

# Social Marketing and Health Communications

## Cutting-Edge, Evidence-Based, Award-Winning Strategies



Whether developing a national campaign to prevent substance abuse among teens or promoting clinician adoption of new practice guidelines, Abt Associates engages **innovative, audience-driven** marketing, communications, and dissemination strategies to realize positive social change.

For more than a decade, Abt Associates has produced high-impact, award-winning communications products and campaigns in the U.S. and across the world to help people adopt safer, healthier behaviors.

The architects of Abt's social marketing and health communications work are seasoned professionals who address each challenge with a deep understanding of the audiences and of the best, evidence-proven approaches to shaping and inspiring behavior change. Our staff includes nationally renowned social marketing authorities and experts in social science, formative and evaluation research, partnership outreach and integrated marketing. Each is a bold, creative thinker, passionate about the work and vigilant about achieving maximum, measurable results within a limited budget.

Over the past decade, we have been privileged to work for, and with, some of the country's most respected health organizations on a wide range of issues. These issues include:

- Child health
- Climate change
- Clinical guideline adoption
- Environmental health
- Health literacy
- HIV and AIDS
- Immunization
- International health
- Long-term care
- Mental health
- Obesity prevention
- Pandemic influenza
- Substance use
- Quality improvement and health IT



Abt provides the following services:

- Social marketing and behavior change communications
- Dissemination, learning and diffusion
- Formative research, audience analysis and evaluation
- Strategy, planning and execution
- Messaging, branding and campaigns
- Creative services and multi-platform materials
- Social and interactive media, websites and data visualization
- Public relations and digital advertising
- Partnerships and stakeholder engagement
- Meetings and events

### Select Projects in Social Marketing and Health Communications

#### Communications Support for National Recovery Month

From 2003 to 2014, Abt Associates delivered a high-impact, integrated marketing campaign to showcase the Recovery Month initiative. This national award-winning campaign for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) involved a multiple media platform launch and sustained activities including use of social and traditional media and viral marketing. Through Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Flickr and e-card campaigns—we were able to successfully connect with current and new audiences. Our outreach materials—for print, television, radio and the web—were developed in both English and Spanish. These materials, which expanded Recovery Month's visibility, included community education toolkits, flyers, posters, public service announcements, and technical treatment manuals.



The final step in our campaign—evaluation of the effectiveness of our activities, events, products, and deliverables—involved conducting focus groups, interviews, communication audits, usability assessments and case studies. These

assessments have shown that our activities made an impact. In 2013, our activities led to a significant increase in Recovery Month material access and campaign awareness, including a 53 percent increase in Twitter followers, the mobile website had close to 95,000 visits, and our Google advertising campaign generated over eight million impressions in three months. Further, the Road to Recovery television series reached 57 million households.

Over the years, Recovery Month has received numerous awards, including from Ava, Web Health, Anvil, Omni, Hermes, Telly, MarCom, Mercury and Interactive Media, for its effective social media tools, website, PSAs, and fully integrated campaign.

### Shattering Cultural and Generational Barriers

When Abt Associates was retained to examine the barriers to accessing preventive health services among middle-aged and older unmarried Latina women, we got to work on developing motivational Spanish-language radio ads to recruit representatives of this population for focus groups.

Abt's study for the National Institute on Aging followed an exploratory, qualitative design including in-depth interviews assisted by engaging photographic prompts and photo-narratives. The methods broke through cultural and generational barriers enabling this segment of Latina women to openly discuss health matters and, for example, share why they shied away from cancer screenings. The results highlighted the importance of developing programs and materials that offer encouragement, support and easy-to-navigate services to assure access to preventive screenings for unmarried Latina women.

### Communicating Evidence-Based Recommendations to Clinicians and Patients

A key piece of the Affordable Care Act is the guarantee of prevention benefits for all Americans. But where should they and their providers turn for the latest science on services to help prevent disease and help them lead longer, healthier lives? The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force), an independent panel that provides evidence-

based recommendations for primary care about screenings, counseling, and preventive medications, helps fill this need. Since 2010, the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research (AHRQ) has partnered with Abt Associates to communicate to primary care clinicians, patients, the media, and stakeholders about the Task Force and its work. Our team worked with AHRQ to put valuable processes in place to help streamline support of the Task Force and to directly provide high quality, on-going communications support. This includes strategic communications planning for more than 30 health care topics per year, general communications about the Task Force and its processes, stakeholder analysis and outreach, message development, media relations and training.

Using our strategic communications approach, the team has achieved improved press coverage of the Task Force (including both increased coverage by television broadcast and major news outlets, as well as an increase in the accuracy of coverage), resulting in 90 percent or more neutral or positive media coverage each month. The Abt Associates team has also enhanced communication to consumers and providers about Task Force recommendations through the development of consumer and clinician guides, which have been produced for more than 70 topics.

By raising the public profile of the Task Force and ensuring that it is recognized as an open, credible, independent, and unbiased recommendation-making body, Abt Associates has helped the Task Force effectively communicate its evidence-based recommendations.

### Contact

For more information on Abt Associates and our work in Social Marketing and Health Communications, contact:

**Selena Ramkeesoon, MBA, MLS, PMP**  
Vice President, Strategic Communications  
301.347.5789  
Selena.Ramkeesoon@abtassoc.com

**Abt Associates** is a mission-driven, global leader in research, evaluation, and program implementation in the fields of health, social and environmental policy, and international development. Known for its rigorous approach to solving complex challenges, Abt Associates is regularly ranked as one of the top 20 global research firms and one of the top 40 international development innovators. The company has multiple offices in the U.S. and program offices in more than 40 countries.

