

Engagement and action campaigns golden rules:

Give me something to do (and a reason to do it). One of the great things about Movember is that the campaign tapped into a behavioral truth: most men at one point in their life want to see what they look like with a moustache. The campaign gave them an excuse to grow a mo and a good reason to do it.

Make it simple. A few years back, Telus experimented with audience engagement by asking its Facebook fans to go pink for breast cancer by changing the color of their profile picture. For everyone who did, Telus would make a small donation. Not sure what to expect, they were amazed when more than 800,000 people participated. Simplicity works.

Make it fun. Volkswagen introduced “fun theory” to a mass audience by running a series of social experiments, including turning a subway staircase into a people-powered piano (remember the movie Big?) to increase the use of the stairs versus the escalator next to it. The result of the action campaign was a 67 percent increase in stair use.

Make it rewarding. To combat distracted driving, Samsung Australia introduced S-Drive, a gamification app that rewards drivers with movie tickets, concerts and other prizes for driving the speed limit, making good turns and not texting while driving.

Make it a win-win-win. To encourage Canadians to get their flu shot, Rexall introduced “Shot for Shot.” For every flu shot given at a Rexall store, the company also vaccinated a child in northern Uganda. The program had a significant social impact and was a win for its non-profit partner Amref Health Africa (who delivers

the vaccines), the children and families vaccinated, consumers who felt good about getting their flu shots and the company.

Play to my interests. The Canadian Hemophilia Society wanted to make young woman aware that they could be at risk of a bleeding disorder, but rather than run an ad campaign, it created a social marketing plan in the form of an e-novella on Wattpad called *A Negative*. It wove the public education message and call to action into a Harlequin-esque story for unsuspecting readers who like romance novels and follow the popular author. The result? More than 135,000 reads.

Show up in unexpected ways. Partners for Mental Health needed youth to sign a petition calling for changes to the way we support and fund mental health services for young Canadians. So as part of a national creative marketing campaign, it wrapped a chip truck with the campaign branding (“Let’s Call BS”) and showed up outside of schools and movie theatres with a simple catch: sign the petition and enjoy some free fries. Two days later with more than 10,000 petitions signed — an action campaign success.

Be authentic. There is probably no better example of a brand authentically engaging in social impact than Patagonia. Its “Worn Wear” campaign encouraged customers to fix and wear its products for as long as possible. The results? A 46 percent increase in sales from the previous year — a significant increase in audience engagement.

Embrace failure. Engagement necessitates trial and error with your audience to see what they respond to and how. So it is vital to re-frame failure as learning, iterating as you go. As Thomas Edison said, “I have not failed, I’ve just found 10,000 ways that won’t work.”

So next time you are asked to create an awareness campaign, turn it into an action campaign instead — one that seizes the moment, delivers an irresistible incentive and incites engagement. Telling me to be good is one thing. But showing me the way and enabling the behavior will have a greater impact — much more than words can say.

Haid, Phillip, Strategy. <https://strategyonline.ca/2015/04/01/stop-telling-me-to-be-good/> (accessed September 23, 2021)