

Characteristics of a First-Rate Marketing Approach

To improve and protect water quality, it's often necessary for people to change certain behaviors. The behaviors in need of changing, and the people who must make the changes, depend on the watershed. Social marketers work to change behavior. The best social marketers possess the following characteristics:

Willingness to Change the Offer

The best social marketers realize that their target audiences may not see the desirability of the behavior change they promote. When the target audience doesn't respond in the desired way, they change their strategies. They find out why the customer finds the behavior change undesirable, and eliminate, or change the perception, of those factors.

Commitment to Planning

The best social marketers systematically think through the major steps. They develop long-term strategies and make specific tactical decisions. Plans include detailed evaluations of factors competing against the behavior change they promote. They base their plans on extensive customer research. After implementing strategies they frequently measure effectiveness. This includes coordinating all of the elements of the Four P's:

- **Product**– Ensure the customer finds the product, or the action, attractive.
- **Price**– Design programs so customers believe the benefits outweigh the costs. Consider all costs and benefits, such as foregone opportunities or unrealized benefits, not only monetary factors.
- **Place**– Ensure your customers find the behavior change easy to do.
- **Promotion**– Promote your programs so your customers know they exist.

Willingness to Take Reasoned Risks

First-rate marketers realize they compete for their target audience's attention. They know they will never completely understand their target's mind, and realize some of their actions will fail. They experiment, and rarely commit to one strategy. Social marketers always look for, and recognize, signs that show an idea is not working. They develop contingency plans to use when ideas fail, and try several strategies at once and see which one works best.

Specialized Skills

The best social marketers know how to effectively conduct marketing research, package, distribute, and promote their product, and create and place advertising.

Develop these same skills, and use them to protect and improve water quality. For more information on social marketing, see the source of the article, "*Marketing Social Change*" by Alan Andreasen.