How to enforce management behaviours without force

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Abstract

The enforcement of companion animal management regulations is by no means an easy task. Animal Management Officers (AMOs) must be able to effectively manage the needs of the individual and the companion animal with the needs of the community. While information regarding animal handling and control is readily available to AMOs, information regarding the effective management of people is lacking. The aim of this paper is to communicate psychological theories of behaviour change and how they relate to the implementation of animal management policy.

Why enforce without force?

Companion animal management through the implementation of animal management regulations is important for the welfare of pet owners, pets and the community. Achieving 100% compliance with animal management regulations is often a difficult task. One method of achieving this task is through coercion via the imposition of various sanctions. There are, however, various issues associated with this strategy.

The first issue is that dog management regulations are sometimes difficult to enforce either because it is impractical to do so or because the financial resources required for effective enforcement are lacking (Australian Companion Animal Council Inc, 2006). For example, councils can organize a door knock throughout the council area to ensure that all dogs are registered but the costs of doing so would probably outweigh the revenue gained through registration fees.

The second issue associated with the enforcement of animal management regulations is that not all aspects of pet ownership are able to be regulated. This would be a restriction of people's civil liberties. For example, many of us would probably like to prevent some people from even owning pets in the first place but this would not be a possibility.

A third issue associated with the enforcement of animal management regulations is that if too many pet owner behaviours are regulated, regulators can run the risk of being perceived as illegitimate. Consequently, any regulations passed by council will be perceived by pet owners as unfair and will be subsequently resisted (Jackson, 1995).

The shortcomings of animal management regulations highlight the need to identify ways in which animal management behaviours can be promoted without force.

Can education promote management behaviours?

One method of achieving compliance with regulations is via education. Education refers to any message that informs people of the correct or appropriate behaviour (Rothschild, 1999). Education is a useful means of fostering awareness of rules and regulations.

After all, rules cannot be obeyed unless one knows that they exist. However, simply knowing what the correct behaviour is does not always mean that one will perform the behaviour. As many AMO's know, there are many pet owners that fail to comply with animal management regulations despite knowing that they exist.

According to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, information alone cannot effectively change behaviours unless there are also changes in the attitudes and beliefs driving the behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). This means that voluntary compliance with companion animal management regulations requires that pet owners are not only aware of the requirements but that they also believe that they are capable of carrying out the requirements and that the behaviours will benefit them and /or their pet in some way.

Since the transfer of information is not always sufficient and since enforcement is not always possible, an additional strategy is needed. A third method is therefore required. The aim of this paper is to describe how social marketing strategies can be used as an effective means of promoting pet owner management behaviours.

What is Social Marketing?

Social marketing is the application of marketing concepts and techniques to promote socially desirable behaviours (Donovan & Henley, 2003). The goal of social marketing is to encourage behaviours that are beneficial for the functioning of individuals and/or the community.

Unlike commercial marketing, which seeks to persuade individuals to make short-term decisions, like buying a particular product, social marketing seeks to encourage long-term and relatively complex behaviours or ideas (Consumer Affairs Australia, 2006).

Social marketing arose as a discipline in response to the realization that the provision of information alone is not always effective at inducing behaviour change. To this end, social marketing has been used effectively in a variety of areas including wearing sunscreen, smoking cessation, recycling and conserving water. It has also been used successfully in increasing compliance within several regulatory environments including taxation, drink driving, speeding and drug use.

Social marketing is often thought to be synonymous with advertising but it is much more than just commercials and big budget campaigns. Social marketing is a planned, informed and targeted strategy which employs psychological behaviour change tools to motivate individuals to undertake various behaviours. Advertising is one of many methods used by social marketers but, alone, advertising is insufficient to motivate behaviour change (Kennedy, 2010). Social marketing is most effective when applied at a community level.

Community- based social marketing campaigns can tailor messages to appeal to a particular audience. Social marketing is also best when applied at a community level because messages can be communicated via personal contact rather than mass media (Kennedy, 2010). This places social marketing campaigns as a relevant, useful and effective means of addressing compliance issues within the realm of local animal management.

The principles of social marketing

The core principles underlying social marketing campaigns are *consumer orientation* and the concept of *exchange*. Social marketing campaigns are always oriented towards the consumer's needs and wants. This means that massages must be communicated in a language that can be understood by the target audience, that the benefits of behaviour change are relevant to the target audience and that the messages are placed in a media that the target audience are exposed to (Donovan & Henley, 2003). Social marketing campaigns are based on the premise that an exchange occurs between the target audience and the regulating authority. For example, within the commercial marketing arena an exchange occurs between the product and money. Within the social marketing arena exchanges are not always tangible entities. For example, a campaign addressing smoking is based on an exchange between the act of quitting and a longer, healthier life. This means that when designing a social marketing campaign it must be kept in mind that if regulators want pet owners to comply with regulations then something of value must be offered in exchange for the behaviour. This may include tangible things like financial incentives but it can also include intangible things like the approval of others or being acknowledged as a valued member of the community.

A step-by-step guide to social marketing

Planning a strategy with which to promote compliance with regulations requires attention to several issues. A successful marketing strategy requires three steps:

1. Identify the problem;
2. Identify solutions to the problem by:
   a. Defining the behaviours one wishes to address and;
   b. Defining the audience one wishes to address
3. Implement the campaign then evaluate the campaign.

1. Identify the Problem.

Social marketing campaigns are more likely to be effective if one has a clear idea of what the problem is. What are the most pressing issues in your municipality? Each municipality is likely to have different problems depending on the area. Perhaps barking is more of a problem in urban based municipalities than rural municipalities. Wandering cats at night time may be more of an issue for some areas than others and so on.

2. Identify the Solution

a. What behaviour(s) do you want to change?

The identification of target behaviour(s) must be specific and measurable. There are two reasons for this. First, specific and measurable target behaviours are more easily communicated to the audience. Second, specific and measurable target behaviours allow benchmarks to be established so that the successfulness of the social marketing campaign can be evaluated.

Some problems will only have one target behaviour, while others may have many target behaviours. For example, the problem of wandering dogs has only one target behaviour - confinement. The problem of nuisance barking, on the other hand, may have multiple target behaviours including participation in obedience training and socialisation or the provision of enrichment for dogs that are left alone.

b. Who do you want to change?

Once you have identified the target behaviour or behaviours, the next task is to identify the target audience. In marketing terms, this is called segmentation (Donovan & Henley, 2003). Are there different groups of people in your municipality that do not comply with animal management regulations? Are males more likely than females to fail to comply with certain animal management laws? Are young pet owners more likely to be non-compliant than older pet owners or does it depend on the regulation? Perhaps there are differing reasons for non-compliance depending on the person or group of people. For example, older pet owners with limited mobility may find it difficult to provide the necessary training and socialisation required to manage a barking dog. They will have very different reasons for keeping a barking dog than other people. Different circumstances of each segment of the audience will require different interventions. In such cases, one may have to choose which segment to target. Segments can be chosen based on size and the level of impact they have on the problem. Are barking dogs more likely to be owned by aged persons or are they more likely to be owned by young working families?

Commercial marketers design and package their product so that it is in accordance with the needs and wants of the target audience (Donovan & Henley, 2003; Kotier & Zaltman, 1996). Similarly, social marketers must also design and package their product in such a way that it is appealing to the audience. In order to do this effectively one must attain knowledge about the audience.

Accordingly, once you have identified your target audience you need to find out more about them. Are they aware that they are not performing the target behaviour? What are their attitudes and beliefs towards performing the target behaviour? Do they perceive any advantages or disadvantages to performing the behaviours? Social marketing campaigns should focus on the removal of barriers to behaviour change while also promoting the benefits of behaviour change.

3. Design an Intervention

The design of an intervention can be facilitated by employing the four Ps (McCarthy, 1968). This is also referred to as the marketing mix (Donovan & Henley, 2003).

a. Product

What are you offering? This must take the audience's needs and wants into consideration. What's in it for them? These can be tangible or intangible benefits. For example, if registrations are the product, what do they get in return?

Tangible benefits may include services such as access to leash free areas and local pound facilities while intangible benefits may include peace of mind that if their dog does become lost they will be reunited quickly and safely. Other intangible benefits to registration may include gaining the approval of other dog owners or being acknowledged as a good citizen.

It is useful here to distinguish between the *core product* and the *augmented product*. The *core product* refers to the underlying benefit that the consumer is obtaining by buying the product or by buying the service or undertaking the behaviour (Donovan & Henley, 2003). For example, if one was selling a computer the core product may be better management. If one was selling cosmetics, the core product might be feeling good about one's appearance(Donovan & Henley, 2003).

The *augmented product* refers to the buyers total consumption system such as additional services and benefits included (Donovan & Henley, 2003). For a computer it might be an extended warranty, software or user training. For cosmetics, it might be tips or advice on make-up application.

With regards to the promotion of annual pet registration, the core product might be piece of mind that if an owner loses their pet the chances of a reunion are increased and quick. The augmented product might be maps locating off leash areas, the provision of disposal bags and ID tags, Additionally, registration might be augmented with newsletters informing owners of what their registrations have paid for or membership to a pet owner community forum.

b. Price

Price refers to the cost to the target audience for purchasing the product or for changing their behaviour (Donovan & Henley, 2003). These costs can be financial or otherwise. Using registration as an example, there are the obvious financial costs associated with the behaviour as well as the effort to go to the council and register the dog and having to make the dog wear a tag. When devising a strategy one must ensure that the costs of performing the behaviour do not outweigh the benefits.

c. Place

In marketing terms, place is called the distribution channel (Donovan & Henley, 2003). If one is selling a product, place refers to where the product will be purchased. Access to the product must be easy. With regards to social marketing, if the product one is selling is an idea or behaviour than the place or distribution channel refers to where or when people might think about the issue? This may be obvious for some ideas and behaviours. For example, if municipalities wish to increase compliance with dog leash laws than people are most likely to think about the issue in a public area like a beach or park. Computer programs and internet sites are also an effective means of promoting change. Clearly, though, the effectiveness of these programs and websites will depend on consumers being made aware that such products exist and on their ability to utilize and navigate the systems.

Place also refers to making compliance easy by removing barriers to compliance. For example, disposal bags could be made available in dog parks to encourage owners to pick up after their dog. Additionally, information sheets and in-house training could be made available for owners to control barking or to help owners set up cat containment enclosures.

Intermediaries

Place also refers to employing intermediaries to distribute the product through a channel or network (Donovan & Henley, 2003). These may include veterinarians, shop keepers, and community groups. Considering most people own a pet, the potential list of intermediaries could be quite extensive. Intermediaries may need to be trained in how to communicate the message. For example, GP's are a useful intermediary to utilize for the promotion of weight loss programs but many lack the confidence and nutritional knowledge required to offer lifestyle advice (Buttriss, 1997). In using intermediaries it is also important to remember that they will need an incentive to promote these behaviours or ideas. Peer selling is another means of selling a product. This is a tactic used by companies such as Tupperware and Avon. Since research reveals that pet owners are susceptible to peer influence (Rohlf, Bennett, Toukhsati, & Coleman, 2010), using this technique may be an effective means of increasing compliance.

d. Promotion using persuasion

The fourth P refers to promotion. This entails the identification of ways to motivate audiences to purchase the product. One must identify ways to make the product familiar, acceptable and desirable (Donovan & Henley, 2003). Promotion may include advertising, articles in local newspapers, personal selling, and direct mail.

Psychological research reveals six effective ways to persuade others (Cialdini, 1994). The first way is through the principle of *reciprocity* where people are more likely to comply with a request from someone who had previously done them a favour. Within the marketing arena, this principle can be seen in the use of free gifts, samples, coupons, customer cards etc. This practice can also be seen when charities give people red noses, or stickers in exchange for a donation.

The second principle is commitment and consistency. This principle refers to the desire for ones beliefs, attitudes and behaviours to be consistent or congruent. When one makes a commitment, particularly a public commitment, to perform a behaviour, they are more likely to follow through with the behaviour in order to maintain consistency (Kennedy, 2010). For example, individuals who made a public commitment to a household energy conservation program conserved more energy than those who made a private commitment or no commitment to the program (Pallak, Cook, & Sullivan, 1980). The principle of consistency is often used by commercial companies when they get people to enter a competition, where in order to be considered for a prize one must write in 100 words or less why product X is so useful to them.

This principle is also utilized in other ways where once a person has complied with one request, they are more likely to comply with a greater request. For example, a Government may ask a certain venue to designate food areas as smoke free. Then, once this has been accepted, greater demands for other smoke free areas are discussed (Donovan & Henley, 2003).

The third principle is social proof. This refers to the notion that people are more willing to perform a behaviour if they see others performing the behaviour. When people are faced with a decision it is customary for them to look to others for a cue in order to establish what the social norm (expected behaviour) is (Donovan & Henley, 2003). This principle can often be seen in TAC commercials which attempt to demonstrate to others that most people do not drink drive. This is why it is really important to communicate to others when social marketing campaigns have been successful. For example, if pet owners know that the majority pet owners are responsible then they will feel obliged to do the same.

The fourth principle is liking. Basically this refers to the phenomena that people are more likely to comply with the requests of people that they like. People are perceived as likeable if they are familiar, attractive and deemed to be warm and outgoing (Donovan & Henley, 2003). This is often why models or celebrities are used to endorse products, ideas or behaviours.

The fifth principle is authority. This principle refers to the phenomenon that people are more likely to obey a legitimate and credible authority. This is often why products or behaviours are endorsed by doctors or other professionals. The sixth and final principle is scarcity. People value opportunities that are scarce or rare.

4.   Implement and Evaluate

Subsequent to the implementation of the intervention it is important to evaluate the program for its effectiveness. The evaluation process will determine whether the intervention was successful and what improvements can be made the next time an intervention is undertaken. When the program is implemented all activities must be recorded and monitored (Weinreich, 1999).

The first step is to determine whether or not the target audience received the message? For example, did they receive the newsletters, did they read the article in the paper, or did they see the sandwich board. The second step is to determine whether the target audience changed their behaviours in response to the message. This can be determined by using a survey to evaluate as a measure of the short term effectiveness. This could also be determined via other methods. For example, is there an increase in registration rates among the target audience.

Bringing it all together

Social marketing can be an effective means of promoting pet owner management behaviours. A successful social marketing campaign requires that one first clearly define the problem. Second, one must identify the solution by defining the target behaviour(s) and target audience.

Third, an evaluation must be carried out subsequent to the implementation of a social marketing campaign to determine the effectiveness of the intervention. In conjunction with education and regulation, social marketing offers all the tools necessary to inform, persuade and motivate pet owners to make lasting behaviour changes.

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