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International seminar on
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Part one – Causes, effects and
Consequences of aggressiveness on
the road

Communication Strategies for Road Safety in Spain

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When talking about communication, we must start with an essential premise. To transmit a message with regard to any field, first of all we must know very well what the values in that society or community are. Only then will we be able to make them aware of our objective.

In this case our objective is very clear: reducing accident rates.

How to do this or deciding what strategy to follow is more difficult. We prefer to talk about dissemination rather than about publicity. The truth is that we “drink from the fountains of the purest publicity” but we have a different objective. We are not trying to sell a product in exchange for economic benefits which are easily accounted for. Our objective will only be achieved in the longer term.

The first intention of publicity is to attract attention, to arouse interest. The creativity of the design, whether visual or audio, must be sufficiently innovative to achieve that aim.

In our case, the next step is more complicated. Once the content of the message is revealed, we need to keep people’s attention and ensure that they watch or listen to the message until the end, while bearing in mind that our message usually contains implicitly an obligation and that often people do not like to be reminded about what they do not do correctly.

Publicity is a continual influence on children, youths and teenagers, with regard to their information as well as their formation. Through publicity messages they start guessing how society is, and the behaviour patterns expected from them. This is a great responsibility for society and we cannot remain idle when we see the contradiction in publicity messages. On the one hand, we are trying to educate them to comply with norms and on the other, we show the fun of not complying with them. To give an example, when the city is filled with messages about the importance of using a helmet and on other hand, they are dazzled with fantastic images where one of the players does not use a helmet; this makes it very difficult to achieve our objective.

Our task must be, above all, a permanent one. It is not possible to change habits of behaviour in just a few months. We must be aware that messages must be very repetitive but their contents very simple and clear.

The means of disseminating our campaigns are very different though TV is "the king". The main problem with regard to TV is the high cost of producing a TV spot and thus the difficulty to separately target different groups. Radio gives us a lot of freedom of action; we can select a great variety of contents and express them in different languages and styles according to the public to which they are directed.

Changing attitudes is different from changing behaviours. We must start by behaviours, by very specific habits, but at the same time work on attitudes though this second task takes a long time.

In Spain, we value the experience of our 2002 Campaign, ***if you lose your cool, somebody could lose much more. Live and let others live.*** This campaign shows the consequences of a new driver driving on a dangerous bend, an old lady using a zebra crossing, an old driver who takes his time to drive into the main road, children riding bicycles...

This campaign is essentially based on promoting values such as Tolerance, Patience, Solidarity, and RESPECT..., foundations of a less aggressive society.

The characteristic which makes this campaign special is that once it has been shown what the terrible consequences could be, then images are shown of all the characters involved in those situations being patient, supportive, tolerant, and respectful and consequently, how nothing happens to them and life goes on.

RESPECT (especially towards those weaker than ourselves) is one of the basic values for building a SUPPORTIVE AND TOLERANT SOCIETY and consequently CALM TRAFFIC.

As has already been mentioned, a society becomes aware when the compromise is global and strong and not only from the Public Administration. It is necessary that private entities and above all mass media continue to join this project and in all its forms i.e. TV, radio, press and movies, etc...

Once we manage to transmit all the positive aspects we gain from respect in our daily lives we will be on the right track.

There is a very simple and well known example which helps to illustrate what I would like to express: All games have their rules and we all understand that we must comply with them in order to play, otherwise it would be impossible... Well, traffic is the same. Apart from the norms contained in the rules and regulations, there are other basic ones which are not written such as RESPECT, TOLERANCE, etc. These, together with the rules and regulations, make up a whole which provides the feeling of confidence. This confidence helps us to dare to go into the street by car as we trust that everybody knows and respects the same norms. This is the so-called Principle of Confidence.

The main theme of this Seminar is aggressiveness in driving. Faced with this reality, the same strategy will not be useful for all countries, as in one country a message could be revealing when in another the same message could be hurtful or ridiculous. Aggressiveness is an emotion. Modifying this reaction in certain situations is very slow. We must be aware that there is a percentage which will reject our message as they are not interested in changing their habits, till the time comes when s/he will discover by her/himself that that reaction is not worthy as s/he may lose her /his life or a relative or friend could die, etc. That is why we must be constantly there. Everybody's life goes on, surrounded by events and thus not everyone will receive our message in the same way. We must be patient and trust that some people in the short term and others in the longer term will change their attitude because they have made the message their own: IT IS NOT WORTHWHILE REACTING AGGRESSIVELY.