

February 2011

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Upcoming Events

SOV Nomination deadline Wednesday, March 23rd, 2011, 8 pm

ASIST Training for SW Ontario April 2 - 3, 2011
In London for London, Sarnia, and Windsor DCs

National Volunteer Week
April 10 - 16, 2011

DCO Visioning Day
May 2 and 3, 2011
Niagara Region

Working effectively with Challenging Callers
4 Wednesdays in May starting May 4, 2011

Tips for Getting Your Fundraising Message to your Donors in a Mobile World

Many Distress Centres in our association connect with their current and potential donors via email. How we and our donors view emails is changing quickly, often due to our ability to use smart phones to perform the function or reading emails.

As we all know, reading emails on our mobile devices differs significantly from what we see on our computer screens. If we wish to insure our messages are getting through we need to consider how our messages are read.

[Informz](#), the way to know email marketing, offers several tips to help us think about how our donors will more easily receive our messages in this ever-increasingly mobile world:

Keep it short Use short subject lines that are really compelling and easy to read on a mobile device. When creating effective subject lines, it's recommended to keep it less than 30 characters and your body copy should be no longer than five scrolls.

Use a recognizable "from" address and include contact info On mobile devices, individuals typically scroll quickly through their messages instantly deleting those that they are not interested in or do not recognize. Make sure your "from" address relates to your organization. Don't forget to include a phone number and email address in the body of the email so individuals can quickly get in touch with you.

Manage the text version Don't ignore the text version of your email. Use line breaks, all caps and symbols to highlight different sections.

Incorporate text messaging Create a new way that your subscribers can become engaged with you. Remember, keep the message to 160 characters or less and always offer a way to opt out.

Limit the amount of images used Always use alt tags to label your images. In the event that images do not display correctly, the alt tag should state the purpose of the image.



New content each month on [www.learningforums.ca!](http://www.learningforums.ca) Get a password through your volunteer coordinator.

Join Our Mailing List!

Create a link to the mobile friendly version Include a link within your traditional email to a version that is easy to read on their mobile device.

Segment out your mobile device users

If your email software doesn't have the facility to record how your emails are opened, simply ask your donors if they want a mobile version or a regular version and keep two separate lists.

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Exploring the impact of Media Reports on Suicide

by Rex Roman

When faced with a person whom we believe could be suicidal, we are faced with the difficult question of whether to mention suicide or not. It is a commonly held belief that merely mentioning suicide is

dangerous. Experienced people know this to be a myth. (Joiner 2010) When we ask with caring and compassion, we are actually holding out hope to the person who is already distressed. (Cutcliffe and Stevenson 2007; Fiske 2008) We can now ask the larger question of whether media reporting can also have a positive role in suicide prevention.

In 'Role of media reports in completed and prevented suicide: Werther v. Papageno effects' Niederkrotenthaler, T., M. Voracek, et al. (2010) look at the effect that the media has on both causing suicide (The Werther Effect) and preventing suicides (The Papageno Effect.) Both concepts are explained as follows:

The Werther Effect

One of the earliest known associations between the media and suicide arose from Goethe's novel, The Sorrows of Young Werther, published in 1774. In that work the hero shoots himself after an ill-fated love, and shortly after its publication there were many reports of young men using the same method to commit suicide. This resulted in a ban of the book in several places. (Wikipedia)

The Papageno Effect

Based on Papageno's overcoming of a suicidal crisis in Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute," we conceptualised any suicide-protective impact of media reporting as a Papageno effect. In Mozart's opera, Papageno refrains from suicide because his attention is drawn to alternative coping strategies. (Niederkrotenthaler, Voracek et al. 2010 p. 234)



The study looked at 6 months worth of suicide reporting in all the major

newspapers in Austria. The media reports were analyzed for their content and approach. A complex qualitative analysis isolated a number of factors involving both the content of the reports and the method (form) of the report. The media reports were then correlated with the statistical information about completed and attempted suicides. A positive correlation would mean that the report was followed by an increase in suicides; whereas, a negative correlation would mean fewer suicides following a report.

What the study found was that there were certain instances where media reports were followed by increased suicide activity. On the other hand, there were instances where the opposite occurred: fewer suicides and suicide attempts. Different reports were correlated with different results. Therefore, we can conclude that the mention of suicide alone did not create the different results. It must have been other factors in the article as suggested in the following quote:

The study indicates that the effects of suicide-related stories may depend on story characteristics. (p.241)

This would indicate that different stories, told in different ways, may have different impacts. The researchers note that stories with details about the suicide method were more strongly correlated with greater numbers of suicide following the publication of the story. In addition, the way the story was told was important. Situations which were sensationalized, particular when the story was repeated (two or more reports on different days), were followed by an increase in suicide activity.

This negative effect occurred even in cases that contained some positive elements. For instance, experts are often asked to comment and these experts always tried to add some protective factors into the story. Unfortunately, these opinions were often embedded into a story which included overwhelming negative elements such as a detailed description of suicide methods and presented in a sensationalist manner:

Consistent with findings in the field of mass communication, expert opinions seem to be used as a means of giving an air of seriousness to reporting, but at the same time tend to be embedded in an unfavourable, sensationalist context. (p. 241)

In contrast, the researchers found that some reports could have a positive influence:

The possibility of a suicide-protective effect of media items on positive coping in adverse circumstances, which has been discussed in the literature on a purely theoretical basis, was empirically supported by the present findings. (p. 241)

Stories that were sympathetic to the plight of distressed individuals, particularly those which stressed the possibility of improvement and had stories without attempted or completed suicide, were correlated with fewer suicides:

Reporting of individual suicidal ideation (not accompanied by attempted or completed suicide) was associated with a decrease in suicide rates. Specifically, reports about individuals who experienced suicidal crises but adopted constructive coping in adverse circumstances were associated with a decrease of suicide rates. (p. 241)

This insight is encouraging. As a community interested in preventing suicides, it is heartening to imagine that we might be able to influence individuals positively through media reports. Our goal needs to be to educate the media about the negative effects of the wrong type of coverage, and also to enlist their cooperation in preventing suicide through protective media reports.

This was an important study because of the correlations it revealed when using newspaper reports, and how different content and form could shape the effect of media reports. Our challenge is to move forward into other media. Perhaps the most challenging arena will be New Media. After all, newspapers are structured institutions with editorial control and public responsibility. New Media-internet, mobile devices, video sites and blogging- does not have any such editorial control nor social responsibility. (Parry 2010; Roman 2010) Thus New Media has the potential for great harm. This study will help us develop new strategies and techniques to provide protective sites, situations, and messages that will help suicide prevention.

Dr. Rex Roman is currently the Vice-Chair of the Research Ethics Board of Women's College Hospital. Rex recently completed Fellowships at Women's College Hospital and the Joint Centre for Bioethics. He holds a Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Toronto.

*Full bibliography available through the DCO offices

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Reporting on the Current Volunteer Experience Reviewing *Bridging the Gap*, a Canadian Study

Over the next several months, we will review *Bridging the Gap - Enriching the volunteer experience to build a better future for our communities.*

Conducted in the summer of 2010, this pan-Canadian research study provides current national data about the changing culture of Canada's voluntary sector. The study conducted on behalf of Volunteer Canada by the Carleton University Centre for Voluntary Sector Research & Development in collaboration with Harris/Decima was funded by Manulife Financial.



Recognized as one of the largest voluntary sectors in the world, Canadians collectively contribute two billion hours of volunteer time yearly, an average of 168 hours each. We are generous with our time and passionate about the communities we live in. Over the past 40 years, the distress line sector has benefited significantly from this generosity.

While the role of volunteers was explored on a general level in four national surveys between 1997 and 2007 this report takes a different view. The research gathers practical information through a more in-depth exploration of four specific demographic groups: youth, families, baby boomers and employer-supported volunteers.

The thrust of the research approach was based on the premise that building the capacity of organizations to effectively engage volunteers involves: Greater promotion of volunteering to the public; and helping organizations to create quality volunteer opportunities that appeal to today's volunteers.

The 2010 research findings are based on a literature review of more than 200 documents, a general population telephone survey of 1,016 households, a survey of 551 volunteers, 18 focus groups around the country in both urban and rural settings with 236 participations, and an online survey of 208 non-profit and voluntary organizations. All primary research was conducted in Canada.

The primary gaps identified by the research were:

- Many people are looking for group activities BUT few organizations have the capacity to offer them
- Many people come with professional skills BUT many professionals are looking for volunteer tasks that involve something different from their work life
- Organizations are expected to clearly define the roles and boundaries of volunteers BUT many volunteers want the flexibility to initiate what they have to offer (i.e., create their own volunteer opportunity)
- Many organizations still want long-term commitment BUT many more volunteers are looking for shorter-term opportunities, and
- Many organizations focus on what they need BUT besides helping others, many volunteers come with their own goals to be met

Volunteer coordinators, trainers, executive directors and boards of DC's will recognize that the findings echo many of their perceptions of the changing volunteer landscape. As we review the report's insights in the coming months some currently held myths may also be challenged.

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**How to Work More Effectively with Challenging Callers
Encore**

Mark your calendars! DCO Learning Forums is pleased to offer another opportunity to participate in the exceptional four-week training sessions delivered by webinar last November. **Gilles Brideau**, Bilingual Program Consultant from the Sudbury offices of the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, will repeat his presentation of *How to Work More Effectively with Challenging Callers - Using Motivational Interviewing Techniques*, Wednesday evenings beginning May 4th - 25th 2011.



Participants from the fall session found Gilles to be an excellent speaker; found the information very relevant to the work they do on the crisis/distress lines; stated they loved the format and found it convenient to attend from home using their telephone and internet connection.

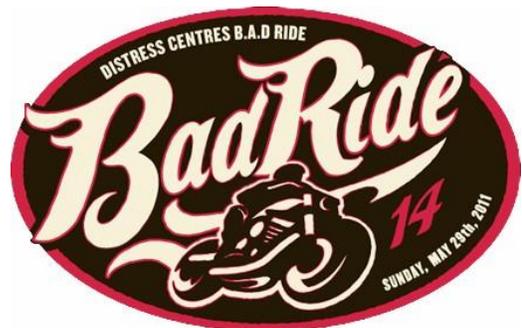
In early April watch for notices for registration in the Learning Forums newsletter *Learning in Partnership*, in the DCO's e-News +Views, and/or in your Outlook email.

In the meantime, mark your calendars and plan to participate so that you don't miss out on this valuable professional development opportunity!

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B.A.D. Ride 2011

February should be renamed "Distress Centres B.A.D. Ride Month" since it's all about warm hearts in cold times. During the dark days of winter, the compassionate care provided by our telephone counselors to those struggling to emotionally stay



afloat ensures that our helpline is really a lifeline. So, when you go out to the garage to check on that bike safely stored away for the season, remember to give it an extra pat from us. There's a lot of life in that machine - for the road and for the cause!

We're Live! The B.A.D. Ride 14 website has been updated to reflect what's new for this year. And, what a great event **May 29, 2011** promises to be - the best of the old and enough change to keep it interesting. How great is that!

Pre-register online at www.thebadride.com and **double** your draw tickets for the B.A.D. attitude 2011 Harley-Davidson Fat Bob. That machine just oozes character and would look good on any road! We've made fundraising as easy as possible through our online option. Remember that the more you raise, the more draw tickets you receive. And, we've sweetened the pot by giving you extra gifts if you reach any one of our incentive levels. Check out the website for more details.

We've started the countdown until the rubber hits the road. When those

bikes start moving again, you know that the **B.A.D. Ride** is just around the corner.

-The B.A.D. Ride Team and Distress Centres

p.s. Did you know that more than half the callers to Distress Centres have diagnosed mental illnesses and regularly use the line to help them manage to live in the community and avoid crashing into crisis?

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