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## Social Marketing Can Drive Safe Behavior

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Is there a way to sell safety behavior like they sell cars? Apparently, safety system leaders can, through social marketing, an innovative concept developed in the 1950s and the 1970s in response to the growing concerns on how best to promote social good.

Elie Daher, executive vice president and chief marketing officer for United Safety, explains this relatively new and innovative concept.

### *What is social marketing?*

To understand social marketing, we need to go back to the very definition of marketing. Marketing is the process of planning and executing the production, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual goals. Social marketing applies the same principles of marketing; but, instead of exchanging a product for financial gain, social marketing trades individual behavior change for the benefit of individuals and organizations. Examples of successful social-marketing campaigns include campaigns that have encouraged people to use seat belts and follow speed limits.

### *How can this work within the safety industry?*

Social marketing has been found to be effective when behavior change is targeted to a specific group of individuals who share the same characteristics or behavior—in this case, workgroups.

Research has shown that the workgroup most susceptible to unsafe behavior is young workers. Thousands of workers suffer occupational injuries every year, but the 15- to 24-year-old age group has consistently exhibited the highest risk of injuries. The first step to social marketing is to

understand why this behavior occurs.

Key factors that contribute to this behavior include young workers' lack of familiarity with basic safety procedures, the lack of experience to recognize when a workplace situation is dangerous, and a desire to maintain a macho image to be seen as a competent worker.

*What comes next after studying behavior?*

We then have to identify the social-marketing matrix, often referred to as the four Ps—product, price, place, and promotion. Our products are the benefits of safe behavior, which include greater quality of life, both inside and outside of work. The price workers pay for adhering to a particular safety practice might be a slight reduction in the speed with which a job can be done. Thus, our materials must be able to demonstrate the value of safety, so that the price paid seems worth the safety that is being gained. The workplace is obviously the place where they are most likely to enact safety behavior; but, the benefits of safety behavior extend into their private lives by enhancing their quality of life outside of work.

*What about the last P, promotion?*

This is where social marketing departs from our traditional safety behavior programs. Another aspect of marketing that we will borrow is the customer-focused approach. Because young workers tend to spend much time interacting in social-networking sites, safety-system leaders must tap these channels to promote safety behavior. Promotion should be done through social-media channels, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, in addition to traditional media such as prints and posters. The promotion of behavior change among young workers must be in tune with their lifestyle to be able to capture their attention and ultimately influence their behavior.

*Have any social marketing programs been successful in the oil and gas industry?*

Yes, a few companies and safety councils have implemented social marketing. In 2008, Work Safe British Columbia examined the affect of occupational health and safety materials aimed at workers aged 18–24 in the US and Canada through content analysis and online and focus group discussions. In 2007, ExxonMobil also conducted a similar program for employees who frequently traveled to worksites around the world. Both programs used social marketing in one way or another to promote behavior-based safety to catch the attention of their target respondents.

*Do you think social marketing will become popular in the oil and gas industry?*

Why not? As an industry, workplace safety has never been more important. The public health sector has used social marketing for years with considerable success. Undoubtedly, the oil and gas industry has the financial capacity and human resources to implement and monitor social marketing campaigns effectively. With management support, safety leaders can easily carry out social-marketing campaigns tailored to specific workgroups (e.g., young workers, frequent travelers, and confined-space entry workers). If they can do it, we can, too.



Dr. Elie Daher is executive vice president and chief marketing officer at United Safety. He has 27 years of oil and gas experience, serving in multiple operational, general management, consulting, global marketing, and sales roles in reservoir characterization, software and technology, and technical and business consulting in more than 15 countries for Schlumberger. Daher has published numerous SPE papers on health and safety and serves on several advisory boards and committees, including several SPE HSE committees and the International Association of Drilling Contractors HSE Committee.