Transforming Sanitation Coverage: Civic Champions Inspire Sustained Change

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Sanitation Marketing

Over the past 5 years, sanitation marketing has emerged as a key methodology to develop supply chains for sanitation hardware and services and to increase consumer demand for safe sanitation solutions. This follows the development of Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), which has gained widespread recognition for making significant progress in creating a community-driven push to achieve Open Defecation Free (ODF) status.

Cambodia is a low-income country and approximately 80 percent of the population live in rural areas. In 2012, approximately 75 percent of rural Cambodians did not have a toilet. The Hands-Off Sanitation Marketing program implemented by WaterSHED is rapidly increasing access to rural sanitation. In only three years, over 90,000 households have invested over US $3.6 million of their own money to purchase and install an improved latrine from local private suppliers. This has directly benefited over 400,000 rural Cambodians.

Sanitation Coverage Gains from Marketing

Starting in 2009, WaterSHED and its partners introduced a sanitation marketing program in Kampong Speu Province, and at the same time began a longitudinal survey to characterize the change in coverage at the village level across a randomly selected sample of 36 villages.

Of the sample villages, 12 of the sample villages had been exposed to CLTS prior to the marketing intervention, and an additional 9 villages were exposed over the project period.

When marketing is not enough: Inquiry driven by uneven change

Under the Hands-Off sanitation marketing program, rapid improvements in some sample villages had been seen across a randomly selected sample of 36 villages.

Of the sample villages, 12 of the sample villages had been exposed to CLTS prior to the marketing intervention, and an additional 9 villages were exposed over the project period. The structure enabled the participant cohort to 1) discover new learning at a ‘discovery’ conference, 2) develop plans for the next 3 months, (during which time they were supported coaching visits) and then 3) to present to their peers at the next ‘discovery’ conference the results they had delivered.

Three iterative cycles were undertaken during the 9 month project period. Participants were incentivized through a peer-award mechanism. Bronze, silver and gold-level winners were awarded certificates, medals and trophies and cash prizes.

Design Considerations

Set, maintain & grow high standards

Empathise with & respect the cultural reality

Design a powerful ‘stretch zone’ experience

Create a meaningful identity - the civic champion

Build, adapt, innovate & optimise skills

Maximise learning

Build a friendly & fun community that encourages learning

Fig 4. Summary of 9 key design considerations

Outcomes

Fig 5. Civic Champions Project significantly increased sanitation sales in a nine month period

The inspiration – great leaders

“Nothing is impossible for those who will try”

- Alexander the Great, conqueror of the known world

“it is possible - 100% sanitation access in 4 months”

- Mr. Siem Dounhara, Village Chief, Kampong Speu Province, Cambodia

Whilst facing similar constraints, some local leaders in rural Cambodia were able to inspire and motivate their communities to achieve remarkable progress in development. The challenge was to allow others to reach their potential as great leaders.

UNC Water & Health Conference, Oct 13 – 17, 2014, Chapel Hill, NC, USA

Civic Champions, a 9-month proof-of-concept leadership project, was designed to wake and engage elected officials “or Community in rural Cambodia. The leadership performance challenge was to drive significant improvements in sanitation coverage. The cohort was comprised of elected local government officials. The average age was over 50 years and many had not completed primary school education. The project was implemented by WaterSHED in partnership with Leadapreneur and was funded by the Grand Challenges Canada. After Leadapreneur designed the program learning-journey and trained WaterSHED staff to deliver it through a ‘train the trainers’ mechanism. The initiative was integrated with WaterSHED’s existing Hands-Off sanitation marketing program.

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Evaluation

The evaluation found:

What is unique about the Civic Champion project is that it shows the participants the paths to walk and lets them discover how to walk those paths themselves.

One participant commented on what is different about Civic Champions this way: “before there was [an NGO] donating concrete slabs and rings for latrines, but some people just used those rings as storage for hay. That created difficulties for us as Commune Councillors too because there were not enough for everyone. People cried nepotism and blamed us for giving to one and not another. Now there’s nothing to give, neutral, so there is no more blame of nepotism.”

The program is innovative and has achieved considerable progress in terms of sanitation coverage. But the real results might not be clearly seen at the end of the program.

Lessons learned

1. Participants are willing to pay for a quality program – whilst initially skeptical, the participants largely agreed that the US$30 fee was good value.

2. Attention is not failure – some participants dropped out of the program leaving a committed and strong community of action.

3. Provide for flexibility in program delivery – previous learning experience, exposure to team work, literacy levels and age were some of the factors which shaped the program elements.

4. Leadership development can ‘sew the seeds’ of long-term transformational change.

Conclusions

- Build confident ‘leadapreneurs’

- Create a powerful and meaningful identity and prioritize the creation of a community.

- Create a powerful experience.

- Generate affective situational understanding.

- Raise the standards.

- Build a long-term program with multiple cycles.

- High quality coaching and training is critical to success.