

(PP) FLASH! THE NETHERLANDS LIFE STYLE CAMPAIGN FOR THE PROMOTION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Introduction

Approximately half the Dutch population exercises too little or hardly at all. (Hildebrandt *cs*, 2004). Taking exercise is crucial for health in general and the prevention of various chronic illnesses in particular. Taking insufficient exercise means that people are not complying with the agreed 'Dutch Standard for Healthy Physical Activity'. According to this standard, adults should engage in moderately intensive physical activity at least 30 minutes each day, five days a week. Children up to 18 one hour every day. Differences in terms of gender, economic class and ethnic origin are significant. From the age of 15, and most notably from the age of 65, physical activity is clearly on the decline. The government has set out its targets in the Time for Sport policy paper (Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, 2005). One of these is to continue a campaign and NISB is commissioned to go on doing it. The Flash! Campaign aims at encouraging physical activity in the broadest sense, as one of the key lifestyle themes, stimulating everyday exercise such as cycling, walking to work and gardening.

Quantity targets have been formulated for the campaign. Two illustrations; the percentage of Dutch people not performing any physical activity must be reduced from 8,2 % in 2004 to 7% in 2010, and 65% of the Dutch population exercises enough according to the standards in the year 2010. The campaign is due from 2003 till 2010.

Project

The campaign focuses on the awareness of the Dutch population but works together with hundreds of partners on national and local level. Professionals in schools, care-centres, sports, civil servants work in their networks to make this campaign a success. The government required NISB to obtain co-funding from market parties. Fortunately, we have been successful in deploying both entrepreneurship and marketing in our campaign. Additional funding has allowed us to carry out local activities in the various settings. This encouraged the intermediary organisations involved to contribute to the campaign.

The power of the Flash! Campaign is the combination of mass media and local activities in those specific settings. Flash! evolved in the first three years (from 2003 – 2006) to a successful campaign. NISB is responsible for the design and planning of the campaign but leaves, in contrast with a lot of other Dutch campaigns, more space for "couleur locale". Nation wide mass media creates interest for local activities through networks of organisations where professionals and volunteers work together in concrete activities. Those activities vary with the local situation and the settings together with the differences in possibilities, money and goals. This approach meant a lot for the working strategy and the way of planning. We like to introduce our project by the results of a research we did on our working process.

Wageningen University (Wink *cs*, 2006) did qualitative research to explore the working process based on data. (literature study, analysis of working documents, attending work meetings and in depth interviews). Based on this study we will discuss two related dimensions of the campaign. The planning approach, within the

organisational studies literature there has been a growing interest in alternative planning approaches to the classical means-end way of planning. Alternative approaches to planning, have emphasized the importance of creating diversity (evolutionary approach), look at planning as a step by step process which people in an organisation go together (process approach) and stress that people act according to the values and norms of the local social system in which the planning takes place (systemic approach) (Whittington, 2001) (Woerkum et al., 2005). Experimenting, creativity and reflection are important values in alternative approaches to planning. Second we will discuss the different working styles of the people responsible for the production of the Flash! Campaign and the implicit assumptions these people hold with respect to their day to day practices. Preferring a network approach, stressing interpersonal collaboration with responsible persons in all kind of settings.

Results

Flash! performed in a lot of settings in hundreds of cities with concrete actions. It led to hundreds of local plans for improving health through physical activity. We succeeded in matching national mass media attention to local activity by stimulating local networking. By focussing on working styles in addition to planning approaches we combine insights of the scenario of the campaign with the reality of people acting in it. Researching planning approaches and working styles offers us a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the way of campaigning epitomised by Flash! We assume that this is the main factor in our success.

Discussion

In contrast to the classical means-end approach the concept of working styles focuses attention on the observed practices of the professional and places less emphasis on normative models dictating how the work should be done in theory. Is this an alternative we should encourage outside the Netherlands? Referring to contingency theories and social network approach Flash! differs from conventional campaigns. In our presentation we will present an analysis of the Flash! campaign and discuss its possible strengths and weaknesses. We like to discuss whether and how the campaign has been more successful than others.

References

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