to focus on the risks and/or on what constitutes "responsible drinking". It could be a drinking/driving message, it could be an "unintended consequences" message such as unprotected sex, etc. With any of these messages, you need input from the 21-25 year old group.

Bob: to assess change, first be very clear on what changes you would hope to see, and then think about how you would measure them. Also, think about the intervening variables that are needed to change in order to achieve your ultimate goals. It is sometimes easier to measure and detect change in intervening variables. For example: are 21-25 year olds being served even when intoxicated in bars and restaurants; are there obvious heavy drinking going on at or before community sports events and other venues; are there fewer intoxicated young adult drivers being identified at sobriety check points? Obtaining qualitative data through carefully selected focus groups can also be useful, particular for assessing changes in community attitudes, norms, and awareness

## **7. We are a rural community. How do we find our target audience?**

Anne D: See my responses to #6. Perhaps your local town clerk might have some ideas about where this group is as well as they register to vote, etc.

## **8. How do we reach 18-21 year olds when there is no college around? Where are they hiding? Where are the "water coolers" for this group?**

Anne D: Again, I'd say see my response to Q 6, minus the bars.

Bob: Another idea is to think at a more regional level. Maybe a large percent of young adults in your community works or recreates in one or more larger nearby communities. See if there are ways you can coordinate efforts with these other communities to reach the young adults that spend time in those locations.

**9. How do we address deeply ingrained norms, beliefs and mores without being insulting?**

Anne D: I wish I knew! However, I think with this issue, you are mostly trying to get the attention of a group who really don't see their role in the issue/problem. A campaign that uses thought-provoking questions or emotional approaches may be good approaches. For example, using an adolescent speaking about what he/she sees and hears from adults in their community that is confusing to them or a young adult(18-21) talking about losing a parent or relative to alcohol and how it seemed like no one even saw that it was a problem until it was too late.

Bob: Here again is where multiple strategies can reinforce one another and hopefully chip away and those deeply engrained views. To try to do so through media campaigns alone is not very likely to succeed.

**10. Based on a survey, what percentage of the population needs to respond to make it an effective survey?**

Bob: See response to #3 above. Unless you are able to survey at least 50 percent of the target population, and preferably 70% or more, it is the number of respondents and the representativeness of the sample, more that the percentage surveyed, that are the key factors.

**11. Based on recent surveys and the development of technology, what is the best way to conduct a survey?**

Amy: See number 5.

Bob: If designing your own survey questions, involve several people in reviewing them to make sure they are clear and will get the information you really need. Where possible, consider using items from established surveys rather than starting from scratch.

**12. How do you know you have reached target population when target population is scattered?**

Amy: Your media channels may be able to provide information about reach (radio, newspapers, etc.) and demographics of the audience. Intercept surveys or focus groups could also help you determine whether you've reached the target population.

**13. What do you do without baseline data?**

Anne D: Well, it would be hard to measure change unless you can find any existing public data related to your proposed intervention, such as police data or Health Risk Behavior or Youth Risk Behavior data that you might use. I'm not sure how you would be able to report any change that you could connect to your planned intervention without SOME related baseline data.

Bob: But if you have started a campaign and don't have baseline data, you can at least ask survey respondents about change retrospectively. For example, you could first confirm that that the respondent was exposed to some elements of the campaign so they know what you're talking about, and then ask if they changed certain behaviors over the past 6 months as a result of that exposure.

**14. How important is it to have a scientifically determined mix of the right types of people in a focus group?**

Anne D: I'm not sure what you mean by "scientifically mixed" but I'm going to assume you may be asking about using some existing group as your focus group? What IS important is that you invite individuals who do represent your targeted audience. Depending upon the issue and questions you hope to explore or test it may be important to do gender specific groups (as teens especially will often speak more honestly when in a group of their own gender.) It is usually more effective to stay away from inviting a whole group who know each other to be in a focus group as friendship groups may think a lot alike and thus narrow the range of responses you would get. If you have a hard time finding enough individuals to make up a good focus group from your target audience you might even consider doing dyads or some one on one interviews as some input from your target audience is better than none for sure.

**15. How do I figure out how to word my evaluation questions? Who does the wording? Staff or professionals?**

Anne D: There are certainly professionals who have a lot of experience in wording survey questions. I have some of this experience but I think that Bob Flewelling probably has even more. I'm not 100% sure what is meant by "evaluation questions". If these are baseline and outcome surveys then you are probably looking at closed ended, yes/no or likert scaled(i.e. things like 0 to 5 where 5 equals strongly agree and 0 =strongly disagree) types of questions. If you are doing focus groups to try to determine reaction to media messages for example, then you would want to use mostly open ended types of questions. So, it depends upon the focus and purpose of the evaluation activity. One needs to pay attention to format as well as content of survey questions to make them easy to understand and respond to. Also, if you are talking about baseline and outcome evaluation surveys of larger numbers of individuals, you would want to stay away from open ended questions for the most part as they are much more labor intensive in terms of analysis.

Bob and Amy: We agree with Anne's comments. See also the answer to # 12 above. Amy and Bob are available to review draft survey instruments and focus group guides, and also provide references or links to established surveys that may have appropriate items. Here are some links to websites that may be helpful:

[http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/fnl\\_eval.htm](http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/fnl_eval.htm)

<http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/outcomes.htm>

In addition, Survey Monkey has several documents that contain useful information on creating and conducting surveys.