Developing an Online Tool
to assist effective use of Behavioural Theory in Intervention Planning & Development

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Dublin 2nd World Social Marketing Conference 2011

“There is nothing so practical as a good theory”
Kurt Lewin 1951

But we know people still struggle to know how to select, use & apply theory appropriately
Using theory effectively can help intervention developers in many ways...

- In harnessing extensive past learning from rich literatures
- In avoiding waste of time & resources on inappropriate or ineffective methods
- In recognising, & then managing, complexity
- In framing of research questions & method selection
- In considering audience segmentation options
- In intervention mix selection & subsequent design
- In improving subsequent evaluation, clarifying initial assumptions and assisting development of intermediate outcome measures

Use of theory to inform intervention design is strongly recommended

- Within a huge range of literature across the social behavioural sciences
- Leading social marketers across the world
- USA: CDC’s performance support tool, CDCynergy
- UK: Government’s independent review recommendations ‘It’s Our Health!’
Different efforts to Organize & Simplify:

- Inventories, eg: Maibach & Parrott, Glanz et al.
- The US NIH National Cancer Institute *Theories at a Glance*
- BEHAVE (AED)
- ‘deCIDES’ framework (French/Blair-Stevens)
- Processes of Change (with Trans-theoretical Model, Prochaska & DiClemente)
- Integrated Theory Framework Grid Tool (Blair-Stevens)

- + your model or framework?

Eyes still glaze over & practitioners...

- Use a few “usual suspect” theories of behaviour change
  (eg: ‘Stages of Change’ or the ‘Health Belief Model’)

- Are swayed by the trends in popularised theory
  (eg: the *Nudge* version of Behavioural Economics)

- Retro-fit or invoke theory to justify programme design decisions made for other reasons
Our Challenge...

To improve the quality & consistency of effective behavioural interventions

By helping those developing interventions to select & apply appropriate theory from across the social & behavioural sciences

Possible Solution...

A “Theory Wizard” performance support tool that:

• would be online freeware
• with a coded database of theories
• offering snapshot descriptions of the theories & examples of their use
• asking questions with drop-down menu response options that helps to narrow potential theories down to 1 or 2 potentially most useful
1. Is changing an existing individual-level behaviour your campaign objective?
   1: Yes
   2: No

2. Is the behaviour you are trying to change:
   1: a health information-seeking behaviour
   2: a health risk behaviour
   3: a health service utilisation behaviour
   4: a behaviour relevant to health policy

3. Is the behaviour something most people in your audience already know they should do?
   1: Yes
   2: No

4. Has perceived risk been shown to predict the behaviour?
   1: Yes
   2: No [eliminate Health Belief Model]

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Tool Development Process

**Vision**

- Initial guidance from conferences
- A Delphi consultation survey to engage selected people/experts on issues such as:
  - The universe of theories
  - Interface features
  - Compatibility with existing tools
- Listserv surveys
- Prototype tests by users
What’s the Delphi Method?

- Developed by RAND in the 1950’s, this is a structured communication process in which a questionnaire is distributed to a small group of experts (N = 12-15)
- Responses are tabulated, summarized and fed back anonymously to the initial respondents
- Respondents get a new set of questions (some repeated from the first round), and are encouraged to revise their initial answers in light of the views of the other members in the group
- Process repeats until consensus is reached (eg: Maibach, 1997, Critical elements of social marketing, JHC, 2(4), 304-7)

Your thoughts are needed on...

- The overall concept
- Who likely users would be
- Theory selection criteria
- Scope & format
- Delphi contributors
2-part Input Format Today

1. Answer initial questions on cards
2. Open discussion

#1

How useful would a tool like this be to people developing interventions?

a) Very useful
b) Somewhat useful
c) Not particularly useful
d) Not really useful at all
#2

Likely users for such a tool would be:

a) programme developers  
b) researchers / evaluators  
c) academics / teachers  
d) other ________________

#3

The only theories to be included will be those with constructs that have been specified well enough to be measured

(eg: Theory of Planned Behaviour)

**Less specified theories are beyond the scope**

(eg: Theory of Cultural Capital)

a) Strongly agree  
b) Agree  
c) Disagree  
d) Strongly disagree
In addition to theories that apply to a broad range of behavioural phenomena (eg: Social Cognitive Theory), theories that deal with a narrow range of content should be included (eg: Extended Parallel Process Model – reactions to fear appeals).

a) Agree
b) Disagree

Only theories used successfully in the past – those for which there are real-world examples – should be included.

a) Strongly agree
b) Agree
c) Disagree
d) Strongly disagree
The following theories should definitely be included:

a) ____________

b) ____________

c) ____________

The tool should narrow theory options down, and give...

a) examples of how they have been applied  yes  no

b) assistance in front end and back end research (eg qualitative and quantitative questionnaire design)  yes  no

c) references for further reading  yes  no

d) something else (please specify)________
The following experts on behavioural theory and/or social marketing should definitely be considered for the Delphi consultation:

a) ____________
b) ____________
c) ____________
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