



APG Planning Idol 2007- Highly Commended

Background:

Ice (crystalline methamphetamine) is the most potent meth/amphetamine to ever hit Australian streets – and it's reaching epidemic proportions. Impacting the user physically and mentally, it often leads towards violence and crime, making it dangerous to both users and nonusers alike.

The Brief: Address the growing threat of ice in Australia

Client: Inspire Foundation

APG PLANNING IDOL

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HOW COMMUNICATIONS CAN CONVINCE PEOPLE THAT SLOW AND STEADY REALLY DOES WIN THE RACE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Simple? No, combating the growing threat of ice in Australia is not a simple task. While attempts have been made in the past there are several reasons they've met with limited success:

1. Lack of target understanding
2. Not recognising how the drug is being spread
3. A diluted message
4. Incorrect provenance

The strategy outlined in this paper is based on a wide variety of public domain information, international strategies and bespoke qualitative research.

It recognises that ice users come in a wide variety with a wide variety of different motivators.

It searches for a common insight to build a common message upon while still being flexible enough to bend the emphasis and delivery to maximise effectiveness across different target groups.

Also, it uses the social networks through which ice is being spread to disperse the message, keeping the credibility inherent with peer to peer networks.

Finally, it recognises that *how* the message is delivered is as important as the message itself.

Overall the strategy builds off the learnings from past campaigns and strategies, combines them with unique target understanding and offers a unique solution based on the individual factors of the problem.

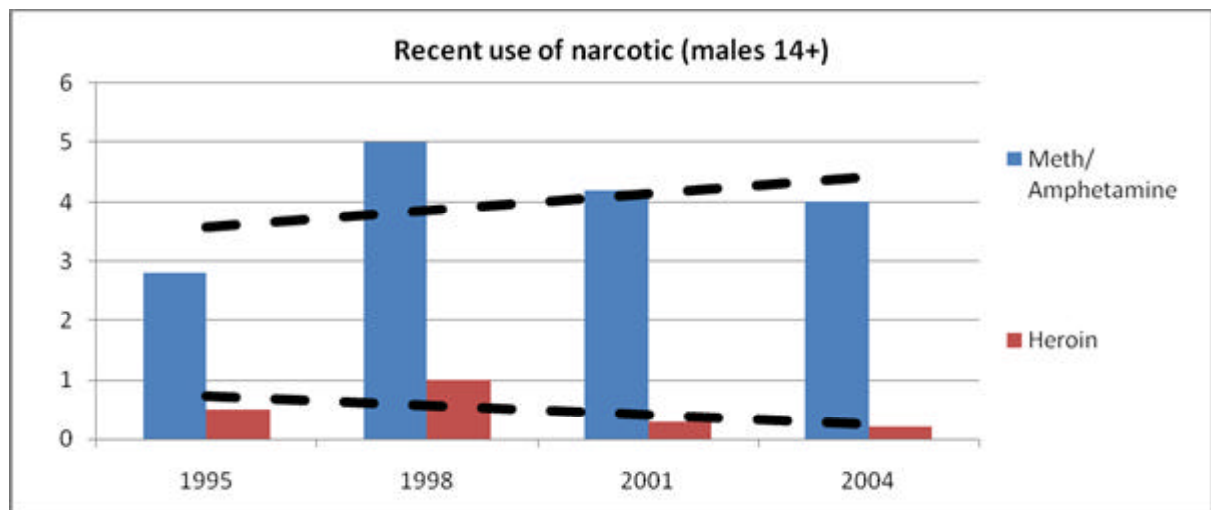
HOW COMMUNICATIONS CAN CONVINC PEOPLE THAT SLOW AND STEADY REALLY DOES WIN THE RACE

A SIMPLE PROBLEM???

The brief set the 'simple' challenge of combating the growing problem of ice in Australia.

Simple?

Since the heroin drought of the late 1990's, ice has grown in popularity and infamy to far outstrip the drug it was once merely replacing.



2004 National Drug Strategy household Survey

Despite growing awareness of this problem and government initiatives designed to stop it, the ice trend continues. The reason for this is multifaceted and includes medical and legal lags along with a raft of other factors. This paper focuses only where communications have failed and how they can succeed in the future.

Simple?

While the government's recent ice campaign was in many ways a good attempt it fell down in four key areas.

1. FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Democratic governments are voted to power by the people they govern. Their advertising campaigns are therefore designed as much for their constituents outside the target as the target itself. They need to be seen to be doing *something* but not necessarily something *effective*.

2. LACK OF INSIGHT INTO THE WAY ICE IS SPREAD

When people think of drugs and addiction, seedy pushers lurking in dark alleyways immediately come to mind. Ice isn't that kind of drug however. It began its life as a party drug like ecstasy or cocaine – a compliment to a good night out with friends. Most young people get ice off friends and that's particularly true for first time users.

Source of supply of illicit drugs by type of drug

	Friend or acquaintance	Relative	Dealer
Heroin	21.0%	11.9%	63.5%
Meth/amphetamine	69.9%	3.1%	22.7%
Ecstasy	72.1%	2.4%	22.6%

2004 National Drug Strategy household Survey

It's through peer, not pusher networks that ice is spreading.

"People normally get onto ice by hanging with the wrong crowd. The way you become an ice addict is by hanging around with an ice addict"

Constable Mark Payne, Hunters Hill

This strategy recognises this and uses these peer networks to spread the message in an organic way much like the drug itself is spread.

3. DILUTED MESSAGE

According to Constable Payne, the recent ice campaign was a true reflection of what the front line of ice looks in Australia. What the ads fail to do however is leave the viewer with a strong, motivating message or idea. It's a shopping list of ice's negatives instead of a hard hitting and single minded piece of communication.

4. UNFORTUNATE PROVENANCE

On the whole, God fearing citizens of Australia appreciate the government's work and applaud its attempts to stem the flow of ice. I wonder however how many ice users consider themselves God fearing? Very few would be my guess. Anyone prepared to inhale smoke from burning amphetamines is probably the last person likely to prick up their ears and listen to a message about drugs from John Howard's Federal Government.

Credibility is essential for effectiveness in a campaign like this and the mouthpiece presenting the message is as important as the message itself.

SO, WHO ARE WE TALKING TO THEN?

From my research with dealers, users and the police I've identified three major user groups:

1. The gay community - ice is a party drug and sexual enhancer
2. Lower socio economic groups - ice is a form of escapism

3. Dance partygoers – ice is good value recreational drug like ecstasy or coke

These three groups couldn't be more different in their motivations or usage occasions and because of this, finding an overarching message to reach them all is very tricky. One reason anti ice campaigns have had limited success in the past.

There is one common motivator for all the groups but it's unfortunately common for all recreational drugs – users want to feel good.

The user groups I've outlined here exist in a broader context which I've split up into five universes.



People on the left of this sliding scale of debauchery will never take drugs and those people on the right are already past the point where communications can help. Therefore the area where we can do the most good is with the middle three.

SUCCESS IS A TWO WAY STREET

The best case scenario for this campaign is a decrease in the intent to purchase and diminishing penetration.

The five key metrics are:

- A decrease in the number of people trying ice
- A decrease in the number of people planning on trying ice
- An increase in current users quitting their habits
- An increase in user awareness which minimises risk to themselves
- Peers passing the ice message through their social networks

A COMMON INSIGHT FOR A DIVERSE PROBLEM

In speaking to ice users one thing became apparent, they think in the short term. Get high tonight and worry about the come down tomorrow. Do ice when you're young and worry about the health implications some other time.

In the Federal Government's recent 'Excuses' anti smoking campaign two vignettes stand out;

HEALTHY LOOKING SMOKER: My Dad smoked all his life. Lived till he was 90

Smokers are borrowing from the end of their lives. Both in quality and quantity.

The same can be said for ice users, even though they may *think* they're invincible, they recognise that eventually, they'll have to pay back what they've borrowed.

THE CANDLE THAT BURNS TWICE AS BRIGHT BURNS HALF AS LONG

For some reason, maybe because heroin is an opiate, addicts normally look quite preserved. Ray Charles, Johnny Cash and Anthony Keadis all looked reasonably healthy during and despite their pretty serious heroin addictions.

Ice is an accelerant on the other hand. Instead of people looking preserved, they look used up. Almost as if the ice needle sucks out life force as it injects ice.

I was told a joke recently:

Q: What's the best thing about being an ice addict?

A: Only two sleeps till Christmas

Ice users can go days, even weeks, without eating or sleeping. It's no wonder that after only a short time using they look like zombies.

OFFERING A HELPING HAND; NOT WAGGING AN ACCUSING FINGER

While the message in this campaign is vitally important, equally so are the *way* it's said and *who's* saying it.

Any anti drugs campaign that drives the issue underground has failed. People who are considering or currently using ice need to know the truth and be armed with the facts.

The campaign needs to be open, understanding and factual.

Credibility of the recent anti smoking campaign featuring images of a woman suffering from mouth cancer were seriously dented when word spread that she was an actress with makeup instead of the heart wrenching figure she was actually portraying.

This campaign needs to get the message across with complete honesty. Any tricky salesmanship immediately puts the message in the rubbish bins of the target audience.

THE RIGHT KIND OF PROVENANCE

To be effective, this campaign cannot be branded by any type of authority figure. The only really effective mouthpiece for this type of message and for these specific target audiences are peers in the different social networks.

Partnering with respected personalities and media partners also gives immediate credibility. Phil Jamieson, lead singer of Grinspoon and recovering ice addict would be a perfect mouthpiece for this message. He's a voice of authority on the subject and someone who the target audience already has an affinity with.

USING THE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AGAINST ITSELF

By utilising the credibility of word-of-mouth the message can be spread via the same social networks through which the drug itself is travelling.

If someone has been given or passed on the communications message, it then makes it almost impossible for them to do the same with ice.

GOOD COP BAD COP

While the overarching message is the same, it will be split into two arms of a pincer movement.

The first arm, Bad Cop, is slightly more hardcore and focused on stopping those in the liberal and drug universes from trying ice. More mainstream, it would utilise bought media such as underground publications and youth radio stations

The second arm, Good Cop, targets those already using ice. More informative and understanding in tone it is aimed at giving users the motivation and tools to reduce and hopefully quite their habits.

IN SUMMARY

For an ice campaign to be successful it needs to be

- Based on a solid understand of the real target audience
- Attack the problem at ground level; the social networks it's being spread through
- Be single minded yet many faceted instead of the other way around
- Come from a place that doesn't immediately discredit the message

The main message here is built off target understanding and insight but the strategy is as much about *how* the message is said and *who* is saying it as it is about what the actual message is. With such an elusive target audiences however, getting there is half the challenge.

Word Count: 1,495