

Case Study 3: Developing a Mental Health Campaign

Student notes

This case study is designed to give students some practice in considering issues associated with reporting and communicating about mental illness or suicide, so that they will be better prepared to deal with such situations should they arise, when they are working as a journalist or public relations practitioner. Mental illness and suicide are sensitive and complex issues and it is natural that some people may feel uncomfortable talking about them. Usually, these feelings are temporary and do not cause serious distress. However, if students do become distressed as a result of using these materials or because of other problems, and these feelings continue, they should talk to someone they trust such as a lecturer, tutor, or counsellor at their university. Students can also talk to a GP, health professional or call a crisis counselling service such as:

- Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 (5-25 years)
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467

For online information visit: www.headspace.org.au and www.reachout.com

Background Information

Aims and Objectives

SANE Australia is the leading national charity for people affected by mental illness and coordinates Australia's only national free call helpline providing information and advice about symptoms, treatment and support services. Awareness regarding mental illness in the community is poor and of those people experiencing a mental disorder only 38% will seek help.

The aim of SANE Australia's Signs Campaign was to increase the number of people seeking help for symptoms of mental health problems. Campaign objectives were to:

- Raise awareness of the early signs of mental illness and encourage help-seeking behaviour;
- Raise awareness of SANE Australia, and especially the SANE 1800 Helpline as an action point.

Key Publics

- Primary - General community throughout Australia, who has or may come into contact with someone who has a mental illness – including those in urban, rural or remote areas.
- Secondary - mental health and primary health sectors, state and federal governments and the corporate sector.

Preliminary Research

Consultation with families affected by mental illness and analysis of SANE Helpline data highlighted the importance of people understanding more about the early signs of illness and feeling empowered to take action. In consultation with advertising agency Commotion, SANE examined campaigns from other organisations in Australia and overseas and then developed messages/images that would best communicate with the community and the public. The Signs Campaign was piloted in late 2007 and its



evaluation informed the current strategies, identifying which media channels to use for maximum response.

Campaign Strategies and Tactics

The message of the campaign is that if you or someone you know shows signs of mental illness, there's something you can do and SANE can help put you in touch with information and support.

SANE developed the Signs Campaign in stages, starting with CSAs (community service announcements) in print and radio, moving to paid radio and print CSAs. A television advertisement was then developed and piloted as a CSA. Evaluation of these strategies informed the next stage of the campaign, which includes a mixture of paid and CSA television, radio and print advertisements, and tram stop, airport and notice board posters. Charity filler advertisements have also been developed. Paid advertising is an important bargaining tool for an increased number of CSAs. Advertisements were sent to a wide range of media outlets nationally by media buyers, using their networks.

In associated activity, media releases were distributed to the media, mental health sector and community, describing the advertisements and the aims of the campaign. Several organisations published the release in newsletters/internal publications, some multimedia/advertising covered the issue, particularly online. An alert was sent to grass roots organisations, letting them know about the campaign. This resulted in several organisations contacting SANE for permission to feature the advertisements as part of their awareness raising/training activities, or to showcase the advertisements at conferences, stalls and other venues.

Evaluation

Success of the Signs Campaign was measured through response to the SANE Helpline – which was the action point for the advertisements – before, during and after campaign advertising. Helpline callers were asked to identify the reasons why they had called the SANE Helpline and where they had heard about it. Demographic data were also collected from callers.

Advisors could determine when the television commercials were running (and in which regions), as there was an immediate increase in callers to the Helpline. Helpline data indicated a dramatic increase in the number of callers seeking information about mental illness and referral to other services. There was also anecdotal evidence from the community reporting they had seen or heard the ads.

An example of the impact of the campaign can be seen in comparison of Helpline statistics. In June 2008, when the campaign was being aired on radio and television throughout Australia, 35% reported they heard about SANE via publicity compared to only 17% during the same time in 2007. In the first six months of the Signs Campaign, the Helpline received a 30% increase in calls, with advisors reporting most inquiries were from first time callers.

Challenges

Receiving the 'right' coverage of mental illness in the media is a constant challenge. The Signs Campaign was developed with this mind, to help people understand that mental illness is common, a part of everyday life and experienced by a wide range of people and that learning about the signs and taking action to get help is an important first step in treatment. By featuring everyday street signs and people representing all walks of life, the campaign aims to foster the idea that mental illness affects everyone.

Student Exercise

The information provided above gives an overview of Stage 1 of the Signs social advertising campaign. The evaluation indicates that the campaign achieved a 30% increase in calls to the SANE helpline during the first 6 months. A strategy is now required to support the ongoing community service announcements and

deliver long term, sustainable outcomes. It has been identified that a public relations campaign that engages the community and builds relationships is likely to deliver such outcomes.

Building on the success of Stage 1 of the campaign, design a public relations campaign with one of the following target groups in mind:

1. People in rural areas, including farmers;
2. Young people between 12 and 25 years;
3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
4. People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

As for Stage 1, the campaign objectives for your specific target group are to:

- Raise awareness of the early signs of mental illness and encourage help-seeking behaviour;
- Raise awareness of SANE Australia, and especially the SANE 1800 Helpline as an action point.

The following discussion questions will assist you to work through your campaign plans. You may want to refer to the *Mindframe* for Universities website at www.mindframe-media.info for specific information about the mental health of the specified target groups.

Supporting materials from the campaign

The following materials from the campaign are provided for students:

- Television CSA;
- Radio CSA,
- Media release;
- Print Advertisements.

Research

1. Write a situation analysis and develop measurable objectives for the campaign.
2. List the types of research you would need to conduct before developing your campaign.
3. Develop an evaluation plan, outlining how you will measure the success of your campaign.

Campaign Development

4. List the important aspects regarding communication about mental illness that you will need to consider.
5. Outline the key elements of your campaign strategy.
6. Develop some key messages for this targeted campaign.
7. Develop a list of tactics you might employ to achieve your objectives.

Media Relations

8. How might you use the media as part of your campaign strategy?
9. Identify what types of media will be appropriate for your chosen target group and provide a rationale for this.
10. Develop a media relations plan.