

Reducing alcohol-impaired driving crashes through the use of social marketing

Author(s)

Rothschild ML, Mastin B, Miller TW.

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Abstract

Over the past decade there has been little decrease in the number of alcohol-related driving fatalities. During this time most interventions have been educational or legal. This paper presents the results of a field experiment that used social marketing to introduce a new ride program into three rural communities. Almost all people in the 21-34-year-old target know that they should not drive while impaired, and most agree it is not a good thing to do, but for many the opportunity to behave properly does not exist. The Road Crew program was developed using new product development techniques and implemented by developing broad coalitions within the communities. A key feature of the program included rides to, between, and home from bars in older luxury vehicles. Results showed a significant shift in riding/driving behavior, especially among 21-34-year olds, a projected 17% decline in alcohol-related crashes in the first year, no increase in drinking behavior, and large savings between the reactive cost of cleaning up after a crash and the proactive cost of avoiding a crash. Programs have become self-sustaining based on fares and tavern contributions, and have become part of the life style in the treatment communities.

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