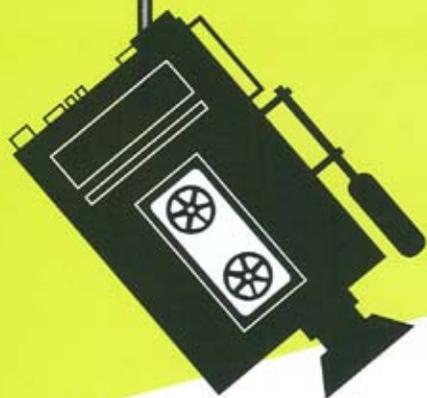


COMMUNICATION FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE, VOL.2



ESTA DE FOSSARD
JOHN RIBER

WRITING & PRODUCING FOR
TELEVISION
& **FILM**

WRITING AND PRODUCING FOR TELEVISION AND FILM

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Communication for Behavior Change, Volume 2

Esta de Fossard
John Riber



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PREFACE

This book is intended as a guide on the use of the visual media for Behavior Change Communication. It is not intended as a text book for those just entering the world of television or film writing and production. While there are some reminders of good writing and production techniques for many programming types, the emphasis is on what needs to be taken into account when designing, writing and producing programs that have a specific behavior change objective.

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I would like to thank my wife Louise who gives me far too much credit for what we have together achieved.

Thanks to my mentor, the late Dr Andreas Fugelsang, whose work continues to inspire me to pursue the challenges of learning from those I am supposed to be teaching.

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John Riber

PART 1

Entertainment– Education

USING TELEVISION AND FILM FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Entertainment–Education Format



Photograph by John Riber

The visual medium has tremendous mass appeal and can attract large audiences.

Topics

- *Popularity of the Visual Media*
- *The Entertainment–Education Format*
- *Drama*
- *The Advantages of Drama*
- *Types of Drama*
- *Starting Up the Social Development Project*
- *The “A Train” Pattern for Social Development Drama*
- *Steps in the Entertainment–Education Project Development*

POPULARITY OF THE VISUAL MEDIA

In the modern world, the visual media (film and television) are universally popular and are becoming increasingly available in developing countries. People everywhere love to go to a movie or to watch a TV show. It seems valid, therefore, to consider employing these media as part of a Behavior Change Communication project to encourage positive social change in individuals and societies.

There is no denying the popularity of television. In remote rural areas of developing countries where individual television ownership is virtually unknown, television programs can still be seen through the medium of the video van. Many development projects make use of video-vans on a regular basis, and the video showings always attract a great deal of interest. The presentation of well-made social development programs through video vans or through television can be a very powerful motivator of behavior change. Even in places where both film and television are part of everyday life, there is a continuing attraction to the visual media that cannot and should not be denied. Indeed, as Miguel Sabido says, “television has become the big moral guide in today’s world” (Sabido 1999).^{*} While words alone (radio, print, oral storytelling) can be compelling because of their appeal to the imagination, it remains true that in many cases “a picture is worth a thousand words.” Television and film can present visual role models who spark in viewers the will to emulate desired behavior change. The visual media can **demonstrate** to the chosen audience exactly how to undertake activities that can improve their lives and the visual media can **show** an audience, in inspiring pictures, how their lives can be bettered as a result of making changes.

^{*}Miguel Sabido. 1999. “Social Uses of Commercial Soap Operas”, *Journal of Development Communication*, Vol. 10.

For example, a film that carries a message on the advantages of proper nutrition for children can show, graphically and dramatically, a comparison between the appearance, health and demeanor of children who are properly fed and those who are not. The prospect of the same positive health and appearance being possible in their own children can be a powerful motivator in encouraging audience members to change behavior.

THE ENTERTAINMENT–EDUCATION FORMAT

There are many ways of using visual media to bring important knowledge to audiences. Jingles, spots, and advertisements are commonly used to remind viewers of such things as the immunization days or the importance of Vitamin A. Documentaries can present audiences with impressive facts such as how new farming methods can increase their crop production.

Perhaps the most powerful use of television or film for motivating social development is the Entertainment–Education format. “Entertainment–Education is the process of purposively designing and implementing a media message both to entertain and educate, in order to increase audience members’ knowledge about an educational issue, create favorable attitudes, and change overt behavior” (Singhal and Rogers 1999).^{*} In other words, the Entertainment–Education format combines an engaging form of entertainment with a relevant educational message. Entertainment appeals to the **emotions** of the audience. Once the audience is engrossed in the entertainment, the relevant educational message can be blended in gradually, naturally, and subtly. The educational message appeals to the **mind** and the **logic** of the audience. The Entertainment–Education format, therefore, employs a combination of emotional appeal and relevant knowledge to demonstrate and communicate the benefits that can result from a change in personal behavior and social norms.

Entertainment = Emotional appeal
Education = Relevant knowledge

At the same time, it must be remembered that the Entertainment–Education format is not a guarantee of behavior change and there are those who are likely to oppose its use. The most common criticisms of the format are:

^{*}Arvind Singhal and Everett M. Rogers. 1999. *Entertainment–Education: A Communication Strategy for Social Change*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- It is expensive when film or TV is the medium being used. The creation of a film or TV drama serial does cost money, and there are those who will argue that the money could be better spent on cheaper methods of knowledge dissemination, such as print or face-to-face discussion.
- Many of the most common behavior change topics are considered inappropriate or too sensitive to show on public airwaves. Such topics as safe childbirth, HIV and AIDS prevention, Adolescent Reproductive Health, etc., do require fairly direct discussion of personal matters and some cultures are not comfortable with such topics being shown on television or even in cinemas.
- There are critics who are concerned that writers, directors and others might enter into the Entertainment–Education field for the wrong reasons: to draw attention and fame towards themselves.

All those involved in an Entertainment–Education project should be aware of the possible weaknesses of the format and be prepared to offset these weaknesses whenever necessary. The likely criticisms should be kept in mind when planning an Entertainment–Education project. Response to these particular criticisms might suggest:

- While the creation of visual media is expensive, it can be re-used in many ways. Well-made dramas can be re-broadcast or re-shown many times using video vans in remote areas of the country.
- Careful message creation can avoid the problem of offending the media outlets. Including media policy makers in the message design is an essential first step in ensuring that programs will be approved and shown. Careful writing is another important aspect in overcoming this criticism. By their presence at the Design Workshop (see Chapter 3), writers can learn from the policy makers just what can be said and shown. They can learn from audience members and content specialists how to provide essential information in a non-offensive manner.
- Commitment to the goals of the Entertainment–Education project is a prerequisite for all those involved in it. This is particularly true of those involved in the creative aspect of the project. They should understand from the outset that the project is not about making them famous, but about improving the lives of ordinary people.
- A further important consideration is that the Entertainment–Education medium (be it film, television, community theater) should never be a stand-alone product. There should always be other interventions to support and replicate the messages it delivers. The main asset of Entertainment–Education is that it reaches out primarily to people’s emotions and thus engages their attention to learn more about the recommended behavior change.