Toward a Strategy for Improving Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Messaging to Small Business

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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.
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<th>Establishment Size</th>
<th>Firms</th>
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<th>Employees</th>
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Overview

Components of a Framework of issues to consider in developing

Communication Strategy

By a public health or OSH agency

Small Business Employers
Critical in OSH communication:

- Target: small business _employer_
  - Responsible for OSH
  - Controls resources for prevention efforts
Messaging

- Contemporary understanding: communication by electronic means
- General understanding: transferring information by any means
• Communication occurs in an environment where recipient is also information seeking
  - They may overlap
Reasons why OSH agencies cannot effectively communicate with small business employers

- Perennial conundrum
- Lack of research; need more
- OSH not championed in small business populations
- False belief in “one size fits all”
- Small business have difficulty obtaining and acting on messages
For communication and intervention purposes using the term “small-business”

- Misleading
- Counterproductive
- Various size cut points
- Various capacities for prevention action
Need a better understanding of meaning of term small business

- Business age
- Structure
- Management centricity
- Culture
- Psychosocial experience
- Financial resources

(Cunningham et al 2014)
Utilizing communication theory

• Theory-base approach are critical for effective communications

• Communication by public or OSH agency generally has followed the Shannon-Weaver Model:

  (Shannon and Weaver, 1949)

May be outmoded for OSH
More matrixed approach (McGuire 1985)
Elements in a strategy for agency communication to small business

- Theory based
  - (e.g., utility of Theory of Planned Behavior demonstrated by Brosseau et al 2005); Health Belief Model: quite useful

- Tailoring and Targeting of
  - Message
  - Channel

- Segmentation
  - Not generally feasible unless the population of small businesses can be identified
  - Include segmented messages
Segmented messages-”if” statements

• (e.g., If your company is a start-up this message is for you or

• e.g., If your company has more than 70 people, look at this)
An approach to test

Segmented audiences: use 4 options based on prevention experience

• Adaptation of categories used by Champoux and Brun 2003
  - Does your company have any specific OSH activities?
  - Does your company have a formal OSH program?
  - Does your company involve workers in OSH activities?
  - Does your company have an extensive OSH program?
  *Make them mutually exclusive

• Tailor messages and channels for each option.
Role of motivation of small business employers

- Sparse literature
- Motivation of employers: crucial factor
- Fear appeals are most effective if you have efficacy guidance
- Importance of making “business case”
  (Brousseau and Li 2005; Cagno et al 2016)
Can We Use the Concept of Knowledge Stickiness?

- Pertains to complexity of knowledge
- Costs that accrue to recover, to engage, and use it
- Knowledge considered sticky if accessibility (understandability and utility) is low
Absorptive capacity

• Uptake of knowledge influenced by qualities of recipient
• Influenced by inherent recipient characteristics and interactions
• Interaction with customers, suppliers, accounts, consumers, insurers, advertisers, regulators and others
• Knowledge alone is not sufficient
Stickiness of Knowledge

Interaction

Firm’s absorptive capacity

Indarti, 2011
May be intermediaries in the communication process

(Hasle et al 2011; Cunningham et al 2011)
Extended Model for Small Business OSH Intervention Diffusion (Sinclair, Cunningham, & Schulte, 2013)
Still a transmission model but would benefit from feedback loops
Enhance intermediary models

• Conduct formative research with candidate organizations
• Engage influential individuals identified in formative research to be involved in the communication
• Collaborate with intermediaries on how they will engage small business (Bruening et al 2016)
It may be time to

• Develop national and international strategic plans for communicating with small business
• Prioritize research and messages

May have an impact on morbidity, mortality, and injury
Thank You

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