

How Can Mobile Outreach Affect Behavior? – Video Transcript

(Highlights from Kevin Bertram's Presentation at the "Taming the Media Monster" Conference, June 26, 2009.)

Kevin Bertram: ... A lot of times we still think of communication as a one-way and we're talking at people and we're saying, "Don't do this. Do that." And...and obviously that plays a role and I don't in any one way want to say that you want to avoid doing that. That's appropriate at times, but I think what...what mobile has a great opportunity to do is also kind of close that loop and be more interactive. So during the presidential campaign, almost everything we did was one way. Go vote. Go volunteer. Watch the debate. And that was very effective. It...it actually had great results. But some of the uh, things that we did to experiment in interactivity actually paid some of the best dividends. We were asking people, "Well, what did you think of the debate? Text it in." It goes up on a blog. You're starting communication. People are asking questions about uh...uh, issues. Some of the lucky folks in Chicago got to answer all those text messages. And uh, and we found that that sort of more open-ended discussion yielded a lot more value in terms of people's connection with the campaign; the likelihood that we would actually change behavior whether it was changing vote or encouraging them to donate or encouraging them to volunteer. So uh, that, well, that broadcast message was very useful. We found that uh, that...that it was more important to have some kind of interactivity. We uh, when we started looking at helping people in the healthcare area I think that that's where we realized that interactivity is even more important in and it resonates even more. But I think about, you know, trying to stop teen pregnancy. Well, are you sending message—let's say you get this great text message in campaign. Lots of people opt in and then what do you do with that? Do you send

them messages at eleven p.m. on Fridays and say, "Remember to have safe sex." Or, "Don't have sex at all." Or, like that doesn't seem to be very compelling uh, proposition and I don't think you're gonna change much behavior that way. So the question is, "Is how can you help change behavior with this communication device?" And I think what we saw is that the interactivity is the key piece and I know, I think other people actually on this panel are gonna talk to it so I won't talk as much about it. But it seems like that chatting function is what we think of it from, of course, me, I think of it from the technical perspective where you're fundamentally creating uh, back and forth communication primarily with, hopefully on the organizational side, with one person who can provide a consistent voice about, "Where do I get tested?" Or, "Can I catch this by doing this?" Or, "Can I get pregnant?" You know, I'm sure all the questions that you know better than I, that those can be, those questions can be answered in a fundamentally anonymous manner. I mean obviously you have the person's cell phone number, but I'm thi, they're...they're far more likely to ask honest questions as opposed to if they call you and ask those questions. I mean, you know, I'm thirty-eight years old and I'm embarrassed to ask some of those questions even when I go to my doctor. But yet in a texting environment it, even though it's not truly anonymous, there's that feeling of anonymity that you can be a little freer and I think you can encourage more honest dialogue and hopefully then do some uh, change of modification or modify behavior to be uh, safer.