

## **Using Social Marketing to Improve Workplace Safety:**

### **A Qualitative Analysis<sup>1</sup>**

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## **Using Social Marketing to Improve Workplace Safety: A Qualitative Analysis**

### **ABSTRACT**

To examine the role of social marketing programs in enhancing worker safety, a large-scale effort was undertaken to gather occupational health and safety (OHS) communication materials and program materials from across North America, with a particular focus on those aimed at younger male workers who have a high rate of workplace accidents and injury. A qualitative analysis of these materials provided a description of the key themes and messages being used in OHS campaigns. The analysis also revealed key differences between Canadian and U.S. approaches to workplace safety campaigns. Canadian OHS campaigns were undertaken at the provincial level using persuasive communications to encourage workplace safety. In contrast, social marketing efforts for OHS campaigns in the United States were largely the responsibility of federal government agencies, with a focus on regulatory and enforcement aspects of workplace safety relegated to state-level agencies.

**KEYWORDS:** workplace accidents; workplace safety; workplace injuries; social marketing; content analysis; qualitative research

## **Using Social Marketing to Improve Workplace Safety: A Qualitative Analysis**

Every year, thousands of workers are injured on the job. In Canada, there were 340,502 time-loss injuries among all provinces and territories in 2004 (AWCBC, 2000). Private industry workplaces in the US reported a total of 4.3 million nonfatal injuries and illnesses in 2004 (BLS, 2005). Among workers, the 15-24 year old age cohort consistently exhibits the highest risk of injuries (Loughlin & Barling, 2001). Occupational injuries claimed the lives of more than 600 American workers younger than 18 years of age between 1992 and 2000 (Linker et al., 2005). For this reason, many workers' compensation boards, government departments, and other organizations interested in job safety have become interested in trying to use social marketing as a tool to reduce workplace injuries, particularly among younger workers who are most at risk.

To examine the role of social marketing programs in enhancing worker safety, we undertook a large-scale effort to gather workplace safety communication materials and program materials from across North America. The purpose was to conduct a content analysis of these materials, in order to determine the key themes and messages being used in workplace safety campaigns. We were particularly interested in campaigns and programs aimed at younger male workers, since they have a particularly high rate of workplace accidents and injury (Loughlin & Barling, 2001). We were also interested in comparing American and Canadian approaches to campaigns and programs for workplace safety, to assess whether differences exist in terms of the source (federal vs. provincial/local efforts) or the nature of these efforts.

This paper reports on the trends and key features that became apparent during the qualitative portion of the analysis that was undertaken in reviewing these workplace safety social

marketing materials. We begin with a review of the literature outlining issues relating to workplace safety, particularly among young male workers, as well as aspects of social marketing related to workplace safety campaigns. We demonstrate how little research has examined communication and program aspects of workplace safety campaigns, and follow this with an outline of the present study and a description of the key findings. Social marketing implications are discussed.

### **Young Male Workers**

Young male workers tend to suffer a higher rate of workplace accidents and injuries, compared to all other categories of workers. Part of this is due to inexperience in the workforce, which may lead to unsafe work habits. Young people also tend to be vulnerable, eager to please, and are typically provided with little or no on-the-job training (Louglin & Barling, 2001). Many young workers are also not entirely aware of their rights, and do not seem aware that a safe work environment is a basic entitlement (CDC-NIOSH, 2003). They may be unwilling to ask questions or convey their concerns due to a lack of self-confidence and communication skills, or because they do not want to appear uninformed and incompetent (Linker et al., 2005; Brown, 2003).

Some research suggests that individuals may engage in unsafe work practices because of a desire to maintain their own self image, such as having a macho or tough person syndrome (e.g., a belief that safety equipment is for wimps), or a concern about maintaining one's image as being a competent worker (e.g., carrying very heavy loads) (Mullen, 2004). In some cases, workers choose not to use safety equipment in order to avoid being teased, or made fun of, by coworkers (Mullen, 2004). Young workers want to fit in with their peers and are easily

influenced to follow the lead of others, especially those showing at-risk behaviour (Westaby & Lowe, 2005). Some young workers have a sense of invincibility, and a general feeling of invulnerability, refusing to believe that accidents could happen to them. A lack of understanding can cause them to make unexpected and potentially risky changes to the job (Anonymous, 2003).

Social factors that may be important in ensuring safe work practices include safety climate and leadership, as well as the subjective norms and early socialization of a worker in the workplace (Mullen, 2004). Training and incentives can be strongly related to safety behaviour (Hofmann & Stetzer, 1996). Job design and engineering systems can also be important factors in safety behaviour. Important organizational factors that affect job safety included role overload, perceptions of performance over safety, socialization influences, safety attitudes, and perceived risks (Mullen, 2004).

Given that young male workers are involved in a disproportionate number of workplace accidents, it seems likely that a significant proportion of this accident propensity can be attributed to individual level factors related to employment experience, safety training, and psychosocial variables. These factors influence safety behaviour, and a social marketing campaign aimed at changing some of these elements may have a significant impact on reducing accidents within this age group.

### **Social Marketing and Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)**

Social marketing can be defined as “the use of marketing principles and techniques to influence a target audience to voluntarily accept, reject, modify, or abandon a behavior for the benefit of individuals, groups, or society as a whole” (Kotler, Roberto, & Lee, 2002). Social marketing theory suggests that an exchange takes place between the consumer (i.e., the worker)

and the marketer (i.e., the employer or a workplace safety organization) (Andreasen & Kotler, 2002). Within this exchange, the worker must be persuaded to give up something in order to gain something. Under the social marketing model, what is given up are the unsafe behaviours or habits that the worker has previously engaged in; what is gained by the worker is an enhanced level of safety and a greater likelihood that he/she will not be injured. Other aspects that characterize a social marketing campaign are the use of marketing research to guide campaign development; as well, the social marketing approach may include the use of incentives, ways to facilitate the behaviour, or tools/products that make it easier for the person to engage in the behaviour (Fox & Kotler, 1980).

A comprehensive social marketing campaign generally attempts to manipulate several of marketing's 4 Ps (product, place, price, promotion; see Figure 1). In the context of an occupational health and safety (OHS) campaign, promotion is generally the easiest of the 4 Ps to manipulate, because there is a full range of communication materials that can be developed to persuade or remind workers to adopt safer work practices. However, it is important to consider ways that the other Ps of price, product, and place can also be managed in the context of an OHS campaign.

The 'price' of adhering to a particular safety practice might be a slight reduction in the speed with which a job can be done. Alternatively the price may be looking "unmanly" by using a particular safety precaution. The price may even be financial, if the worker must buy expensive work boots, for example, rather than wearing runners. The social marketing task would be to demonstrate the value of safety, so that the 'price' paid seems worth the safety that is being gained.

The 'product' element of the social marketing mix can be manipulated as well. Product is a tangible object or intangible service that facilitates behaviour undertaking. The basic 'product' of safety can be positioned as being inextricably linked with enjoyment of life (given that unsafe workplace behaviour can have drastic consequences on future health and wellness, and hence on enjoyment of life). In the context of work safety, actual tools that serve to facilitate safety, such as back braces, rubber gloves or goggles, may also serve as the 'product'.

'Place' is another element of the social marketing mix that can be manipulated. It is the location where the product is made available and where behaviour can be carried out. The worker becomes more aware of the need for safety when safety messages are delivered at both conventional (work) and unconventional (non-work) locations. Having a variety of safety messages throughout work locations reinforces the idea that the workplace embraces a safety culture which encourages safe work practices and behaviours. If use of a particular work-safety product is being advocated, such as rubber gloves or goggles, then locating that product conveniently for worker use is a crucial element of 'place'.

Research examining social marketing campaigns on the topic of workplace safety is somewhat limited, even when the definition is extended to include more limited campaigns that focus primarily on workplace safety communication or education. Previous research includes a study on a multifaceted safety campaign to reduce workplace injury in Europe, an evaluation of a demonstration project in social marketing in northern Alberta, and the impact of marketing strategies on workers within a private company (Spangenberg et al., 2002; Guidotti, Ford, & Wheeler, 2000; Vecchio-Sadus & Griffiths, 2004). Some trade publications have discussed safety campaigns, such as a short review of the 2002 Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario social marketing campaign that appeared in *Marketing Magazine* (Turnbull, 2002). Two

American studies examined the impact of safety education campaigns on Hispanic workers in the US, and teens in the State of Washington (Brunette, 2005; Linker et al., 2005). Although all of these articles discuss using educational materials or communication campaigns to improve workplace safety, less than half mention social marketing or refer to the full range of elements that would comprise a social marketing campaign. None of these previous studies have included a content analysis of social marketing campaigns relating to workplace safety. Therefore, our study addresses this gap in the literature and provides a qualitative analysis of social marketing campaigns in North America, discussing major themes and indicating key differences between Canadian and U.S. campaigns.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This research involved conducting a content analysis of English-language safety communications materials, with a particular focus on those that are aimed specifically at young workers. These were gathered from a wide variety of OHS sources and jurisdictions throughout North America. These materials included web sites, print ads (newspaper and magazine), TV ads, radio ads, outdoor posters/billboards, workplace posters, and printed materials such as leaflets, brochures, hand-outs, and instructional materials. These OHS communication materials provided examples of social marketing advertising and communications materials. The materials were also useful in portraying or identifying some of the other elements of a comprehensive social marketing campaign, such as ‘product,’ ‘price,’ and ‘place,’ since these aspects were often discussed within the communication materials.

Organizations that could potentially contribute English-language OHS communication materials were located through the use of websites, industry directories, and other relevant lists

or sources. The project research assistant developed a list and contacted a wide variety of workers' compensation boards, government departments, and occupational health and safety organizations throughout North America. Requests were made to share OHS communication materials that have been used within the last five (5) years, particularly those materials aimed at young workers. These requests were made by e-mail and fax, with follow-up phone calls to improve the participation rate. Out-of-pocket costs for communication material reproduction and shipping were reimbursed to contributor organizations where necessary. An offer was made to share research results with organizations that contributed communication materials, in order to provide an incentive for their participation.

In addition to requesting copies of communication materials, the research assistant also requested copies of any research reports which discuss the effectiveness of the communication materials. Also requested were copies of any communication plans or social marketing plans that may have been used in conjunction with the communication materials (e.g., detailing any manipulation of the 4Ps besides Promotion, including the use of incentives to encourage safe behaviour). This information was requested to help assess the degree to which social marketing is currently being used in OHS, and the extent to which such efforts are successful.

Initial contact with all of the organizations took place over a period of 4-6 weeks in February/March 2006. Phone follow-up continued over the next 4 weeks in April 2006 in order to increase the participation rate. A total of 14 weeks elapsed before all of the promised communication materials were received. Overall, 80 government and non-government organizations were contacted in the US and 46 responded, while 120 organizations were contacted in Canada and 63 responded. Therefore, in total, 200 organizations in North America were contacted and 109 responded. Of these 109 organizations, 81 were able to provide

communication materials or directions to their website to download communication materials, while 28 did not have any communication materials to provide. Just over 100 pieces of communication materials were collected from the 81 organizations, either received through the mail or retrieved from organizations' websites.

A majority of the organizations that were contacted store their OHS communications and research materials on their websites. In most cases, the research assistant was encouraged to retrieve information from these websites at no cost. Some organizations charged a small fee for these materials, and these were paid for and ordered where necessary. Other organizations took a combined approach, encouraging review of their websites for retrievable materials, as well as mailing print and/or video/CD-ROM resources to the research assistant.

Once the full set of communication materials was received, the qualitative content analysis was conducted. The objective of this exploratory qualitative analysis was to determine common characteristics shared by these messages, as well as unique characteristics that might differentiate particularly effective or particularly ineffective messages or communication materials. Differences between approaches in Canada and the United States were also noted.

## **Qualitative Research Findings**

### ***OHS Communication Materials: Canada***

A review of OHS communication materials targeted at younger workers in Canada and the US reveals somewhat different approaches being used in the two countries. In both countries, there is an abundance of print and web-based information and training materials, as well as compliance-based materials. US federal and state jurisdictions tend to primarily focus on

providing factual information, education and training to encourage safe work behaviours.

However, Canada appears to be using social marketing concepts to a greater extent than the US in attempting to influence OHS behaviours and attitudes.

The Workers' Compensation Boards (WCBs) of Canada appear to be leaders in employing social marketing concepts to influence OHS. All Canadian WCBs have shifted their mandates beyond providing workplace injury insurance into the additional area of workplace safety and injury prevention. Their social marketing efforts, which flow out of these expanded mandates, are directed at workers in general. Some provinces have campaigns specifically directed at young workers. While all Canadian WCBs are involved to some degree in social marketing efforts to increase OHS, there are also differences among their approaches.

All Canadian WCBs use the Internet extensively to provide work safety and injury prevention information and to display their social marketing campaigns. In some provinces, the WCB has sole responsibility for prevention initiatives, housing OHS communication and resource materials. In other provinces, both the WCB and the respective provincial department responsible for employment/labour issues share complimentary prevention materials and messaging, maintaining links between their websites. Some specific examples help demonstrate the proactive approach of WCBs.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Board of Ontario (WSIB) provides access to its youth campaigns on its website. These campaigns, dating back to 1999, employ the use of posters, print ads, and radio commercials, with an emphasis on personal stories of tragic incidents relayed by young victims or surviving family members (WSIB, 2006a). The WSIB has also created a website aimed at young workers that provides personal testimonials of victims and survivors, a young worker awareness program, and links to numerous health and safety resources

(WSIB, 2006b). These resources include links to the Ontario Ministry of Labour website for youth and an online health and safety course (Gov. of ON, 2006; WSIB, 2004). The WSIB young worker campaigns and information resources include an array of communication methods (Promotion). The messages also focus on safety in the workplace (Place), and emphasize consequences for the victim, as well as negative impacts on survivors (Product). The resources also inform young workers about the need to work safely, wear protective equipment and report hazards (Price).

The WCB of British Columbia has devoted a section of its WorkSafeBC website to young workers. The site provides a variety of prevention resources for young workers, including fact sheets, videos, guides, information bulletins, magazines, brochures and reports (Promotion). Young Worker Safety Campaigns between 2001 and 2004 are posted on the website, with accompanying videos, posters, personal victim stories, fact sheets, brochures, discussion guides, and background information. These campaigns incorporate messages about the need for safe workplace practices and behaviours (Price and Place), emphasizing the loss of life or quality of life when these behaviours and practices are not followed (Product). WorkSafeBC has developed extensive research on young worker safety, and an education strategy that incorporates classroom resources, a speakers' network, and continuing education to improve the state of young worker safety (WorkSafeBC, 2006).

The Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission (WHSCC) of Newfoundland and Labrador, the WCB of Prince Edward Island and the WCB of Nova Scotia have recently combined their efforts in a social marketing campaign designed to raise general awareness that workplace injury is a problem (WHSCC NL, 2006a; WCB PEI, 2006a; WCB NS, 2006). The campaign uses a five-stage model of social change, with awareness-building as the

first step. The campaign radio and television ads, focused on prevention, depict two serious work injuries and one fatality while incorporating the social marketing elements of promotion, place and price. The campaign graphically shows loss of life or quality of life, conveyed by the key message – “A workplace injury can change your life forever” (WCB PEI, 2006b).

The WCB of Nova Scotia has taken a graphic approach with its most recent campaign directed at young workers – “Know Your Rights. Consider Safety.” Print, television and radio commercials, and web-based materials provide graphic images of body parts, along with direct hard-hitting messages. The website includes safety tips, a video game, statistics, a link to online safety training and Frequently Asked Questions, incorporating aspects of promotion (Considersafety Inc., 2006). This campaign, designed out of focus group testing with 16-24 year olds, demonstrates serious life-altering workplace injuries and the actions young workers should take to protect themselves at work, incorporating the social marketing elements of product, price, and place.

The WCB of Manitoba and the WHSCC of Newfoundland appear to be sharing ideas and resources in their safety awareness campaigns. Province-specific versions of similar OHS communication materials can be found on the Manitoba SafeWork and Newfoundland WHSCC websites (SafeWork, 2005; WHSCC NL, 2006b). Campaign communication materials include print advertisements and radio and television commercials. Posters, brochures and stickers are also available on the websites. These communication materials incorporate several of the social marketing Ps by emphasizing the need for safe workplace practices and behaviours, and conveying the consequences of potential loss of life or quality of life when safe work practices are not followed.

The Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Commission (WHSCC) of New Brunswick offers a variety of work safety and injury prevention resources on its website. These include books, pamphlets, hazard and risk alerts, posters, videos, safety reminder cards, stickers and resources for schools. These OSH communication items are directed at young workers and incorporate the 4 Ps, emphasizing the need for young people to take action to protect themselves at work, in order to avoid negative consequences and maintain their quality of life (WHSCC NB, 2005).

WCBs in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Yukon, and the Northwest Territories and Nunavut are also using social marketing concepts in their safety awareness campaigns. Saskatchewan's WorkSafe campaign combines billboard, television, radio, newspaper and transit advertising.. This campaign uses the 4Ps to encourage workers to follow safe work practices in order to avoid injury and its associated consequences. The Saskatchewan WCB has been measuring its campaigns for impact and effectiveness. Third party market research conducted in the fall, 2005 indicated that awareness and support for these campaigns are high, and that they are having a positive influence on how Saskatchewan people think about workplace safety (WorkSafe SK, 2006).

The Work Safe Alberta "Heads Up" campaign directed at young workers includes the use of humour to convey messages to this target group. Communication elements include posters, tip sheets for workers, parents, employers and supervisors, videos, and a safety booklet (Gov. of AB, 2006a). All of the social marketing 4Ps appear in this campaign. Young Albertans can also access information on the Internet about employment standards, rights and responsibilities, and how they should protect themselves at work (Gov. of AB, 2006b).

The Yukon Workers' Compensation Health and Safety Board (CHSB) and the WCB of Northwest Territories and Nunavut have incorporated social marketing to a lesser extent than some of the provinces. WorkSafe Yukon targets all workers in their "Think About It" campaign. They have introduced the Passport to Safety program targeted at young workers, parents and employers, employing the use of brochures and booklets (YT WCB, 2006). Previously, the Yukon CHSB had used a fun, interactive campaign to get the attention of young workers, centred on a safety contest entitled "Give workplace injuries the boot!" Communication methods included strategically placed 3-D ballot boxes and "youth-desirable" prizes; radio and newspaper advertisements, posters, direct mail, and food tray liners at key fast food outlets. Research conducted after the campaign indicated a 33% response rate from the target demographic, a strong measure of success that can be attributed to the use of prizes and incentives (Outcrop Yukon, 2006).

The WCB of Northwest Territories and Nunavut employs limited social marketing concepts to influence worker safety, and relies on an education-based model instead. Opening with the statement that "young workers are at risk", this website provides information about rights and responsibilities, training, and the need to work safely. It also includes a 2006 Young Worker Statistical Review (WCB NWT & NU, 2006).

Some Canadian provincial government departments are active participants in promoting young worker safety. The Saskatchewan Department of Labour provides numerous information and education resources through its Ready for Work program and website. While its focus is on providing information, the department has developed a "Don't Risk Your Life" video, which conveys personal tragic stories about young worker accidents (SK Labour, 2006). A similar approach is taken by Alberta Resources and Employment, Manitoba Labour and Immigration,

Workplace Safety and Health Division and the Ontario Labour Ministry (Gov. of AB, 2006b; Gov. of MB, 2006; Gov. of ON, 2005). These provincial government departments have specific areas on their websites directed to young workers, primarily with factual information. However, their websites also provide links to their provincial WCB counterparts, where social marketing concepts are used. In the other provinces and territories, the responsibility for work safety promotion and injury prevention resides primarily with the WCBs.

Beyond the efforts of Canadian provincial WCBs and provincial government departments, some federal government initiatives also exist. CCOHS, the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, “promotes a safe and healthy working environment by providing information and advice about occupational health and safety” on its website (CCOHS, 2006a). CCOHS has also established a national occupational health and safety website, CANOSH, to help identify and locate all provincial, federal and territorial government OHS information (CCOHS, 2004). Other federal government websites, including Human Resources and Social Development (HRSD), Job Safe Canada, and Service Canada also provide links to other resources and detailed information on worker rights, legislation and compliance (HRSDC, 2006; CCOHS, 2006b; Gov. of CAN, 2006). This information is targeted at all ages of workers, with some special website areas for young workers. These resources are education and information-based in nature, rather than being social marketing campaigns aimed at workplace safety or injury prevention.

Other Canadian organizations that provided materials for this research included the Association of Workers Compensation Boards of Canada, the Canada Safety Council, the Institute for Work and Health, professional safety associations, non-profit organizations, and trade unions. Many of these organizations have abundant research on worker safety, and many

offer worker safety education and training. Some non-profit organizations are employing social marketing concepts in their attempts to reach young people with work safety messages.

Examples of this are Our Youth at Work, initiated by Rob Ellis following the death of his son in a workplace accident, and Passport to Safety, sponsored by the Safe Communities Foundation of Canada and spearheaded by Paul Kells, whose son also died in a workplace accident (Our Youth at Work, 2006; Passport to Safety, 2006).

A number of organizations and associations at the provincial level also provided materials for this research. These included safety councils, non-profit organizations, professional safety associations, municipalities and cities, provincial trade unions, regional health authorities, and industry safety associations. These provincial safety-related organizations focus on worker safety and injury prevention through information provision, education and training, rather than through the use of social marketing. They tend to develop training courses and OHS communication materials specific to their industries. They also target their OHS communications at workers in general, not specifically at young workers, or at young males.

### ***OHS Communication Materials: United States***

Unlike Canada, where the leadership in OHS communications and social marketing is originating out of provincial and territorial jurisdictions, the federal government appears to be the accepted leader in the United States. The US federal government has established information-rich websites that provide accessible OHS information to workers of all ages and their employers. The OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) website, established through the national Department of Labor, and the NIOSH (National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety) website, established through the national Department of Health and Human

Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, serve as extensive OHS information and research repositories (OSHA, 2006a; CDC-NIOSH, 2006a). OHS communication materials on these sites tend to be factual and information-based, in the form of fact sheets, guides, brochures, posters and reports. Training information and safety videos can also be accessed.

NIOSH devotes a separate section of its website to young worker safety and health, providing research and reports, as well as factual OHS-related guides for workers and employers (CDC-NIOSH, 2006b). OSHA has created the TeenWorkers website, which provides safety and health information for young workers, their parents, educators and employers (OSHA, 2006b). It offers real-life photos of young workers and learning e-tools on the topics of agriculture and restaurant safety. The detailed content identifies hazards, along with worker and employer solutions. In-depth stories of actual tragic incidents are provided in a text-based format. Workplace rights and responsibilities for teens are emphasized.

OSHA has also established FedNet, the online federal network of twelve federal safety agencies devoted to young worker health and safety. This online resource targets teens, parents, teacher/counsellors, employers and public health professionals. It provides safety checklists and access to numerous web-based training and information resources related to young worker safety (FedNet, 2006). The national US Department of Labor's YouthRules! website provides access to information about federal, state and labour laws that apply to young workers. Posters, stickers and bookmarks can be downloaded from the site. Compliance checklists are also provided. Target groups include teens, employers, and educators (YouthRules!, 2006).

The federal agencies involved with YouthRules! go beyond a website presence to reach and engage young people. Rallies and other events are held at shopping malls, where teens and their parents are invited to "learn about the benefits and hazards of youth employment, as well as

their workplace rights and responsibilities, through interactive games, safety demonstrations and presentations by representatives from OSHA, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Employment Standards Administration and other agencies” (Occupational Hazards, 2004). These events demonstrate many aspects of social marketing. Interactive games, for example, offer the incentive of fun in exchange for the individual’s participation; incentives and exchange are both key elements in social marketing. Safety demonstrations can serve to reduce the perceived price of utilizing safety precautions, by showing their ease of use.

The online OHS resources developed by NIOSH and OSHA act as critical hubs of OHS information for a number of state governments. Many State labour and employment departments referred the research assistant to the NIOSH and OSHA federal websites, in addition to encouraging perusal of their own state websites for useful information. Some states, like California, Maine, and Washington, appear to place extra emphasis on young worker safety. The California Department of Industrial Relations has a Young Workers website with information that young people can download to learn more about their rights and how to protect themselves at work (State of CA, 2003).

The Maine Department of Labor has a SafeTeen program on its website that provides factual information on dangerous jobs, legal working hours, work permits, rights and responsibilities, questions young workers should ask, and a quiz on labor laws (Safeteen, 2006). The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries also has an extensive section on its website devoted to young worker issues, with a focus on the agriculture and restaurant industries. Information resources include printable fliers, wallet cards, brochures and posters that inform youth about their rights and responsibilities (WA DLI, 2006).

Beyond this handful of States that have placed more and separate emphasis on young worker safety, most US state-level government departments responsible for labour and employment focus their OHS communication materials almost completely on the provision of compliance and enforcement information. OHS information about workplace safety issues and safety training at the state level tends to be limited to worker rights and responsibilities and legal rights. Those states with their own OSHA plans tend to derive their OSH communication materials from the federal OSHA website. The search of US government-related entities did not reveal the use of any formal social marketing campaigns to enhance workplace safety, although the nationwide program YouthRules! certainly encompasses most, if not all, of the elements key to social marketing.

The qualitative analysis also revealed that, unlike Canadian Worker Compensation Boards, Industrial Accident Boards and Commissions in the US do not tend to get involved in communication to enhance workplace safety awareness and injury prevention. Their focus is on providing legally required fact-based documents, compliance and enforcement with regulations and legislation, and worker compensation coverage issues.

The US research also included contact with a number of non-government organizations. A few organizations located in California and Washington appear to be leading this sector on the issue of young worker safety. Youngworkers.org, a California resource network for young workers' health and safety, provides numerous links to information resources for young workers, parents, teachers and counsellors, youth employment specialists and employers (LOHP-UC Berkeley, 2006).

The UCLA-LOSH Labor Occupational Safety and Health Program in California has a Youth Project which focuses on peer education, young worker rights and leadership, and school

curricula. Posters, brochures and guides can be retrieved from this site (UCLA-LOSH, 2006).

The University of Washington in Seattle has developed the “Youth at Work – Health and Safety Awareness for Working Teens” initiative with support from the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries. Resources include an informative website, posters, brochures, wallet card, curricula and a CD-Rom highlighting young worker rights and responsibilities and youths’ personal experiences with work and workplace injury (Univ. of WA, 2006).

Most of these US young worker resources, whether they originate in government or not, aim to provide information and resources that can be used by young workers, their parents and others. In terms of social marketing, they use communication (Promotion), and they emphasize the need for young people to take training, follow safe work practices and gain knowledge about rights and responsibilities (Price). However, they do not emphasize the safety consequences and quality of life issues (Product) as much as Canadian OSH materials and campaigns. Canadian government and non-government organizations, in particular the WCBs, have taken a more graphic and direct approach in conveying to workers, and young workers in particular, the negative consequences of not working safely. However some US efforts do offer an immediate incentive, fulfilling the important element of a near-term and tangible exchange.

Only one campaign was located that employed social marketing concepts directed solely at young male workers (Nehlsen Communications, 2005). In this case, the Mechanical Contractors Association of Chicago used a marketing campaign called *Sexy Safety Stuffers*, where brief safety messages were included with weekly paycheques. A slightly sexy approach was used to capture the workers’ attention so that a range of basic safety concepts and behaviours could be communicated. One flier pictures a smiling young woman, with the message

“It’s easier to return a wink when your eyes are in your head.” The back of the flier says: “Wear your safety glasses” (Occupational Hazards, 2004).

This ongoing campaign provided valuable lessons to its creator, Illinois marketing firm, Nehlsen Communications, about effectiveness in reaching under-30 workers: “Printed materials must have dynamic, high-impact graphics and short (one- or two-sentence) messages” to align with the shorter reading attention spans of younger workers (Occupational Hazards, 2004).

Young people are also “graphically oriented” and used to being entertained, so the message must be delivered in only a few words, allowing the graphic to speak for itself (Occupational Hazards, 2004). According to Nehlsen Communications, appealing to positive future impacts by working safely now does not resonate with younger workers, because “the future is not reality” and they do not think long-term (Occupational Hazards, 2004). Young workers also want their personal protective equipment to be ‘cool’. Safety ideas and messages must be continually refreshed to catch their attention and engage their interest.

Interestingly, most of the social marketing campaigns and messages targeted at youth take the ‘downstream’ approach, focusing on the negative consequences of not working safely. In contrast, successful ‘upstream’ safety approaches in the workplace would attempt to engage employees of all ages as an “active part of the process,” turning away from the “catastrophic” and “dictating safety,” while moving towards “selling the positive benefits of safe work” (Schultz, 2004; Forck, 2003).

Effectively incorporating ‘upstream’ positive approaches into social marketing campaigns to promote and reinforce safe work practices and behaviors may create a challenge when attempting to reach young workers who believe accidents will never happen to them. In a North Carolina study, teens identified common areas of concern about workplace safety, as well

as opportunities for improvement (Zakocs et al., 1998). The study suggested that focused encouragement might work better with youth than traditional warnings. Future studies need to investigate how social marketing campaigns targeted at youth can begin to incorporate an “upstream” approach that promotes and rewards safe work behaviour and practices, rather than focusing on the negative outcomes of unsafe work behaviour.

## **Conclusion**

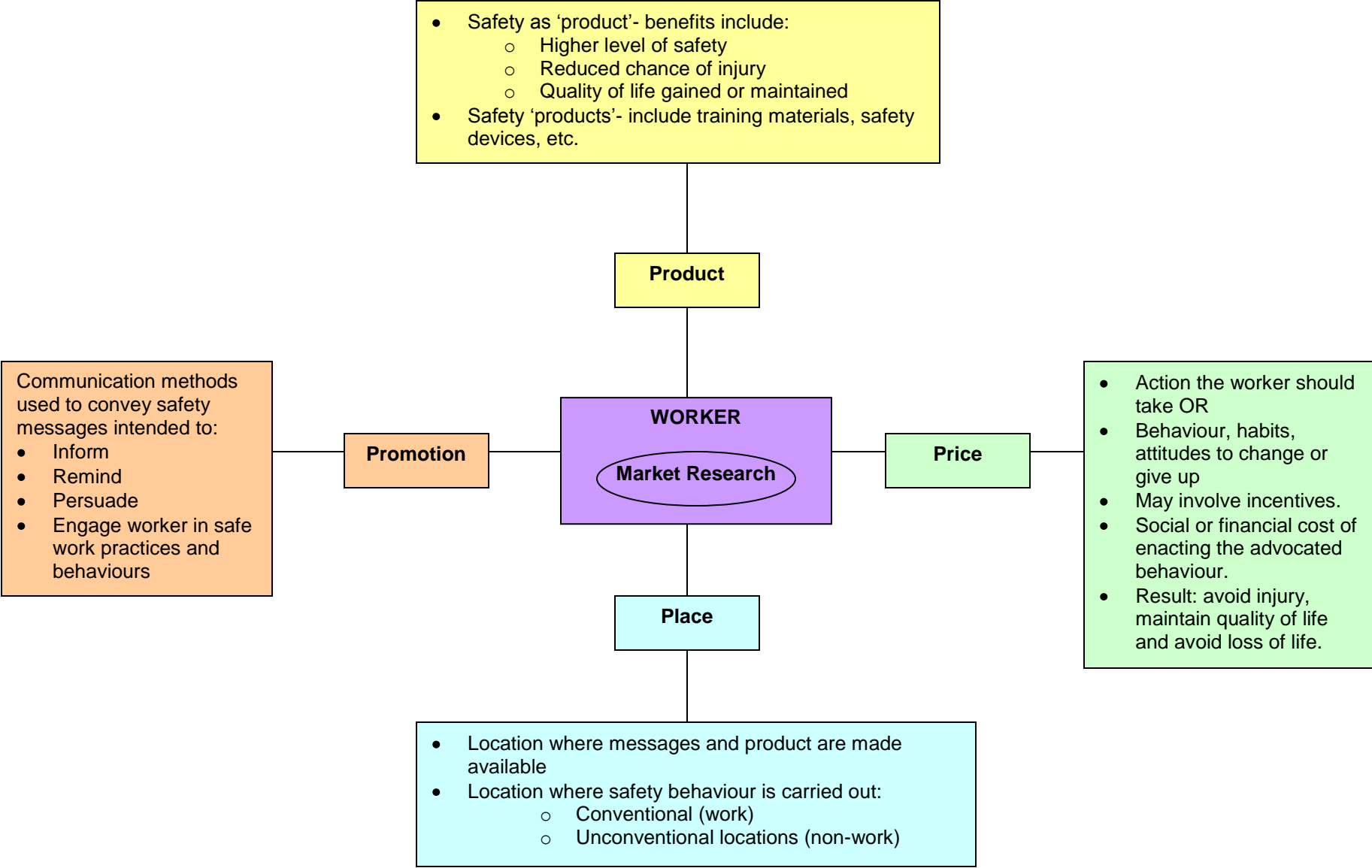
In summary, there are some distinct differences between the way Canadian and American entities approach OHS communications and social marketing. In Canada, these efforts were largely undertaken at the provincial level and were focused on using persuasive communications and social marketing tactics to encourage workplace safety. In contrast, in the US safety campaigns were largely the responsibility of federal government agencies, and had more limited use of social marketing concepts. Efforts undertaken at the state level were focused primarily on regulatory and enforcement aspects of workplace safety.

Only a few jurisdictions provided reports or studies about the effectiveness of their OHS efforts or campaigns. Of these, only one source provided evidence of increased awareness and more positive attitudes to workplace safety among the general population as a result of a provincial WorkSafe social marketing campaign (WorkSafe SK, 2006).

The qualitative analysis presented in this paper provides an overview of key social marketing efforts in OHS campaigns, and an interesting glimpse of differences between the Canadian and American environments. This collection of OHS materials from across North America has revealed that young worker safety is a topic of concern in both Canada and the US. Using social marketing concepts to influence workplace safety tends to be more popular in

Canada, especially among provincial Worker Compensation Boards. Even where social marketing methods are being employed, there is limited information available on the effectiveness of these campaigns in influencing the general population and workers in particular. There is also a gap in social marketing efforts directed at young male workers, leaving the door open for future innovative developments in this area.

Figure 1: 4Ps of SOCIAL MARKETING for WORKPLACE SAFETY



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