Don’t stop me now: Marketing in Central Government
Foreword

The freeze on Government marketing means that inevitably, more will need to be done with less. This paper offers examples of why Government marketing is effective not just on a return on investment basis, but also because campaigns designed to help us eat and drink more healthily and live longer lives are the right areas for public money to be spend on. Rather than asking, ‘what does it cost?’ the real question should be, ‘what is it worth?’

Despite this view, the spending freeze means that Government marketers will need to find new ways of achieving their aims. Key to this will be the increased use of commercial partners and other supportive stakeholders. If a supermarket, for example, is willing to promote Change4Life at the tills, then the message can still be put across even if the cost to the public purse is reduced.

Government marketers achieve much despite the odds being loaded against them – and there’s much for marketers from all industries, in both the public and private sectors, to learn from. Marketers often talk about meeting customers’ ‘needs and wants’; and yet when it comes to responsible behaviour, our ‘wants’ can be very different from our ‘needs’.

Government marketing also faces significant perception problems: not least of which is that for every voice criticising Government for not doing enough, equal and opposite voices will claim it tries to do much, interfering with our everyday lives and creating a ‘nanny state’ culture. Resolving this means focusing on the value of Government communications – not seeing them as merely a disposable cost that can be cut in the short term.

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Don’t stop me now: Marketing in Central Government

Contents
2  Methodology and definitions
3  Summary
4  Section one: Speed of change
7  Section two: A very long engagement
13  Section three: Post boxes and privacy boxes
16  Section four: Finding the balance
25  Section five: Gorilla marketing
28  Section six: How do you rate the morning sun?
37  Section seven: Findings
43  Section eight: Conclusions
45  Acknowledgements
46  Sources
48  Related reading
Methodology and definitions

This paper was prepared as a result of a round table of central Whitehall Government marketers. Subject to the Chatham House Rule to encourage free and open discussion, the views in this paper are those of The Chartered Institute of Marketing, and should not be taken to be the views of the individuals credited on page 45.

Summary

The UK Government is one of the largest spenders on marketing and until recently was the largest single spender on advertising in the country. The coalition Government has announced a freeze on what has been described as ‘non-essential’ marketing spend as part of the commitment to reduce public spending by £6 billion, yet the benefits of a marketing approach are repeatedly proven. Behaviour change marketing is estimated to save the NHS and the Government billions of pounds per annum.

The examples offered in this paper are evidence that investment in marketing is a good strategy to maintain. Rather than embarking on cost-cutting of the projects that work, Government should embrace marketing and marketing communications, and recognise that campaigns such as Change4Life, the THINK! campaign tackling drink-driving and It Doesn’t Have to Happen for knife crime reduction (to name three examples explored in this paper) not only more than pay for themselves in terms of the long term cost savings to the NHS and other areas of the public purse, but also improve quality of life for individuals and communities. Evidence of the value of these long-term behaviour change campaigns is offered in the case studies.

The strongest rationale for marketing is that marketing operates from the point of view of the individual (the ‘customer’ in the commercial sector). If Government wants to be truly citizen-focused, it needs to use marketing principles. Ministers face a dilemma: when asked if Government information is useful, citizens tend to agree. When asked if public money should be spent on it, those same people often disagree. Resolving this conflict is key for the future.

“Behaviour change marketing is estimated to save the NHS and the Government billions of pounds per annum”
SECTION ONE

Speed of change

Many marketers working within Government come up against two perennial problems: firstly, the perception that marketing is ‘spin’, or focused only on imagery and communications (the visible, end-result of a much longer process); and secondly, many of the behaviours and perceptions that marketing seeks to influence and change are long term projects. Some behaviour change objectives (such as investing in smoking cessation to reduce long term costs to the NHS) can arguably only be fully measured over 10 or 20 years, and sometimes perhaps only over a lifetime.

This does not sit easily with the speed at which critics expect to see results, nor with the speed of parliamentary change. By definition, behaviour change can be a long term process, yet politicians want to be able to summon figures to show that initiatives they introduced are quickly having the right effects.

Successful marketing in the commercial sector is harder than its reputation suggests – and Government marketers have two further problems. One is the greater number of stakeholders who need to agree on any marketing initiative. The second is the fact that persuading people to change long term behaviours, where the rewards in return are less tangible and more abstract, is much harder than, for example, persuading people to favour one particular brand of chocolate over another. Getting people to break an ingrained habit, or persuading people to do something they find difficult, is a considerable challenge. This challenge is complicated by Government marketers being in the glare of the media, which can be highly critical of their activity.

The difficulty faced by behaviour change professionals is often that the benefits of the current behaviour are usually more tangible than the desired behaviour change. A cigarette, for example, gives you an instant gratification: you know what it is going to do, compared with the abstract promise of (for instance) ten years’ more life by not smoking at all. The fact that behaviour change marketing works so well means that its investment should be a given.

There is a gap between the public’s understanding of marketing and its reality. If members of the public are asked “Do you find the information useful?” they tend to answer “yes”. However, if you ask “Is this a good thing for Government to spend money on?” you are likely to get the answer “no”. Cuts in ‘communications’ need to be addressed with this conundrum in mind.

“Persuading people to change long-term behaviours is harder than persuading people to favour a particular brand of chocolate”
For commercial marketers, reaching the customer and getting the company’s message to stick is a good proportion of the battle. The Government marketer is faced with a more subtle dilemma. Government has less difficulty reaching the customer; it often has sufficient details on file, and sometimes has the kind of personal information that even a major supermarket would not be able to collect as completely and as accurately.

There are three caveats against this assessment; firstly is that, for data protection reasons, Government departments cannot always share required data across platforms. Secondly, often, the people who most need to be reached are those who are hardest to reach in terms of accurate data being on file – and Government has a duty to try to reach those who are hard to contact. Thirdly, even where Government can reach its target audience, the problem lies in engaging that audience.

There are several approaches to engagement that can be considered, some of which are already being unrolled. The key is that positive messages succeed far better than negative ones. For example, the historical approach to reducing drinking might be an authoritative figure telling people that drinking is bad for them and that it could shorten their life. The ‘public information film’ approach might have an impact in the immediate term, as it can shock or scare the audience, but is unlikely to deliver sustained behaviour change. Instead, the aim is to encourage the individual to buy in to the behaviour change you “Often, the people who most need to be reached are those who are hardest to reach in terms of accurate data being on file – and Government has a duty to try to reach those who are hard to contact”
want to create in them, and to want to change voluntarily. That’s more likely to happen if the message is a positive and encouraging one. With Driver Friendly partnership marketing, part of the recent drink-driving campaign, rewarding the individual (eg free soft drinks for the driver) is a successful carrot, rather than a stick of punishment for not complying. The punishment for not complying still needs to be there, but the marketing approach can be two-pronged: to emphasise the positives as well as the negatives.

The marketing approach also helps the individual see for themselves the benefits of behaviour change. Rather than being seen as do-gooding or interfering, it needs the individual to change their behaviour of their own accord. Avoiding making the change seem impossible is key here – Change4Life, for instance, shows how you can exchange larger meals for smaller ones, rather than having to cut out enjoyable food altogether.

“The aim is to encourage the individual to buy in to the behaviour change you want to create in them, and to want to change voluntarily”

Change4Life is a society-wide movement that aims to prevent people from becoming overweight by encouraging them to eat better and move more. It is the marketing component of the Government’s response to the rise in obesity. The campaign aims to inspire a societal movement in which everyone who has an interest in preventing obesity (be they Government, business, healthcare professionals, charities, schools, families or individuals) can play their part.

The Change4Life advertising campaign began in January 2009 and in the initial stage targeted young families with children aged 5–11 years. Since its launch, the movement has grown to targeting parents of 1–to 4–year-olds (Early Years) and new parents with babies (Start4Life).

The campaign will cost £75 million over three years, which should be considered in context: obesity currently costs the NHS more than £4.2 billion a year. The campaign also generates further exposure, without using public money, by developing partnerships with commercial organisations, which help cement Change4Life in the public’s mind by using promotional materials in-store and on websites.

Evidence that Change4Life uses segmentation to employ effective use of budget can be found in the Change4Life adults’ advertising campaign ‘Swap it, don’t stop it’, aimed at 45- to 65-year-old men and women. This segment has been targeted as there is evidence that the majority of the age group (about 71%) can be classed as either overweight or obese. Behavioural changes have been developed that sit under the banner of ‘swaps’ and house different exercise and nutritional goals, and a range of support materials is available to help communicate the message.

Change4Life is effective for several reasons: the campaign makes the desired changes appear manageable; it helps individuals understand why it is in their interests to change behaviours; and it is presented in a fun and engaging way. It avoids words like ‘exercise’ altogether, for example, and uses ‘getting active’ instead.

The Government’s ambition is for the UK to be the first major nation to reverse the rising tide of obesity in
the population, by enabling everyone to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. The initial focus is on children; by 2020, it aims to reduce the proportion of overweight and obese children to the levels seen in 2000.

Over 20% of mothers with young children have already made lifestyle changes as a result of the Change4Life campaign. Given that annual cost of obesity could reach £50 billion by 2050, this campaign alone will be saving society billions of pounds a year for many years to come – on an outlay of just £75 million over 3 years.

The marketing approach tries to see the situation from the individual’s point of view, recognising and anticipating what the barriers to the desired change might be. For example, the barrier to drink-driving compliance might be a belief of “I’ll be okay, because I can handle my drink”. Understanding this barrier, the emphasis in campaigns historically shifted onto avoiding the social shame that comes from conviction and the inconvenience of a driving ban. A mixture of carrot and stick can, therefore, be the most successful approach, depending on how the individual is likely to react to a given situation.

Marketing tells a story – to make a desired behaviour change, the campaign needs to resonate. Telling people there is an urgent need for organ donation does not resonate with the individual. The current campaign for organ transplants, however, shows an apparently happy couple on a sofa, with the male character slowly forming the effects of needing a transplant. This ‘making it personal’ element is vital in trying to create a behaviour change by making the objective seem relevant to the individual.

Where you do need to have a negative message, make it too powerful to be ignored. For example, the recent campaign about the dangers of buying non-prescribed drugs over the internet featured someone removing a rat corpse from their throat.

Behaviour change marketing at its best works the more the individual’s circumstances are understood: what the barriers to change are; and which particular suggestions might resonate.

Thus, for instance, recommending two-and-a-half hours of moderate exercise a week is unlikely to resonate with someone with a full time job, because the investment in time does not seem realistic. The desire to encourage people to get more exercise can, in this kind of example, be counterproductive because the barrier might be “If I need to get that much exercise, it’s not worth bothering at all”. Understanding this, and identifying a way of creating a more resonant message (such as, 75 minutes a week of brisk exercise might be as beneficial as two-and-a-half hours of moderate activity), can reach this particular individual more effectively. Three 25-minute runs at lunchtimes might seem like an entirely different, and achievable, prospect. For other people, that will be less appealing. Understanding individual needs is, therefore, sometimes necessary to trigger behaviour change effectively.

The art of effective marketing lies in understanding an individual in this way and targeting the message to reach them in the right way. Change4Life avoids the word ‘exercise’ altogether – because that can be perceived as boring. ‘Getting active’ is used instead. However, researching and understanding individuals’ motivations clearly uses considerable resources. Segmentation can help here, but the wider understanding of what goes into a successful behaviour change campaign needs to be understood at a wider level. It is not, as the public perception might sometimes be, a case of throwing money at campaigns and hoping that some of it sticks.
The second issue on engagement is that of privacy and trust. A major supermarket knows who you are, and it uses that information to target you with offers that you might want or need. However, when Government knows who you are, it can be perceived as scary or invasive. There is, therefore, a challenge for Government marketers to make communications friendlier, and to express things in ways that help the individual understand why the communication is being made and to buy in to the message.

There is sometimes a belief that Government does not have the luxury of being able to segment its customers, but this is not always the case. Many Government messages, just as many non-Government campaigns will do, it is entirely legitimate to target particular people who need to be reached with a particular message; and, indeed, one of the ways in which social marketing campaigns in the third sector are proven to represent good investment is precisely that segmentation is used to direct resources where they are needed. Government is in a better position to segment its customers than many commercial companies because it often (although not always) has the information it needs, does not have competitors holding onto potential customers, and does not have to shield information from those competitors. In fact, it’s arguable that there is more potential for segmentation than is currently the case, targeting messages where they are needed, and saving money along the way.

HMRC online self-assessment tax returns and the DVLA are strong examples of how Government provides access to services online, and, indeed, offers incentives to individuals to use them above posted communications – individuals are able to make a later payment date if processed online. It’s examples like this that show Government successfully driving communications online where possible, without disengaging from those who are not online.

It is likely that cost savings could be made if these principles were extended. For example, costs could be saved if a level of posted communications were transferred to electronic communications wherever possible. At the moment, most letters from HMRC, DVLA, the NHS and the Identity & Passport Service are posted.
when they could be emailed at far less expense. There are sound reasons for resistance to this: firstly, security (email correspondence is still seen as being a risk for confidential communications); secondly, not all customers will want to receive letters by email; and thirdly, not all citizens are digitally included, and it is important not to neglect these individuals.

Much has been done, but there's always more that is possible to do. It’s possible, for example, to build an opt-in list of those who want to be primarily contacted by email, and then use this as a default electronic list for any communications that do not contain original documents. Citizens could be encouraged to accept email communications (much as users have been driven to file their tax returns online). Over time, the number of people who require posted communications should decline. The cost savings would be considerable and could be communicated as an example of reducing perceived bureaucracy. Without ignoring those members of society who are not online, email can be used for some individuals more often than is currently the case, in order to reach recipients quickly and reduce the problem of losing pieces of paper. Additionally, and especially for the need to know that communications have been received, emails can be tracked when received and receipts logged for when they are read, so addressees cannot claim that they did not receive them.

An advantage Government marketers have is that they are not in competition with one another. Broadly speaking, departments do not compete and it is possible for a marketer in one department to contact a colleague and ask for advice or help. This is substantially different to similar scenarios in the commercial sector: Marks & Spencer cannot ring up Debenhams, for instance, and ask the marketing manager ‘how they do it’. There is a willingness to share good practice amongst Government communicators.

“There is a challenge for Government marketers to make communications friendlier”
Government has a perception issue. At its worst stereotypical misrepresentation, Government can be pictured as an authoritarian nanny state, telling us what to do, enforcing its will via the police, and taxing us along the way. At the opposite extreme, Government is accused of not doing enough. Overturning this image is an ongoing problem, exacerbated by the problem of the media seeking to create a critical story from any initiative or decision. The Government have two choices, either to engage the media to gain their support or to connect directly with the public. Unfortunately the media can often project a negative image. Enabling the public to make their own decisions without trusting the media as their primary source of information is the best strategy for the future, and that requires consistent communication.

Asking what marketing does well – creating loyalty by gaining the customer's trust and value for the product – means finding ways of achieving that customer loyalty from citizens. If the issue is Government’s image problem, increasing or extending in scope the number of Government services provided by other stakeholders may be a potential answer.

This is key to the current success of several agencies and campaigns. The Carbon Trust and the Food Standards Agency are Government agencies, but their messages are perceived to be independent (ie not heavily Government influenced). Rather than Government telling you what to do, in these examples, the stakeholder builds the right perception for Government. Firefighters, the police and nurses, for example, perform the positive role and offer the messages that individuals identify with. Recognising that stakeholders, not politicians or civil servants, are the people who engage with the public, these agencies work because they disseminate Government messages without being faceless or seen as autocratic or bureaucratic. The messages are thus listened to more and are more trustworthy. The recent announcement that the Food Standards Agency is to be abolished fails to recognise this important distinction and ignores the success that an agency can have.

“Firefighters, police and nurses perform the positive role and offer the messages that individuals identify with”

This works for a specific campaign, but also as an overall service; placing the emphasis on the stakeholder (eg ambulance service or the firefighter) achieves several key goals. It makes engagement more likely, as the public trust the stakeholder more than Government. It makes complaints less likely, as there is less of a perceived easy target; Government is seen as bureaucratic and thus ripe for criticism, whereas an ambulance service is doing a vital job. They are the “face” of the agency, and, in specific cases, of products, but create sub-brands instead. If a particular brand fails, declines or suffers a risk management problem, the negative image does not also contaminate other P&G or Unilever products. Adapting this lesson for Government campaigns means that where a complaint or a negative image goes on record, it can be dealt with on a case by case basis, and any negative coverage does not negatively impact on other areas of Government work.

Some perceptions are more controllable than others. Unlike with specific campaigns, Government does not have the luxury of command and control over its agencies, so there is a need to influence more positively and, again, prove to stakeholders why decisions have been made in certain ways, and increase their support. Marketing is sometimes seen as the ‘fluffy’ end of business; it is the ‘pens and posters’ department, or the department that spends thousands of pounds on a minor logo redesign. The reason this misconception exists is that this is the visual end of the process; the part that the public (and the media) sees. This leads naturally...
to the conclusion that ‘marketing’ is something that can be cut when cuts need to be made. There needs to be more communication that marketing is far more than the visible end that is (sometimes justifiably) criticised. When there are situations that create the negative impressions of marketing, those situations are the ones that need to be addressed.

Thinking from the point of view of the media in this way helps avoid such problems. Consider the partnerships model used in Change4Life. This is an eminently sensible way of saving taxpayers’ money, because the partner companies such as Asda, Tesco and ITV create a lot of the promotion themselves, rather than Government (ie public money) having to pay for it. However there is the risk that some sections of the media will misconstrue the initiative and question whether Government should be working with commercial companies in this way. The model is an excellent one, yet more tackling of how the media is likely to perceive it and turn it into a story, could reap benefits.

Alternatively, rather than trying to get the media on side, find ways of consistently and effectively influencing the public to make their own minds up about Government spending. The internet offers such a portal, at low cost, and, as the ability to reach citizens is not a problem, an online repository of such information for the public to read further would not be difficult or expensive to communicate. Government already does a significant amount of activity using social media (for example FRANK, RAF recruitment and Afghan Diaries) and such usage is certain to increase. A platform like Facebook can be more effective than Direct.gov.uk because engaging citizens in the spaces they already inhabit is easier than persuading them to visit a site that is foreign to them. Social networking sites also represent low-cost ways for Government messages to be communicated more widely.

“Government does not have the luxury of command and control over its agencies”
Fire Kills is a powerful example of using the stakeholder (in this case, the firefighter) to help citizens identify with the issue and take positive action. The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness of fire safety issues and the ways people can reduce their risk of fire, in an effort to reduce the number of deaths and injuries from house fires. It is run by Communities and Local Government (CLG).

The national marketing strategy is predominantly aimed at a mass audience and conducted primarily through TV advertising. However, this is supported at a local level by PR activity, community outreach work and local media engagement, all of which boost recognition of the fire service and better inform audiences of how messages apply to them.

Whilst Fire Kills is the national umbrella campaign mark for fire safety in England, 46 local autonomous Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) in England plan and undertake local activity to complement the national co-ordinated campaign activity. Acting as the face of the campaign, their engagement activity at a local level gives the campaign meaning to individuals. The FRS is one of the most trusted and liked public sector organisations, and its affiliation with the Fire Kills campaign strengthens people’s perceptions of the service. Individuals are more receptive to its messages, and are trustworthy of its intentions and understanding of its cause. The FRS’s diverse knowledge of the different communities covered by the campaign, and its community-based approach to working with them, means the FRS has helped the campaign to build trust and awareness amongst some of the audiences deemed most difficult to reach by government campaigning. These have been identified as ranging from middle-aged single men in East Yorkshire, to first-generation Somali communities in London and students living away from home for the first time.

A strong partnership between CLG and the FRS has proved successful in delivering campaigns that resonate at both a national and local level. Activity is planned nationally then devolved to each of the 46 FRSs through a series of advance briefings. It provides them with background on the communities being targeted, tools and ideas on engaging local media, and supporting materials for distribution. They are then able to participate as they see fit – avoiding brand saturation and public over-exposure to messages that may not be relevant. Briefings such as these ensure that the brand is associated with consistent messaging across England, which allows it to undertake long term perception and behaviour change, by using the brand as the constant.

The campaign has provided opportunities for stakeholders to engage in building the brand, and this has paid off in terms of recognition and understanding. The public better understand the meaning of national messaging as a result of local interaction with the local fire and rescue service. The depth of information that can be provided at a national level is limited, but local FRSs are there to inform and advise the public on how national messaging applies specifically to them and how it can be tailored to their needs. The Home Fire Risk Check initiative, for example, involves FRSs visiting homes to install and test smoke alarms and advise on fire safety issues – messaging endorsed through national channels.

CASE STUDY

Fire Kills

Fire Kills campaign

Sources
Communities and Local Government
Central Office of Information
The Department for Transport’s THINK! Moment of Doubt Drink-Drive campaign launched in summer 2007. The campaign aims to demonstrate the personal consequences of a drink drive conviction to young men aged between 17 and 29.

Previously, drink-driving campaign messages had been based on a risk and reward model, contrasting the pleasure of drinking with the risk of causing injury or death by driving under the influence of alcohol. While the number of drink-drive related fatalities fell steadily between 1979 and 2000, from over 1,600 to a little over 500, it stayed relatively stable at about this figure in the six years that followed up to 2006.

With this in mind, along with the drive to find new news on this familiar issue, the Department set out to re-evaluate the assumptions behind its drink-drive campaigns. Attitudinal research found that a small but growing number of people, particularly men aged 17-29, refused to acknowledge the risk of having a crash after drinking, while qualitative research suggested that trying to shock viewers with the most extreme consequences was becoming less effective for this group, who did not see drink-drive related crashes as something that could feasibly happen to them.

Previous campaigns had succeeded in raising the social stigma of drink-driving by building public outrage on the issue. These findings, along with input from behavioural psychologists, now pointed towards persuading the target audience that drink-driving could have immediate, negative consequences for them personally. Consumer research, a semiotics analysis and behaviour theory identified the key intervention point as occurring when the drinker was deciding whether to have a second pint (when they are still in control). The campaign therefore focused on creating cognitive dissonance between the desire for another drink and a set of credible, relevant consequences, such as getting a criminal record, being banned from driving and damaging relationships with a partner or family members.

Six months after the launch of the campaign, tracking research showed that young men’s perceptions that they would be caught by the police had risen from 58% to 75%. The number of people breathalysed during December 2007, when the campaign was active, rose by 6.4%, whilst the number testing positive fell by 19.5%. In addition, the number of deaths from drink-driving fell significantly for the first time in six years, from 560 in 2006...
to 430 in 2008, which represents a saving in costs to society of around £208 million.

Post-campaign tracking research after the December 2009 burst of THINK! Moment of Doubt activity underlined the success of the campaign strategy. There was a growing acceptance among the target audience that drink-driving could have very real and profound consequences for them, with 85% agreeing it was likely that being caught drink-driving would change their lifestyle dramatically. This represented a 13% point shift from the pre-campaign figure of 72%.

The THINK! campaign aims to increase road safety, inform responsible driving and raise awareness of the dangers of drink-driving. The previous Government’s key targets were set as: (1) to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured in road accidents by 40% by 2010 (compared with the average for 1994–98) and (2) to reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured by 50% by 2010.

Recent THINK! research has identified that, 10 years after its launch, the brand has successfully positioned itself as ‘the voice of your conscience’ rather than an authoritarian nanny state – giving you the information to then judge your own behaviour. It goes beyond communications, and has helped save over one thousand lives and prevent 90,000 injuries.

The value of this to society is £4.2 billion, of which THINK! would need to have accounted for just 2.2% to pay back. THINK! has actually had a greater contribution than this. The Department for Transport estimates that for every £1 spent on THINK! the campaign has saved society £9.36. This represents 3,494 people who are alive and uninjured today who wouldn’t have been without THINK!

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Politicians see networking sites as a good place to be and as good tools for engagement; however, problems arise when the ‘village etiquette’ of sites is misunderstood. Firstly, there is an instinctive desire to monitor, and ideally control, how content is responded to online. The commercial companies who understand and thrive in online spaces recognise that this is a lost cause. There needs to be acceptance that once a message, concept or campaign is in a public space, it will be commented on freely and criticised heavily (and also in some cases, argued passionately for). Far better to accept that the space is an open one, allow your brand to be talked about in whatever way individuals want to talk about it, and move on.

In the commercial sector, a company like Cadbury understands this implicitly. When its ‘drumming gorilla’ campaign was copied and satirised online, it did not try to censor the copies, nor demand that anyone take their versions down for reasons of IP infringement. Cadbury accepted that the message was out there and allowed it to be played with and interacted with as much as individuals liked, whether or not it was potentially damaging, knowing that the long term impact on the brand would be positive. This was the case even with seemingly inappropriate copies, such as when a vomiting gorilla was used to advertise a late-night club.

Social networks are the crystallisation of meaning residing in the medium, not the message. Even if you are being criticised, it is the right place to be. The art lies in identifying which messages people are going to be receptive to, contrasted with where a line is crossed and the communications seem invasive, rather than desired. Commercial sector examples are again helpful here. When Sainsbury’s used Yahoo! Answers to post recipe suggestions in a thread that was designed for individuals rather than companies, the commercial replies were seen as useful and enjoyable.

“The brand has successfully positioned itself as ‘the voice of your conscience’ ”
SECTION FIVE  Gorilla marketing

Contrasted with this is the example of American Apparel opening stores on Second Life: a group calling itself the Second Life Liberation Army rapidly appeared, virtually shooting anyone they saw wearing AA-branded clothing, and setting fire to the stores.

The difference depends on an understanding of how people want to be communicated with in spaces that they see as private. For Government perhaps even more than commercial companies, there is a fine line between communicating and interacting in ways that people want, and being perceived as interfering or authoritative. Building the brand with a ‘softly softly’ approach (Sainsbury’s gently leading people towards recipe suggestions) works; direct selling does not, and can make situations worse. There is increasing evidence of Government achieving the right balance with its social network usage. It Doesn’t Have to Happen, for example, uses Bebo to great effect for reaching young people in their chosen spaces. Similarly, FRANK talks to teenagers in ways they want to be talked to, on the platforms they want to use. The THINK! Biker campaign for motorcycle safety has a Facebook community of over 27,000, since the new campaign launched in March 2010. NHS Choices and Businesslink.gov also use a range of innovative online applications.

“There needs to be acceptance that once a message, concept or campaign is in a public space, it will be commented on freely”

CASE STUDY

It Doesn’t Have to Happen

It Doesn’t Have to Happen is a £3 million anti-knife crime campaign launched in several cities across the UK by the Home Office in May 2009. It aims to give young people an understanding of the consequences of knife crime, encouraging them to ‘say no to knives’ and have a positive influence on each other. The campaign allows the targeted individuals to have a voice by enabling them to help develop the campaign itself. Peer-to-peer messaging is an important part of the campaign which has a dedicated website on the social networking site Bebo: www.itdoesnthavetohappen.co.uk

The campaign is a good indicator of Government using the platforms on which target audiences want to be reached. The Bebo page has guest editors who communicate in the language that young people identify with and respond to, and now has an impressive 11,000 friends and over a quarter of a million visitors as of May 2010.

Sources
http://www.london.gov.uk/young-london/teens/top-stories/knife-crime.jsp
http://www.footballfoundation.org.uk/our-schemes/kickz/idithi/
http://www.bebo.com/itdoesnthavetohappen
SECTION SIX

How do you rate the morning sun?

Measurement is a deceptively complex area. For Government, the difficulties are compounded in behaviour change campaigns by the length of time that is involved in some of the changes. A smoking cessation campaign can take years, or even a lifetime (or several lifetimes), to conclusively prove the value of marketing investment. One answer to this problem is to split up any measurement you do. For a smoking cessation campaign, this might be during the campaign, immediately afterwards, after a year, after five years, etc.

This can help the dilemma of needing to show fast results for long term processes.

If the measurements can be laid directly against Office of National Statistics figures, then you can start to extract direct correlations between a campaign, and the effect you want. This is beginning to happen on a more orchestrated level than has historically been the case. With a project like Change4Life, such measurements become harder because of the overlapping contexts in which the scheme operates. 600,000 families are registered for Change4Life, and because there are set behaviours that the project is trying to change, it can be difficult to draw conclusive measurements about its effectiveness.

Some measurement returns can be a spectacular proof of the value of marketing, particularly when they are targeted well and meet a pressing need. The Teacher Recruitment campaign from 1998 to 2005, for example, should, over the career lifetimes of the recruits, create £85 per £1 spent, as well as paying for itself. This kind of bald statement can be useful if Government finds itself needing to justify marketing spend. If £45 million a year is spent on smoking cessation, £20 million of that will be on customer relationship marketing, creating the desired behaviour change by understanding an individual’s motivations and barriers, and maintaining a relationship with them to help them achieve the desired outcomes.

Yet, supposing the metrics don’t appear particularly compelling? In this scenario, the risks of measurement become apparent. For example, we may find obesity still rising after five years of Change4Life, which would lead to negative perceptions of the campaign’s effectiveness. However, if it is shown that it’s rising at a slower rate than it was before Change4Life was introduced, it is still a good result. There needs to be more understanding of the inherent problems of measurement within Government and with the broader public too. The question is not so much how Government marketing should be measured, but whether the objectives are right in the first place. Effective marketing is as much an art as a science and there is always room for re-assessing objectives and trying to ensure they are set appropriately at the start of a campaign.

“Measurement returns can be a spectacular proof of the value of marketing, particularly when they are targeted well”
across Government – and in some cases very well. But it is currently carried out inconsistently in terms of approach and methodology*. One of the biggest challenges for Government communicators at present is demonstrating ROMI and evaluation, and heads of department are currently looking at how to better evaluate and demonstrate effectiveness.

However, whilst measurement is important, Government marketing should not be hidebound by metrics, and the need to prove ROMI should not discount campaigns that cannot be directly measured by such figures. There are sound reasons for marketing investment that should not be dismissed because the transparent measurement does not appear to make them value for money. Using marketing principles of putting the individual at the heart of your operations for the NHS, for example, means you get fewer complaints – because people begin to ‘buy in’ to the work of the NHS more than in the past, rather than seeing it as a service ripe for complaint. With complaints currently costing the NHS £787 million a year, the value of this approach can far exceed the specific measurement of marketing investment. In the commercial sector, it’s accepted that you invest in building a brand, and the profits follow. Just because you cannot necessarily measure the direct link between brand and profits, does not mean that it does not exist. The same view should apply to Government marketing, with ‘positive change’ in place of ‘profit’.

The challenge for Government marketers in future may be the need to monetise Government campaigns and find out the best ways to do so. However, this should not be necessary, as campaigns are proved to pay for themselves and are the right thing to do, regardless of cost; yet if cuts are threatened, proving that Government campaigns create a surplus for the public purse may need to be considered.

“Whilst measurement is important, Government marketing should not be hidebound by metrics”

The Government’s national stroke strategy was published in December 2007. The campaign, launched in early 2009, uses the F.A.S.T mnemonic to help people act quickly and effectively if they suspect someone is having a stroke.

The reason the focus is placed on FAST – Face, Arm, Speech, Time – is that quick action can make the difference between an individual making a full or partial recovery, compared with being permanently disabled or killed by the stroke. The emphasis is therefore on an eye-catching, visually arresting campaign that cements the principles of FAST in the public’s mind, with the focus being on the need to respond swiftly.

It is expected that the campaign will deliver significant cost savings to the NHS. Currently, stroke care costs £2.8 billion a year, while income and productivity losses as a result of disability are estimated to cost the wider economy a further £18 billion annually. Around 150,000 people in the UK suffer a stroke each year and more than 67,000 die from one.

SECTION SIX How do you rate the morning sun?

CASE STUDY

Stroke Awareness campaign

Stroke Awareness

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HM Revenue & Customs Self Assessment is a campaign costing £6.8 million for the period January 2008 to January 2009. The payback is estimated to be £18 million, with a net payback of £11.2 million and a ROMI (Return on Marketing investment) of £1.65: 1.

Once an individual files a tax return online they tend to continue to file online. Over five years, this shift saves HMRC £68.74. To support the ambition of driving all those for whom it is possible to do their tax online by 2012, the deadline for paper based filing for the 2007/08 tax year was brought forward to 31 October 2008. This presented a challenge, as pursuing every late return costs HMRC, on average, £18.12. So, HMRC wanted to ensure that the 640,000 ‘rump’ of paper filers who do not use an agent were aware of the changed deadline – and acted on it. The campaign needed to build on the previous successful campaign, Tax doesn’t have to be taxing. The campaign uses Moira Stuart as the spokesperson in a series of quirky adverts that aimed to cut through the procrastination that research showed was the key barrier to filing online. An integrated media plan, including TV, radio, outdoor, print and online was put together to reach the broadest audience possible, supported by extensive PR and partnership activity to get to hard to reach audiences.

**Behaviour change model**

HMRC aims to have everyone who can filing a tax return online by 2012. Filing online offers many advantages to the taxpayer as well as HMRC: the online system provides an immediate confirmation from HMRC once a form is submitted; mistakes are identified and pointed out in real time; calculations are done automatically; and the user can stop and return later. HMRC's marketing strategy has been to tackle the human tendency for procrastination. People are tending to leave their self-assessment tax return later and later – until the prospect of filing online becomes an almost insurmountable task. Bringing the deadline for filing by paper forward to 31 October was intended to encourage the shift to self-assessment by playing to this tendency, but the marketing campaign needed to communicate the new deadline, offering the choice, as well as the benefits, of filing online.
CASE STUDY HMRC tax online

The campaign
The objectives of the campaign were, firstly, to communicate clearly the new deadline for filing by paper and, secondly, to persuade the ‘rump’ of paper filers to file online. The campaign strategy was to use a broad range of media to reach at least 85% of the target audience in the adverts that highlighted the key deadline and the advantages of filing online in an engaging way. Direct mail, press activity and partnership marketing was used to engage harder to reach groups.

Outcomes
There were two dimensions of outcome to the campaign:

Filing on time
Tracking research was used to attribute individuals who filed on time to the campaign. It identified that:
- 68.68% of the rump of 640,000 paper filers, or 439,552 individuals, were unaware of the change in deadlines before the campaign
- 85% of those who were unaware of the change in deadline before the campaign subsequently could recall seeing the adverts

Filing online
Trend analysis was used to attribute individuals who filed online to the campaign. The number of individuals filing online had been rising since 2005/06 but the rate of increase had been slowing. The projected increase in numbers filing online based on this trend was 100,000, an 11% increase. The actual increase was 386,000 – a 42% rise – so 286,000 additional online filers were added above the trend.

It is not easy to be sure how many of these people decided to file online due to the campaign, but this was estimated at 64%, based on the spontaneous awareness figure from tracking research. This suggests that 183,000 additional online filers can be attributed to the campaign. Once individuals file online they tend to continue to do so, and HMRC believes it is reasonable to assign to the campaign the savings accrued over five years for each individual persuaded to file online.

Monetisation
HMRC has robust figures for the cost of late filers and the saving to it of individuals who file online. It has deliberately excluded claiming other possible benefits, such as increased tax yield:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in behaviour</th>
<th>Financial impact on HMRC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£18.12</td>
<td>£68.74</td>
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Calculating Payback and ROMI
Combining the numbers of filers attributed to the campaign with the value identified by HMRC provides the basis to calculate Payback. Comparing this with campaign cost gives a ROMI calculation for the effectiveness of the campaign.

| Number who filed on time attributed to campaign: | 299,194 |
| Saving for each person who filed on time:       | £18.12  |
| ‘On time’ saving attributed to campaign:        | £5,421,000 |
| Number who filed online attributed to campaign: | 183,040 |
| Saving over five years for each person filing online: | £68.74 |
| ‘Online’ saving attributed to campaign:         | £12,582,170 |
| Gross Payback:                                  | £18,003,569.51 |
| Cost of campaign:                               | £8,800,000 |
| Net Payback:                                    | £11,203,569.51 |
| ROMI:                                           | 1.65:1   |
| ROMI as percentage:                             | 165%     |
“Government marketers have ammunition to show that many campaigns deliver measurable benefits”

There is a perception gap between the value that Government marketing is known to create, and the wider acceptance amongst the public and the media that marketing is a benefit (in both financial and social senses) not a cost. Eighty-seven per cent of GPs, practice nurses and practice managers supported the idea of using Government money on a campaign to prevent childhood obesity, yet the freeze on what has been referred to as ‘non-essential’ government marketing will reduce the level of behaviour change marketing that is carried out.

Despite the headline cuts, however, there is room for manoeuvre. The list of ‘essential’ marketing activities that has been published includes “activities where there is unequivocal evidence that campaigns deliver measurable benefits relating directly to immediate public health and safety”. From the evidence in this paper, Government marketers have ammunition to show that many campaigns deliver measurable benefits that relate directly to public health in the required ways. Similarly, the freeze includes the caveat “unless permission is sought from the relevant personnel”, which gives leeway for marketers, using the evidence in this paper, to challenge some of the conditions of the freeze.

Government marketing has a strong track record of changing behaviour positively, providing information to help people make choices, raising awareness of new legislation and promoting channel shift to encourage the take-up of services online. Sometimes it does this directly; sometimes through partners or a different brand identity, depending on what is deemed to be the most successful route. The risk is that such valuable and worthwhile work will be cut in order to meet a political agenda, because the perception is so different to the reality.

It is important for Government marketers to address this. Perceived Government failures make a good media story, so ministers and civil servants need to try to change this, with consistent and continual communication, externally and internally, of the benefits that marketing brings – creating awareness, desire and action for particular campaigns, such as for smoking cessation, responsible drinking and other public health initiatives; public transport consultations and other environmental...
initiatives; and social projects such as anti-knife and drugs campaigns. This is done, not just by using communications, but by a deep understanding of individuals, and their motivations and barriers, which requires more in-depth work than ‘marketing’ is sometimes credited with – both inside and outside Government. This means tackling the view that marketing is just one ‘P’, that of promotion (and tackling the perception that promotion is only a cost).

The sometimes negative view of Government marketing is unfair; Government has been doing marketing for longer than most commercial companies, and does it well. There is also much successful marketing that Government does that receives less attention, such as in health and safety messages, and public information.

An area that can be addressed, though, is tackling the view that marketing equals expensive and unnecessary rebrandings. Where possible, this can be done by creating design, brandings and promotions in-house, rather than outsourcing them to agencies that can create negative and damaging headlines. This is already the case in many departments (HMRC completes much in-house, for example) but not in all.

If failures make a story, it might seem wise to address the media, try to get them on-side, and prove to them that negative stories are in no one’s interests (as well as being an unfair narrowing of the broader picture). However, this is likely to use much energy to little effect. What has more promise is to prove the benefits of Government campaigns to the public to enable them to make up their own minds; developing an online portal to this information is one possible approach. As is beginning to happen, this should be executed on social network sites like Facebook rather than direct.gov.uk, because it’s easier to engage people in the spaces where they already are, than persuading them to visit a new site.

It is proven in the commercial sector that in times of cuts, ringfencing marketing leads to greater success, as opposed to a policy of ‘pulling up the drawbridge’ that simply makes the situation worse in the long run. This theory urgently needs to be applied to Government policy on marketing (especially behaviour change marketing). Where Government marketing can be proved to go further than merely paying for itself, it should not be reduced. Savings can be made on some of the ‘easy hits’ outlined above, yet it is a force majeure that more value will need to be extracted from smaller income. That relies on staff morale and a stiffened resolve towards negative media representation. Helping the public understand that the media are getting it wrong and that they can make up their own minds may seem like an unlikely goal, but if it is tackled it is not unachievable.

Arguably, it’s the marketing that makes Change4Life so successful, because the messages are clear, personal and positive. C4L tells a story; it makes the situation personal (rather than just being told that being obese is bad for you). It makes the behaviour changes seem fun, rather than a chore (the word ‘exercise’ is conspicuously avoided altogether). The colour schemes are bright and engaging. It understands the barriers to change (‘I don’t want to give up all the nice stuff’). Finally, whilst the message is clear, engaging and likeable, that message does not appear to come from an establishment, authoritarian figure (ie Government itself.)

There is no denying the power of Government messages. The expression ‘5 a day’ has even entered the language – everyone knows what the benefits are, and it has changed lives for the better by its focus on a clear and consistent message. If you ask people if they find Government information useful, helpful and beneficial, they will say yes. However, if you ask them if money should be spent on it, they say no. Government needs to recognise this contradiction and be robust in maintaining marketing spend where there are proven returns on investment not just in terms of saving costs, but in terms of long term value to individuals and communities. The reality is that Government...
campaigns have spectacular success, more than paying for themselves – as the examples in this paper, such as stroke care, teacher recruitment, THINK! and Change4Life, indicate.

Government might spend £6 million to encourage us to drink less, compared with the drinks industry spending £300 million to encourage the opposite; and yet Government campaigns still have great success, despite the choice being loaded in favour of the drinks companies (it’s what people want).

Not only is Government marketing proven financially, but it is also the right thing to do. Even if there is a ‘cost’ to its marketing, it is better to ask not “what does it cost”, but “what is it worth?” The fact that successful Government campaigns more than pay for themselves and improve the quality of life for individuals and communities, both in the short and the long term, should be proof enough of the validity of maintaining them.

The challenge now is to continue the good work that marketers have so far helped create.
Government marketing

- Have a clear evidence base that there is a role for marketing
- See situations from the point of view of the individual
- Where appropriate, avoid making messages appear to come directly from a Government or establishment source; campaigns such as It Doesn’t Have to Happen and agencies such as The Carbon Trust and the Food Standards Agency have been successful because their messages do not seem to come directly or exclusively from Government
- A portal (via Facebook and equivalents, not Direct.gov.uk) where citizens can access information about Government marketing that gives evidence of its value
- Communicate internally and externally the figures that show that cutting Government marketing is a false economy
- Where possible, logos and designs to be completed in-house to avoid media criticism of wasteful spending
- Ensure clear objectives are put in place at the start of each campaign and that these objectives are achievable, relevant and desirable. Monitor the objectives during and after campaigns
SECTION EIGHT Conclusions

Behaviour change marketing

- Identify key motivators and barriers to provide insight into the role of marketing
- Positive messages can succeed more than negative ones – rewards or incentives where possible, instead of punishments, within the remit of a legislative background
- Promote the benefits as well as the risks of certain behaviours
- Personalisation where possible leads to fullest understanding of motivators and barriers to behavioural change
- Where personalisation is not possible, segmentation
- Not making a change seem too much like hard work. Change4Life shows how you can swap large meals for small ones, rather than having to cut out enjoyable food altogether

- Targeting the right audience by using messages they understand – anti-smoking messages to teenagers need to be very different from those directed at older people who want to give up
- Telling a story, and making it personal – a call for organ donation does not resonate, but it does if the individual can picture themselves or a relative needing the service. It is more successful as it personalises the message

Marketing outside behavioural change

- Market the marketers: where possible, give consistent and continual evidence that marketing generates savings or quantifiable benefits to society, not additional costs

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Sources

Related reading

**Marketing in the Public Sector**
Philip Kotler and Nancy Lee
£28.99

This groundbreaking book written exclusively for governmental agencies, offers dozens of marketing success stories from agencies of all types - from around the world. World-renowned marketing expert Philip Kotler and social marketing consultant Nancy Lee show that marketing is far more than communications and has at its core a citizen-oriented mindset. This book offers no-nonsense roadmaps on how to create a strong brand identity, gather citizen input, and evaluate your efforts. It presents a step-by-step model for developing a marketing plan, pulling the lessons of the entire book together into one, high-impact action plan.

**Social Marketing**
Gerard Hastings
£24.99

The book is aimed at seasoned marketers with an interest in social marketing, and those in the public health or safety sector, who are perhaps new to marketing, introducing them to key marketing concepts that they might find useful. Hastings sets out the principles of social marketing, covering its theories (in particular human behaviour theory) and communication techniques (including the use of fear in changing behaviour). He also looks at relationships with stakeholders, ‘competition’ in social marketing, research.

Besides delving into the theory, the book features 18 case studies of social marketing in practice, making use of some excellent, thought-provoking exercises that really help the reader get to grips with the thorny issues involved.

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