

North Central Regional Extension Publication 138

A Guide for Understanding Attitudes and Attitude Change

by
Robert B. Schafer
John L. Tait

Reprinted | August 1986



Sponsored by the Extension Services of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. In cooperation with SEA-Extension, USDA.

Acknowledgments

This is the ninth in a series of bulletins by the North Central Region Extension Sociology Committee which is sponsored by the Farm Foundation and the Cooperative Extension Services of the Land-Grant Universities in the North Central States.

The authors wish to thank the Farm Foundation, Oak Brook, Illinois, whose support helped make this publication possible. The authors and the committee would also like to acknowledge the assistance and support of the North Central Region Extension Sociology Administrative Advisor, Clarence Cunningham, Ohio State University.

The authors express appreciation to John A. Wallize, Communication Specialist-CRD-Public Affairs, Iowa State University, for his editorial suggestions and assistance. Appreciation is also extended to Diane Schultz for her patience in typing drafts and the final copy for this publication.

This publication was critiqued by the North Central Region Extension Sociology Committee and several independent reviewers. The authors wish to express their appreciation to these individuals for their helpful comments and reviews.

Members of the North Central Region Extension Sociology Committee, 1980.

Joe Donnermeyer, Ohio State University, Chairperson
Walter Armbruster, Farm Foundation
Randy Cantrell, University of Minnesota
Clarence Cunningham, Ohio State University, Advisor
John Holik, University of Missouri
Donald E. Johnson, University of Wisconsin at Madison
Stephen Lovejoy, Purdue University
Sheldon Lowry, Michigan State University
John Mitchell, Ohio State University
Jerry W. Robinson, University of Illinois
James Satterlee, South Dakota State University
J. Pat Smith, North Dakota State University
John L. Tait, Iowa State University
Paul D. Warner, University of Kentucky

Other Reviewers

Clair E. Hein, Iowa State University
Arthur H. Johnson, Iowa State University
Ronald C. Powers, Iowa State University

Preface

In most educational and community programs, existing attitudes which people have affect whether or not they will adopt new ideas. While many attitudes may be supportive of new ideas, other attitudes, which people have, may be barriers to bringing about desired change. For leaders, understanding the existing attitudes and the possible strategies for influencing them is an important part of designing an action program.

The purpose of this publication is to create a better understanding of attitudes and how they can be changed. Emphasis is placed upon an applied attitude model and a range of strategies which leaders can use to influence attitudes.

The model defines the underlying factors such as beliefs, values, and personal needs which support a person's attitudes. In addition, factors which may intervene between a person's attitude and behavior are discussed. The attitude model is used as the basic framework for suggesting strategies which leaders might use for influencing attitudes. These strategies include changing existing beliefs and values, creating new personal needs and aspirations, and understanding the intervening factors.

Ways of communicating with a target audience are suggested and discussed. Finally, several factors which leaders need to consider in selecting a particular strategy are presented. These include (1) the existing attitudes of the audience, (2) the objectives for the program, (3) the resources available, (4) the organizational constraints and (5) the leaders' expertise.

This publication is intended for use by leaders who are interested in understanding attitudes and how to influence them. They include Extension staff members, community development specialists, governmental agency personnel, school administrators, community planners, ministers, business leaders, union leaders, and voluntary association leaders. Some selected references are provided for additional reading about attitudes.

Clarence Cunningham
Cooperative Extension Service
Ohio State University
Advisor to the North Central Region
Extension Sociology Committee

Contents

	Page
Introduction	3
Purpose of this Publication	3
An Attitude Model	3
Attitudes and Behavior	3
Intervening Factors	4
Beliefs and Values	4
Personal Needs	5
Summary	5
Influencing Attitudes	5
Changing Existing Beliefs and Values	6
Creating New Personal Needs and Aspirations	6
Group Influences	7
Understanding Intervening Factors	7
Communication and Attitude Change	7
You as the Persuader	8
How to Communicate your Message	8
Involving the Audience	8
Selecting a Strategy	9
Analyzing Existing Attitudes	9
Objectives	9
Resources Available	9
Organizational Constraints	10
Your Expertise	10
Summary	10
Bibliography	11

A Guide for Understanding Attitudes and Attitude Change

Robert B. Schafer and John L. Tait*

Introduction

In our everyday lives, attitudes play a major role in affecting our behavior. They influence how we feel and behave toward others in our environment.¹ Attitudes have an important influence on our decisions. They strongly influence what we decide to do, where we go to school, what job we decide to take, where to live, and whether or not to accept a new way of doing things.

The positions we take toward public issues and policies are also strongly influenced by our attitudes. These attitudes affect how citizens feel about such issues as energy conservation, land use, drugs, environmental controls, health care, government regulations, taxes, police protection, highway safety, and other community issues. Attitudes affect how citizens feel about state, national, and international issues.

In using community action programs to solve issues and implement policies, you are often concerned with promoting and stimulating social change. Among the factors affecting the acceptance or rejection of new community action programs are the attitudes of community members. In some cases, your programs may fail because existing attitudes of community members are not in agreement with the proposed change.

Purpose of this publication

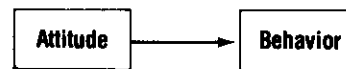
Prior to developing strategies for gaining the acceptance of new ideas and action programs, it is essential for you to understand the existing attitudes of people. Attitudes may be supportive of the new action programs or they may be in opposition to proposed new ideas. Knowledge and understanding of attitudes will aid you in selecting an appropriate strategy to successfully carry out your program. Although not assuring success, understanding people's attitudes and the range of strategies which might be used to influence them should enhance the chances for acceptance of community action programs.

The objective of this publication is to create a better understanding of attitudes and how they change. An attitude model will be developed for understanding how attitudes relate to behavior. This model will then be used to

develop a range of strategies which you might consider in attempting to influence attitudes. In addition, ways of communicating with the intended audience are discussed. Finally, several factors which you need to consider in determining the appropriateness of various strategies for social action programs are presented.

An Attitude Model

The starting point in understanding attitudes is the relationship between attitudes and behavior. It is generally understood that a person's attitudes have a primary influence on behavior.



Attitude Feelings, beliefs, and tendencies to act toward other persons, groups, ideas, or objects.

Behavior Any response or reaction of an individual, including not only bodily reactions and movements, but also verbal statements and subjective experiences.

Attitudes and Behavior

This attitude model suggests that how you feel about some person, object, or idea will influence your behavior toward that object. An attitude against land use planning, for example, may influence a state legislator to vote against a bill proposing the establishment of a state land use policy.

If you know a person's attitude, you will often be able to make predictions about how that individual will behave. However, it is not uncommon for people to have feelings one way and to behave differently. For example, citizens may have a positive feeling toward the city providing more recreational parks and programs, but vote against a bond issue for new recreational facilities because it would raise city taxes.

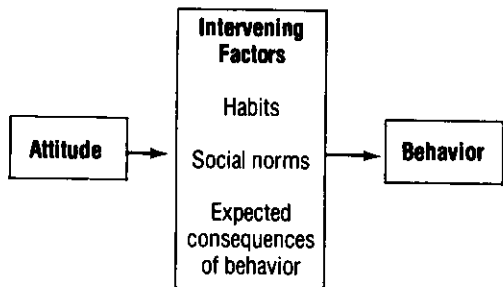
This difference between what we say and what we do may lead one to raise questions about the relationship between attitudes and behavior. How often have you worked with someone who behaved in a manner entirely contrary to how you expected him or her to act? How often have your predictions of someone's behavior been proven wrong? This has probably happened often enough so that it is clear that the simple relationship suggested between an attitude and behavior needs to be modified.

It is apparent that there are factors that intervene between attitudes and behavior which would cause a person's

*Prepared by Robert B. Schafer, professor of sociology, and John L. Tait, professor of sociology and Extension sociologist, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Iowa State University. This project was funded by the Iowa Cooperative Extension Service.

¹The term environment as used throughout the publication refers to a person's total environment, i.e. the physical, cultural, social, and economic environments.

behavior to be inconsistent with his or her attitudes. These factors include a person's habits, social norms, and the expected consequences of behavior.



Habits Any regularly repeated action on the part of an individual that is learned and that is observable to others.

Social norms A standard shared by the members of a social group to which the members are expected to conform, with conformity being enforced by positive and negative sanctions.

Expected consequences of behavior The evaluation by an individual of what the outcomes of a particular behavior are likely to be.

Intervening Factors

Habits. A person's habits are automatic ways of behaving in appropriate situations with a minimum of thinking. For example, having maintained an office file through the same procedures for many years may become a habit which is a barrier for adopting a new filing system which would increase office efficiency.

Social norms. Society is characterized by certain norms or social standards which influence the behavior of its members. These social norms are both general and specific expectations of behavior which the members of a group, community, or society share. Social norms include role expectations of how people should behave.

At times these norms and a person's attitudes will be at odds with each other. If the norms are strong enough and supported by enough people, a person may behave in a manner more consistent with the norms than with his or her attitude. This may occur because a person wants the acceptance gained by conforming to society's standards and to avoid rejection that may result from non-acceptance. A member of a community service club, for example, may have a negative attitude toward participating in the club's fund raising drives. An intervening social norm that may result in the member's participation, is the expectation that all club members participate in fund raising drives. In this case, the member's behavior is more consistent with the group's norm than with his own attitude.

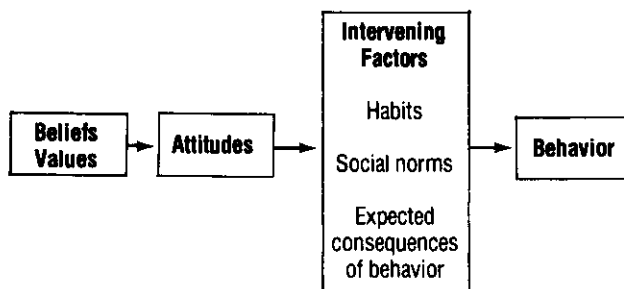
Expected consequences of behavior. A final reason that one's attitude and behavior may not correspond is that before people behave, they weigh the consequences of that behavior. If rewards are expected from a particular behavior, then it is encouraged. However, if the behavior is costly, then that behavior is less likely. In either case, the expectation of a reward or cost can intervene in the relationship between a person's attitude and behavior. This often produces an apparent inconsistency between what a

person says and what a person does. An individual may have a positive attitude toward a certain political candidate, for example, but not express it for fear of losing friends who have different political views.

These three factors (habits, social norms, and expected consequences of behavior) help us to understand why a person's attitudes are not always good predictors of behavior. In carrying out a community action program, you need to be aware of these intervening factors and how they affect the relationships between attitudes and behavior of the people in the community.

Beliefs and Values

To fully understand attitudes and how they change, you need to know the factors that influence attitudes. Attitudes are not isolated, but reflect the beliefs and values which a person holds.



Beliefs The knowledge and information which a person assumes to be true about the environment.

Values General feelings about what is desirable or undesirable.

The information a person has about an object will influence the attitudes that person holds about that object. For example, if a homemaker believes that pressure cookers are dangerous, then she is likely to have a negative attitude toward pressure cookers. This belief will reinforce her decision not to use a pressure cooker.

Many beliefs may underlie a given attitude. You need to determine as many of these beliefs as possible before attempting to influence attitudes. A 4-H member may have a negative attitude toward completing a record book due to his beliefs that (1) record keeping takes too much time, (2) the payoffs for record keeping will be small or non-existent, and (3) record keeping has a low priority when compared to other project activities and interests. It would be important for you to know these beliefs before developing strategies to influence 4-H members' attitudes toward record keeping.

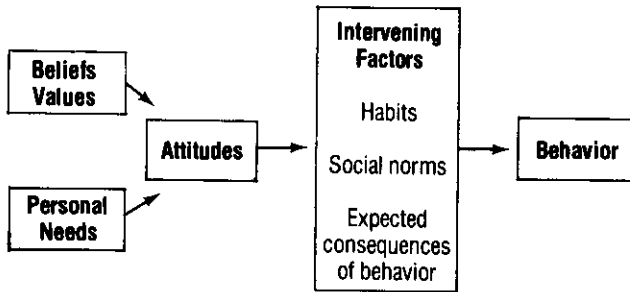
Individuals also use attitudes to express their basic values and to portray to others the sort of persons they are (self concept). A person gains satisfaction from holding and expressing attitudes which are consistent with values and self identity. A person who places a value on individual freedom will have a negative attitude toward the development of a state land use policy which puts restrictions on how individuals can use land.

Generally, people maintain a consistent relationship between their beliefs, values, and attitudes. An individual may believe that the use of seat belts protects lives in an accident. The individual also places a high value on the protection of life. The belief regarding seat belts and the

value placed on life determine the positive attitude toward using seat belts. If you know what a person's beliefs and values are, you will have better understanding of how to develop strategies for influencing attitudes.

Personal Needs

Up to this point, we have said that beliefs, values, and attitudes "go together." However, attitudes are also influenced by personal needs. The negative attitude which a beef producer has toward the establishment of national nutrition goals which recommend eating less red meat in the diet is likely to be influenced by his personal need to receive economic rewards from producing beef. It is apparent that an individual's personal needs as well as beliefs and values also influence one's attitudes.



Personal Needs Attitudes are held to support personal needs of the individual such as the need for rewards, defending the ego, and understanding the environment.

The next step in understanding attitudes is to ask the question: "What do attitudes do for the person who holds them?" Attitudes are held because they meet such personal needs as: (1) the need for rewards, (2) defending the ego, and (3) understanding the environment.

Need for rewards. Individuals tend to have a positive attitude toward objects in the environment which reward them and a negative attitude toward objects which punish them. For example, youth members in 4-H, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts have a positive attitude toward the youth program because it rewards them with praise, attention, acceptance, new skills, and approval for projects which they have completed. The main reason we like some object or person is because that object or person has been rewarding to us in the past. These attitudes then become useful in helping us to satisfy our needs or to reach our goals.

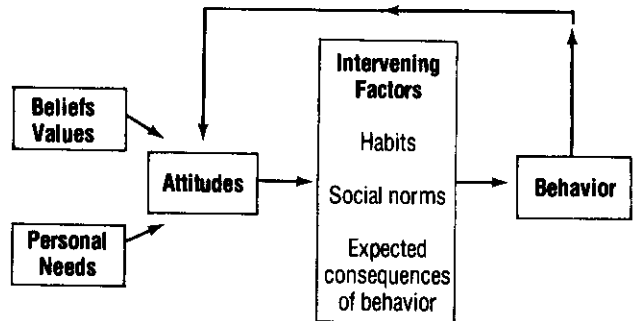
Defending the ego. Attitudes which are held for defending the ego help to enhance our self-esteem and to defend ourselves against threats to the self. In general, people like to feel good about themselves so they adopt those attitudes which allow them to do so. An example of defending the ego is the case of the man who is opposed to the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Since the adoption of ERA would give women equal status with men, the man may personally feel threatened by changes which would make women equal with men in employment opportunities and practices. The lowering of his status might ultimately reflect on his self. Therefore, he holds a negative attitude toward ERA because of the potential loss of self-esteem.

Understanding the environment. Attitudes may help the person understand his/her environment. They also help the individual decide how to behave in relation to the environment. A family may have a negative attitude

toward energy conservation because their particular lifestyle consumes high amounts of energy. Lowering the thermostat, using public transportation to go to work, and reducing the boating and vacation trips would result in learning new ways to relate to their environment. Therefore, a negative attitude is developed toward energy conservation. Such an attitude protects the family from facing the consequences of changes in their environment.

These three basic personal needs which attitudes serve are very important. By understanding their operation, you can better understand the reason behind a particular attitude and can more adequately address the issue of attitude change. Often a set of beliefs and values is used to provide a reasonable justification for an attitude. However, the real motivation for the attitude may be the need for personal rewards, defending the ego, and understanding the environment.

A final consideration is the influence behavior has on attitudes. Once a person behaves a certain way, for whatever reason, there is pressure on the individual to keep his/her attitudes consistent with that behavior. Therefore, behavior under certain circumstances will influence attitudes. The attitude may be changed to make it more consistent with the behavior.



Summary

The relationship between attitudes and behavior, and the factors that underly and influence a particular attitude have been illustrated with an attitude model. You need to be aware of three aspects of this model.

First, you should know what factors might intervene between the intention to behave and actual behavior. It is desirable to understand the extent to which you can influence these intervening factors.

Second, you should know what beliefs and values support an attitude. Are the factors which support the beliefs and values correct? Is there more important information the person should know that would have a bearing on the attitude?

Third, what personal need is the attitude fulfilling? Can personal needs be met by a different set of attitudes and beliefs? An understanding of these aspects will aid you in developing strategies to change attitudes.

Influencing Attitudes

Before selecting a strategy for influencing attitudes, you need to determine exactly what is to be changed. It is desirable to select goals that are both specific and attainable. After establishing the goals and gaining an understanding of existing attitudes, you are prepared for

the next step—selecting a strategy to influence attitudes. There are several factors which you need to consider in selecting a strategy, that include both individual and organizational constraints.

Organizations and agencies are established for different purposes. Some have as their goal the carrying out of action programs, while others have education as their major mission. Each organization and agency is likely to have goals and social norms which are constraints in selecting a strategy to use in influencing attitudes. If you work in an organizational setting, you must consider which strategy is most appropriate for your organization. Some strategies may not be acceptable given the organizational constraints.

Another factor which will likely affect the selection of an attitude change strategy is your own value system. Given your own beliefs and values, some strategies may not be acceptable means for influencing attitudes. Only you can decide whether a particular strategy is consistent with your values.

The intent of this section is to create an understanding of a range of attitude change strategies. Given individual and organizational constraints, you have to decide which is most appropriate for your given situation (Fig. 1). Using the attitude model outlined in the previous section, there are four strategies which you might use to influence attitudes, these include (1) changing existing beliefs and values, (2) creating new personal needs and aspirations, (3) using group influences, and (4) understanding intervening factors.

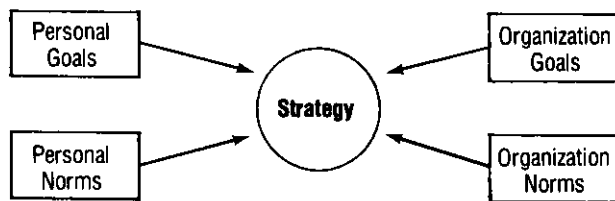


Fig. 1. Factors affecting choice of strategy type.

Changing Existing Beliefs and Values

The most commonly used approach in changing attitudes is to attempt to change what people believe and what they know. Since individuals try to keep their beliefs and attitudes consistent, providing information and changing what is believed is the first step in changing attitudes. Providing information regarding limited energy supplies and the expected rise in energy costs, for example, may influence people's attitudes toward energy conservation.

Influencing beliefs, however, while a necessary aspect of attitude change, is not always sufficient to bring about attitude change. You must go beyond beliefs and consider how the attitude contributes to the personal needs of the individual. You can present information in an attempt to change an attitude, but if the existing attitude is supporting a specific personal need, then that attitude will not likely change.

Information regarding zoning, for example, may indicate that zoning can be used to prevent undesirable junk yards from developing near neighborhoods. However, a negative attitude toward zoning may be supported by a basic value of individual freedom of choice. In this case, the information

would not likely influence the attitude since the attitude is held because it is an expression of a basic value. Thus, an informational program which is used to change attitudes must also address the personal needs from which the attitude has been formed.

Existing attitudes may also be supported by misinformation. When you have determined that the target audience has been misinformed you may design a program that provides more accurate information. If the existing attitude is not strongly supporting a personal need, the new information may be sufficient to bring about an attitude change.

Many attitudes allow for consistent expression of our self identity and values. If one's attitude toward an object is inconsistent with one's basic values, then that attitude may change if the individual is made aware of the inconsistency. On the other hand, if a proposed new attitude runs counter to one's basic values, it may be extremely difficult for you to influence or change the existing attitude. Changing basic values which individuals hold is extremely difficult.

Getting people to accept a favorable attitude toward evolving land use policies at the local level may be achieved by pointing out that local people can decide what policies they want rather than having state or federal government control over land use. Thus, the appeal would be to relate the new attitude to a basic value of the audience, that of having the freedom of choice at the local level.

Creating New Personal Needs and Aspirations

Another approach for influencing attitudes is determining how personal needs and aspirations can be met in a different way than by the existing attitudes.

Providing rewards. One approach to changing attitudes is to point out the benefits and rewards one will receive as a result of a new or different attitude. These rewards may be inherent in the change and may occur as a result of the change. For example, farmers who agree to participate in soil conservation practices receive economic support for their adoption, or women who use microwave ovens reduce the amount of time they spend preparing meals.

Another way of using rewards is to provide them when they are not inherent in the change itself. You can encourage change by offering the reward of approval, acceptance, or status. For example, many states have community betterment programs to recognize individuals and communities who have done outstanding work in initiating new community development programs. Such rewards are incentives for individuals and communities to change their attitudes toward community betterment programs.

The use of rewards may change a person's attitude. This is likely to occur if the rewards are forthcoming, if the rewards are valued by the person, and the person feels he/she had a free choice in deciding whether to try the new behavior. Also, if the new attitude contributes toward meeting personal needs, the attitude change will tend to be permanent.

Defending the ego. If individuals hold attitudes to protect themselves from threats to their egos, there are certain things which you can do to influence the attitude. In this case, your efforts would be more directed toward removing the threat to the individual rather than changing the attitude. An office secretary, for example, may not want to

adopt a new office filing system because she feels she lacks the abilities to learn the new filing system (threat to ego). You may provide the secretary with the opportunity to visit another secretary who has found that the new system is relatively easy to learn and that it frees time for other office activities. Such an approach may remove the threat to the ego posed by the new office filing system and therefore make the secretary more open to the acceptance of the new system.

In influencing ego defensive attitudes, never use an approach which depends solely on giving information, because that information may actually increase the threat felt by the person. To tell the office secretary all that the new filing system will accomplish, before she can see it in operation elsewhere, may make her feel even more insecure about her abilities to use the system and therefore more resistant to accepting it.

Understanding the environment. One approach to change an attitude because of a need for stability and structure in one's environment is to provide new information. You may present new information to the person or point out environmental changes which render the old attitude inappropriate. As a result of this, the person may experience ambiguity and recognize the need to develop new attitudes which are appropriate to the changed environment. These new attitudes would reduce the ambiguity and serve as a new structure for the individual.

Land owners may develop a more positive attitude toward governmental control over land use when a large national corporation proposes to buy several hundred acres of prime farm land for a new industrial expansion. You may point out the environmental changes and the likely impact they may have on present and future land use. Thus, the changing environmental situation may result in citizens changing their attitudes.

New information which renders old information or situations inappropriate often creates ambiguity and instability in an individual's environment. In order to again create stability, an individual is likely to adopt new attitudes which are appropriate for the new situation. This can be an effective means for you to use to bring about attitude change.

Group Influences

The groups we identify with have a major influence on our beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. Individuals need approval and acceptance from others and one way to obtain this is to

conform to the expectations of others. You can operate from the premise that when people are in a group there is pressure toward uniformity. Members of groups become uncomfortable if their beliefs and attitudes are unlike others in their group. To avoid this, individuals have a tendency to conform to the expectations of other group members. It is the group pressure and not the argument that is the important force for change. You may create a situation in which an individual's attitude may be changed through group pressure.

For example, an influential community member who opposed a school bond issue that failed may be asked to serve on a committee being created by the school board to study and propose a new bond issue. If he agrees to participate, the group pressure may change his attitudes and he may find that participating with the committee meets some of his personal needs.

Group pressure can be effective in changing attitudes if the group is perceived as influential and important. Pressure from an industrial development committee is likely to have an effect on a committee member who perceives the committee as an important community group and who attends committee meetings regularly.

Understanding Intervening Factors

In addition to the general approaches outlined here for influencing attitudes, you need to be aware of the intervening factors—habits, social norms, and expected consequences of behavior—and the role they play in influencing attitudes. Although the intervening factors are not considered change strategies, you may be able to change the program design with an understanding of those factors that can intervene between attitudes and behavior. It is, therefore, important to gain as much background information regarding these intervening factors prior to designing the strategy for influencing attitudes.

For example, low income people may not attend educational meetings because of the expectation that they should wear good clothes. Consideration of this intervening factor may lead you to design strategies for informal meetings within the neighborhood or to design a "one on one" program where an aide works directly with the individuals in their homes.

Communication and Attitude Change

Once you have selected an approach(es) for changing attitudes, you also need to consider: (1) how you present yourself as the persuader, (2) how you choose to present the message, and (3) how to involve the audience.

Table 1. Methods of influencing attitudes using various strategies.

Strategy	Method
Changing existing beliefs & values	Provide information that challenges individual's beliefs and knowledge.
Creating new needs and aspirations	Point out benefits of behavior change and reward behavior change. Remove ego threats. Provide ways to better understand environment.
Using group influence	Involve individual in groups which reward the desired attitude.
Understanding intervening factors	Become familiar with individual's background and its effects on attitudes and behavior.

You as the Persuader

Your message is more likely to gain acceptance if you establish credibility with the audience. Factors that determine credibility include trustworthiness, expertise, concern, dedication, and prestige. If you can impress the audience that you have skills, knowledge, and judgment that is relevant to the issue, you will be more effective.

You can also increase your credibility if you can establish your trustworthiness. This can be accomplished if you can convince the audience that you have their best interest in mind and do not represent vested interests. An important point to remember about factors influencing credibility is that they can vary as a function of each specific situation: the issue at hand, the persuader in question, and the audience involved.

Before introducing your topic, you may enhance your effectiveness by initially expressing some views that are held by the audience. Establishing agreement with the audience tends to dampen the audience's critical capacities during the presentation of your topic. This may lessen the resistance to accepting the desired attitude change.

Finally, the more liked you are, the more persuasive you will be. One of the most effective ways to increase the attractiveness of the communication is to select someone to present the message who is similar to the audience.

How to Communicate Your Message

You will usually be more effective in changing attitudes if you use face-to-face communication. This type of communication allows you to adjust to the arguments and concerns of the target audience. In this situation you can influence the interaction itself in such a way as to increase the possibility that the person or group will be more likely to accept your argument.

Attentive listening on your part is important. Through listening to the target audience, you can learn much about their beliefs and personal needs. Listening to the audience also will help establish you as "open" to what the target audience has to say.

When the target audience says something to which you agree, you should reward that behavior. This can be done by nodding or saying "good," and with direct eye contact with the target audience. The audience should feel that you really care about their actions.

You should make the audience feel unique and important. In small groups, this can be done by using names and titles. Your communications are more likely to be received if the audience perceives that you really care about them and are enthusiastic about the topic of discussion.

Another factor in communicating your message is the actual organization of your presentation. The best arguments of your presentation should not be in the middle, where they are likely to be forgotten. Instead, you should put your strongest arguments first if you want to interest or motivate uninvolved people and last if the audience is already interested.

You may consider whether or not to present both sides or an issue to your audience. If the audience knows both sides of an issue or will soon hear the other side, then you should present both sides of the argument. Organizational constraints will likely affect whether you present one or both sides of the issue. Educational organizations, for

example, are committed to presenting factual information on both sides of the issue regardless of the audience. In this case, your goal would be to objectively present both sides of the issue and let the audience decide their positions.

The main points of your argument and the major points of agreement between you and the target audience should be repeated during your communication. Also, you should draw your conclusions early. The audience should be left to draw their own conclusions only if the members are knowledgeable, or if the argument is a very simple one.

Another question which you need to consider is how much should your message differ from the audience's view? If a message is extremely different or only minimally different from the audience's view, there is less likely to be attitude change. An extremely different message may be rejected outright. A minimally different message may not appear at all different to the audience. Messages will likely have a greater impact in changing attitudes if they are moderately different from the audience's view.

Involving the Audience

The impact on attitude change can be enhanced by requiring active, rather than passive, participation by the audience. There are several ways you can actively involve the audience. If the situation allows it, role playing can be effective in changing attitudes. Also, participation through group discussion is another way to involve the audience. Listening to lectures or reading appeals (passive participation) are generally less effective than group discussion.

Still another way to involve the audience is to have them actively learn about situations in which you are aiming to change attitudes. People in a community are more likely to change their attitudes about providing employment opportunities for youth if they visit a community that has recently developed a new program. Here, they would be able to see the effective coordination of the school, the state job service, the employers, and the youth in locating job opportunities.

You will likely be more effective if you can get the target audience to agree to a small compliance before proceeding to more involved compliances. Before dealing with the more complex aspects of an issue, you may get the audience to agree to a small compliance such as talking with you for a few minutes about the issue. At a later time, more complex issues can be pursued.

In involving the audience, avoid any situation in which the audience might feel that they are being forced to change, or their freedom is being limited. If your audience begins to feel this, they will likely reject you and your message.

Once the audience has made a commitment, encourage them to make it public. This will make them more resistant to counter arguments by further strengthening their commitment. Also, the person or audience should feel that they made the commitment to change and that it was not your decision.

Finally, you might consider helping the audience build up defenses against counter arguments by suggesting that other people will likely disagree with them and try to change them. You should ask the audience how they would respond to those critics. Such an approach will help the target audience build up a defense against counter arguments.

Table 2. Ways to increase communications effectiveness.

1. Increase your credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Represent audience interests. b. Seek topic of agreement with audience. c. Appear knowledgeable, trustworthy, likeable, skillful. d. Select person similar to audience to present message.
2. Structure your message carefully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Communicate interpersonally whenever possible. b. Encourage and reward feedback. c. Make audience feel important. d. Present both sides of argument whenever possible. e. Repeat important points. f. Don't differ extremely from audience's views. g. Present important points first or last. h. Guide audience to your desired conclusions.
3. Involve audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Encourage role playing or group discussion in communication. b. Encourage audience to do its own homework on the topic. c. Encourage public commitments to your views. d. Help audience devise defenses against counter arguments. e. Don't force the audience to change.

These are some of the ways you can communicate with your audience. A combination of ways to involve the audience is likely to have a greater impact in changing attitudes than relying solely on one approach.

Selecting a Strategy

The particular strategy which you select to influence attitudes will vary depending upon (1) the existing attitudes of the audience, (2) the objectives for the program, (3) the resources available, (4) the organizational constraints, and (5) your expertise.

Analyzing Existing Attitudes

Before establishing objectives and selecting a strategy to influence attitudes, it is essential for you to analyze the attitudes of the target audience. The attitude change model presented in the previous sections may be used to analyze the attitudes and the underlying factors which support them.

There are a range of techniques for you to use in collecting information regarding the attitudes of the audience. These may include (1) personal conversations with members of the audience, (2) program planning or ad hoc committees which include members of the audience, (3) mail questionnaires sent to a sample of the audience, and (4) personal interviews conducted with a sample of the audience.

Although less scientific than sampling the audience, collecting information through personal conversations, program planning committees and ad hoc committees can produce valuable information regarding the existing attitudes and values. If you have limited time and financial resources, these methods may be appropriate for collecting information to analyze the existing situation.

If you have more time and financial resources and desire a more scientific analysis of the existing attitudes, sampling the audience for interviewing may be more appropriate.

Collection of the data might be achieved through either a mail questionnaire or personal interviews. If you don't have expertise in questionnaire design and sampling, you should obtain assistance. Such assistance may be obtained from community development agencies, colleges and universities, and government agencies.

Understanding the existing attitudes will provide information that is essential for establishing objectives. In addition, the understanding of the existing situation will assist you in selecting the most appropriate strategy to change existing attitudes.

Objectives

After analyzing the situation, you should select realistic objectives for the change program. The establishment of objectives may depend upon several factors. Among these are (1) the extent to which existing attitudes are held, (2) the priority given to the program area compared to other program areas in which you are involved, and (3) the resources available.

If existing attitudes are strongly held by the audience, changing them may be extremely difficult. Such a situation suggests that limited change can be made in the short run. It may also suggest the need for you to establish both short- and long-range objectives to bring about the desired changes.

Another factor which may affect the established objectives is the priority given to program areas. A program of high priority with significant resources will likely have more ambitious objectives. A program of lower priority and with less resources will likely have less ambitious objectives. Program priorities need to be considered in establishing realistic objectives.

Resources Available

The resources available for influencing attitudes is another

important criterion in selecting an appropriate method. Most of us have limited time and financial resources with which to address this issue. However, if you have significant resources in time, finances, and personnel, more information can be collected regarding the existing attitudes. Also, more resources can be allocated to the strategy selected to achieve the program objectives.

Programs with limited resources may have to depend primarily on volunteers to bring about the desired changes. The use of volunteers in influencing the audience can be an effective way in bringing about the desired changes. Effective use of the resources may depend primarily on how well you organize them into a total action strategy.

Organizational Constraints

As mentioned earlier, organizations and agencies are established for different missions. Some are established to carry out action programs while others have education as their major mission.

Each organization and agency is likely to have goals and social norms which will provide constraints in selecting a strategy. As you work in an organizational setting, you must consider which strategy is more appropriate for the organization. Some strategies may not be acceptable given the organizational constraints.

Your Expertise

Your expertise will affect the selection of strategies. One

may be hesitant to use a strategy with which he or she has had limited experience. Skills in various strategies can be developed through practice sessions and training programs.

Another criterion affecting your choice of strategies is your values and beliefs. If a particular strategy is inconsistent with your values and beliefs, you probably should not use that strategy. Your personal beliefs and values should be considered in selecting appropriate strategies to influence attitudes.

Summary

The major purposes of this publication are to (1) define an attitude change model for understanding attitudes, (2) suggest several strategies which can be used to influence attitudes, (3) discuss how best to communicate with the target audience, and (4) discuss several criteria to consider in selecting an appropriate strategy for influencing attitudes.

In conclusion, the authors believe it is essential for you to have a knowledge and understanding of attitudes and how to influence them. Because analyzing and understanding attitudes is an important step in the process of designing action programs, failure to understand the existing situation may result in limited success of your program. The allocation of time and resources to analyzing and understanding attitudes, establishing realistic objectives, and selecting the most appropriate strategy will enhance action programs.

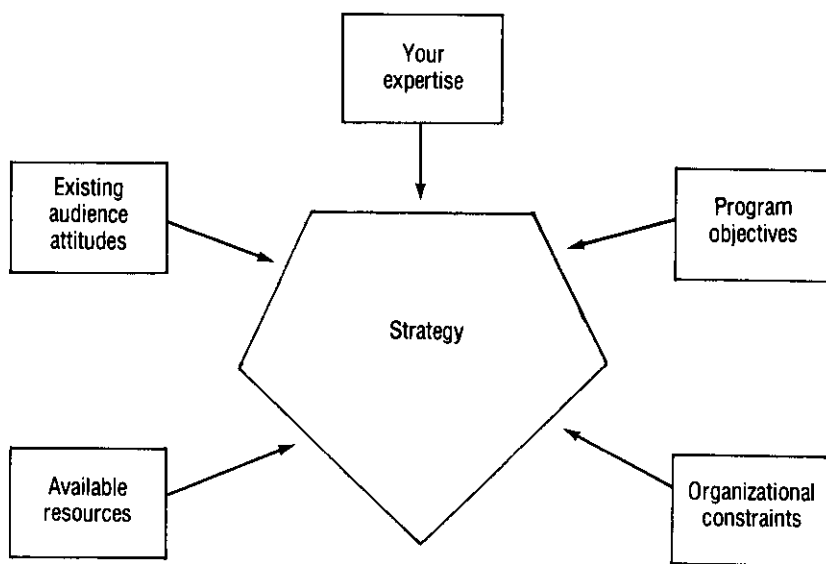


Fig. 2. Factors affecting scope and scale of a strategy for attitude change.

Bibliography

Fishbein, Martin and Icez Ajzen. *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior.* Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. Reading, Massachusetts. 1975.

Karlins, Marvin and Herbert I. Abelson. *Persuasion: How Opinions and Attitudes are Changed, 2nd Rev. Edition.* Springer Publication Co., Inc. New York, New York. 1970.

Katz, Daniel. *The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes.* *Public Opinion Quarterly* 24:163-204. 1960.

Limbaro, Philip G., Ebbe B. Ebbesen and Christina Maslach. *Influencing Attitudes and Changing Behavior, 2nd Edition.* Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. Reading, Massachusetts. 1977.

Oskamp, Stuart. *Attitudes and Opinions.* Prentice-Hall. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey. 1977.

Robinson, Jerry W., Jr. and Roy A. Clifford. *Change Implementation in Community Groups.* North-Central Regional Extension Publication No. 36-6. Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. 1974.

Robinson, Jerry W., Jr. and Roy A. Clifford and A. Christine Wills. *Motivation in Community Groups.* North-Central Regional Extension Publication No. 36-8. Cooperative Extension Service, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. 1975.

Rokeach, M. *Beliefs, Attitudes and Values.* Jossey-Bas. San Francisco, California. 1969.

Triandis, H. C. *Attitude and Attitude Change.* Wiley. New York, New York. 1971.

Programs and activities of the Cooperative Extension Service are available to all potential clientele without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, or handicap.

In cooperation with NCR Educational Materials Project
Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension Services of Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Robert L. Crom, Director, Cooperative Extension Service, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.