

Using Marketing to Create Widespread Change

These strategies and tools can help you find the best solutions to your most vexing problems.

By Terrence Fernsler

Social Marketing and Social Change. By R. Craig Lefebvre. Softcover. 564 pages. John Wiley & Sons (wiley.com).


Marketing—which is sometimes used to institutionalize greed—can also be used to improve social conditions. This book takes a comprehensive approach to applying marketing to social issues. It provides frameworks for working with people to drive behavioral change. It can help you reflect on what might be missing from your organization's efforts to create more sustainable and equitable solutions.

People don't live solely in an economic marketplace. Applying some of what has been learned about marketing in business to drive large-scale behavioral change can help bring positive impacts on people's health and well-being.

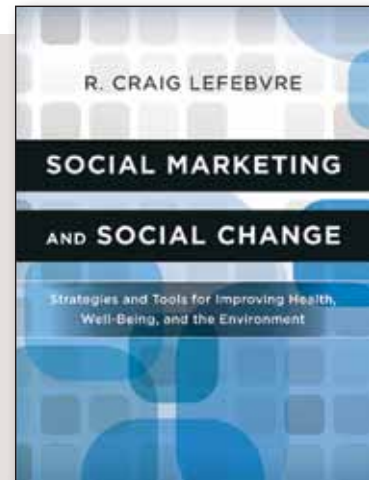
Author R. Craig Lefebvre offers real-life examples of social marketing-driven changes that have improved communities. He presents social marketing as a way to identify what people value rather than as an effort to impose value. He describes all the processes and outcomes that influence change, yet at the same time he takes a systems approach, not a clinical approach, to obtaining results.

This comprehensive, thought-provoking book goes beyond individual behavioral change to large-scale policy change that's not driven from the top but from the community level. It applies marketing principles to the development of innovative, community-based approaches. Especially worthwhile is its focus on sustainable solutions and on effective ways to evaluate marketing efforts.

Social marketing allocates resources in a strategic way to address enormous, far-reaching problems at a manageable scale. It facilitates change by meeting stakeholders' goals and integrates tried-and-true practice with insights from those being served. It approaches social issues by determining how different actors in society can improve program effectiveness, equity, efficiency, and access.

Unlike most new books, *Social Marketing and Social Change*, while encompassing new technology tools, isn't limited to them. It includes asset based community development as a marketing consideration, and asks truly generative questions to make sense of how to use marketing tools in the social sector to effect meaningful change. 

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Think Like a Fish

If you want to catch a fish, learn to think like one, the saying goes. Social marketing is based on this premise: To help people change, you first need to listen to what they have to say. Then focus on behaviors that are amenable to change.

As you do so, value deviancy more than conformity. Recognize that there are individuals whose uncommon ways of thinking lead to better solutions than those of their peers.

This approach assumes that innovative ideas already exist within the system. Your role is to help the community discover and spread those ideas to facilitate social change.

There are five steps to the process:

- 1. Identify four to six people** who have achieved an unexpected good outcome despite high risk.
- 2. Interview and observe these people to discover uncommon behaviors** that could explain the good outcome.
- 3. Analyze the findings to confirm that the uncommon behaviors are accessible** to those who need to adopt them.
- 4. Design activities to encourage adoption** of the new behaviors.
- 5. Monitor and evaluate** the results.

When a medical center used this technique, it discovered five vital behaviors that led to uncommonly high customer satisfaction: Smile, identify yourself, make eye contact, tell people what you're doing and why, and end every interaction with, "Is there anything else that you need?" When the entire center learned and enacted those behaviors, there was a dramatic improvement in service quality scores.

— adapted from *The Power of Positive Deviance* as discussed in *Social Marketing and Social Change*