CHANGING BEHAVIOUR & ATTITUDES TOWARDS WATER USE: A QUESTION OF HABIT

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Water Ireland, 27 March 2014, Ashbourne
1. Why behaviour change
   – The need to target the consumption-side

2. Three areas to target for effective change in habits
   – Individual, Social & Infrastructure

3. Examples
   – Successful initiatives targeting those 3 key areas.
   – CONSENSUS – everyday water using practices

4. Conclusion
   – Key lessons
WHY TARGET CONSUMPTION?

Water use trends & opportunities to intervene

- Ireland - households = largest end-users (60%), 150 litres per person per day.

- UK forecast +50% increase in hot water use by 2050 yet could achieve 50% decrease with policy action, efficiencies & lifestyle change (HM Gov. 2009).

- Today, home water use can be cut by over 30% with behaviour change & existing efficient technologies.

- Climate mitigation - Hot water = 24% total energy end-use (SEAI, 2008).
Latest research shows that behaviour change initiatives are more successful if they target all 3 contexts in an integrated way: Individual, Social & Infrastructural.
E.G. DURHAM WATER, ONTARIO

- Experimented with different combinations of interventions in different groups:

**RESULTS:**
- Information campaign on own = limited impact
- Those targeted with all interventions = 54% reduction in water use (17% over time)
- $80,000 to implement & financial savings of $945,000. Programme was 1/5 the cost of alternative – expanding the water infrastructure

(Source: www.toolsofchange.com)
INDIVIDUAL: MESSAGING

Loss aversion
• “Avoid losing” versus “save money”

From environmental messaging – to health & convenience
• Health, wellbeing, time pressure
• Open to new habits during key life-changes (moving home, baby, retirement…)

Balance emotional messaging with rational information
• Emotions, humor & indulgence – targeted marketing
SOCIAL: NORMS

Norms
Peers & leaders
Relationships
Institutions

Mayor of Bogota—videoed himself showering to encourage citizens to wash with less water—shown on TV adverts.

“If people know the rules, and are sensitized by art, humor, and creativity, they are much more likely to accept change.”
Mayor of Bogota, Antanas Mockus.

Sao Paolo ‘pee in the shower’

Denver Water
SOCIAL: RELATIONS & INSTITUTIONS

PEER LEARNING E.G. ECO-TEAMS
• Pre-existing communities & trained facilitators.
• Meet once monthly empowering & guiding people to make their own changes

INSTITUTIONS
• Workplace & school action plans
SOCIAL: PEER COMPARISONS

PEER BENCHMARKING

• Social comparisons have more impact on conservation behaviour than appeals to save the environment / money (e.g. Nolan et al 2008)

• E.G. Opower, H20Score

TARGETS

• “Target 140” – Queensland government campaign – culture of responsibility & common purpose
**CHOICE EDITING – EFFICIENCY STANDARDS**

- “Choice editing” – e.g. product & home minimum efficiency standards
- DEFRA “Future Water” - set target for reducing household consumption by 13% by 2030 – From 150 l/p/d to 120 litres

**CHOICE ARCHITECTURE**

- E.G. shower timers, lawn gauges – cues at point of use
- E.G. subsidies / retrofitting low-flow taps & shower heads.
PHASE ONE 2009-2013

- Collaborative visioning process to explore integrated individual, social and infrastructural interventions for sustainable washing practices.

- Future scenarios & Long-term Transition Plans created.
CONSENSUS

PHASE TWO 2014

- Working with industry, public sector and NGO partners to prototype new ICT, shower devices, communications & educational strategies

- **HomeLab**: Implement in homes – ethnographic evaluation.

- Cross-sectoral recommendations & spin-off

- See: [www.consensus.ie](http://www.consensus.ie)
CONCLUSIONS

• Behaviour change = holy grail of environmental action, yet success has been very limited.

• Latest research shows changing behaviour = about changing HABITS (need to move beyond information approaches that fall prey to Value-Action-Gap)

• Our everyday water-using habits are influenced by 3 key forces:
  1. Individual – boost motivation, emotional cues & provide skills
  2. Social – social learning, social norms, peer benchmarking
  3. Infrastructure – choice editing for efficiency, making it easy.

• Integrated approach essential - requires collaborative action (across sectors & disciplines)

• CONSENSUS is piloting this new approach.
THANK YOU
ANY QUESTIONS?

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www.consensus.ie