

Southern Conference on Teacher Retirement



COMMUNICATION & EDUCATION

BEST PRACTICES

IN TURBULENT TIMES

Do Typical Communication Tools Work?



- One third of baby boomers have saved less than \$1,000 for retirement
- 45% of pre-retirees over 55 have saved less than \$25,000 for retirement
- Recent NAGDCA survey has shown that the combined average participation rate is 22.9%

Up or down market, the message has not been as effective as we would have hoped!

Concepts good... Message weak or ineffective



- Over-education instead of communication
- No clear “call to action”
- Insiders view of the benefits
- Inconsistency
- Infrequency
- Assumption of similar learning patterns

Where do we start?



Effective Communication in a Down Market is as Much a Function of Knowing Your Participant as it is Knowledge of the Subject.

Adults... educational brick wall!



- Job Stress
- Family Pressures
- Media Stimuli... Overexposure
- Deadenning of sensitivity to messaging
- Hard-wired with certain behaviors
- No two adults will react the same to the same message

Before we decide what to communicate...



WHAT PROMPTS ACTION BY EMPLOYEES

*Know
behavior
...
Know
message*

*No one
form of
communication
will be
effective*

*Cure is not
one big pill,
but in fact
many little
pills*

Typical Behaviors



- Words (print) > Verbal Learners
- Pictures/Video > Visual Learners
- Personal Instruction > Hands on Learning

Rules of Thumb

Selective Attention

Concentrating on familiar key elements while automatically rejecting messages perceived to be irrelevant.

Territorialism

Investing or gravitating towards behaviors or investments that are most familiar.

Rules of Thumb

Framing
(sizzle... no steak)
How information is presented is more important than the message.

Representativeness
More weight placed on current experience than historical fact.

Rules of Thumb



INERTIA (GLACIER EFFECT)

*Difficult to get some individuals to
make a change, thus...*

“Moves like a glacier”

Strategic Suggestions



- Messages should not be negative, i.e.
“if you don’t save for retirement, you will eat cat food twice a day”
- Empower with believable results. Not necessarily a penthouse, but comfort and security
- Presentation in all media should be easy to understand with easily readable or viewable material to battle selective memory

Strategic Suggestions



- Take advantage of well know mental “links” that are already part of everyday vernacular.
 - “Put your investments on cruise control”
 - “Bonds are like a Government or corporate I.O.U.”
 - “Set it and forget it”

Strategic Suggestions



- Focus on visuals and short “sound bites”
- Pictures of actual work sites or Participants
- Don’t be afraid of “kitsch or cute”
- White space, call out boxes, contests etc.

Strategic Suggestions



- Use all forms of media
- Communicate often to create “informational layering”
- Create consistency to establish anticipation
- Vary formats

Conclusions



- Incorporate a variety of messages to overcome the “rules of thumb”
- Target the messages to specific groups
- Conduct research to establish groups, techniques, benchmarks etc.
- Keep the faith, it is important work!