



The evolution of Rare Pride: Using evaluation to drive adaptive management in a biodiversity conservation organization

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Evaluation
Adaptive management
Social marketing
Entertainment–education
Biodiversity conservation

ABSTRACT

Rare Pride is a social marketing program that stimulates human behavior change in order to promote biodiversity conservation in critically threatened regions in developing countries. A series of formal evaluation studies, networking strategies, and evaluative inquiries have driven a 20-year process of adaptive management that has resulted in extensive programmatic changes within Pride. This paper describes the types of evaluation that Rare used to drive adaptive management and the changes it caused in Pride's theory-of-change and programmatic structure. We argue that (a) qualitative data gathered from partners and staff through structured interviews is most effective at identifying problems with current programs and procedures, (b) networking with other organizations is the most effective strategy for learning of new management strategies, and (c) quantitative data gathered through surveys is effective at measuring program impact and quality. Adaptive management has allowed Rare to increase its Pride program from implementing about two campaigns per year in 2001 to more than 40 per year in 2009 while improving program quality and maintaining program impact.

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1. Introduction

In spite of decades of work and massive financial commitment, efforts to conserve global biodiversity have achieved spotty and inconsistent successes because “we have yet to fully discover the secrets of effective conservation” (Salafsky, Margoluis, Redford, & Robinson, 2002). Carleton-Hug & Hug (2010, this issue) argue that a majority of environmental education groups fail to incorporate high-quality, systemic evaluation into their programming. Salafsky and his colleagues argue that adaptive management (AM) is a strategy to learn how to do conservation better through the use of formative research, project monitoring, and impact evaluation. This paper uses an historical analysis of a number of in-house studies done over 20 years to understand how a biodiversity conservation organization focused on environmental social marketing used the results of its evaluations to drive the evolution of its primary conservation program, resulting in substantial programmatic changes and the adoption of AM at the program level.

1.1. Rare and Pride²

Rare is an international biodiversity conservation non-governmental organization (NGO) based in Arlington, Virginia, whose mission is to “conserve imperiled species and ecosystems around the world by inspiring people to care about and protect nature.” Pride is Rare's flagship program that utilizes the entertainment–education strategy and social marketing (SM).³ The Pride strategy is designed to inform and motivate people to adopt both a conservation ethic and specific behavioral practices that are less environmentally damaging.

Pride is used to reduce threats to biodiversity that are caused by human behaviors, for example, illegal “bush-meat” hunting, destructive fishing practices (e.g. use of cyanide or explosives), and the use of fire to clear land. Pride campaigns are implemented by campaign managers (CMs) working for lead agency partners (LAPs) and consist of 15–20 multi-media SM activities (e.g. puppet shows, billboards, posters, radio spots, songs, video programs, religious sermons and other civic engagement activities) produced over a period of one to two years. The campaigns are branded by the use of a “flagship” species, a local charismatic animal or plant

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² Additional information on Rare and Pride may be found at <http://www.rareconservation.org/>.

³ The entertainment–education strategy is defined as designing and implementing media messages to both entertain and educate audiences (Singhal and Rogers, 1999). SM is the application of commercial marketing strategies (e.g. audience segmentation and market research) to achieve desired social change (Andreasen, 1995).

Table 1
Evaluations used by Rare.

Author (year)	Methodology	Design	Study population	Sample size(s)	Purpose (s)
Butler (1996)	In-depth interviews	Retrospective	CMs, LAPs, Stakeholders	10 traditional Pride campaigns	Lessons learned
Vaughan (2004)	Web-based survey	Retrospective	CMs, LAPs, Stakeholders	31 traditional and Pride 1.0 campaigns	Partners' satisfaction; CM/LAP capacity building; Pride efficacy
Vaughan (2005)	In-depth phone interviews	Retrospective	BINGOs	22 senior administrators	Partners' satisfaction; Rare's competencies/weaknesses
Vaughan et al. (2006)	Literature review; Meta-analysis of survey findings; In-depth phone interviews	Retrospective	CMs, LAPs	26 traditional Pride campaigns	Short-term campaign efficacy; Long-term campaign impacts on CMs, LAPs, conservation; Lessons learned
Parkinson (2006)	In-depth interviews; Web survey; Content analysis of Pride Internet club messages	All current Pride Internet club members	Rare staff, Partners, CMs	45 Pride Internet Club members	Determination of potential for computer-mediated communication to enhance learning within conservation education
CMs (Ongoing)	Personal interview surveys	One-group Pretest-Posttest	Campaign's target population	All campaigns	Measure campaign impact on KAP
Vaughan (2007)	Meta-analysis of survey data	Multivariate statistical analysis	Campaign survey data	Avg. = 520 respondents per survey; 25 Traditional and 34 Pride 1.0 campaigns	Frequency trends, statistical associations; 250 variables ^a
Various (Ongoing)	Networking	Participation in forums for exchange of management ideas	Foundations of Success; CMP;	Not applicable	Share/develop best management practices with other organizations
Various (Ongoing)	External review; Internal reflection and analysis	Porter's (1980) Five Forces; Strategy Maps and Balanced Scorecards; Competitor Analysis	New Profit, Inc.; Rare board and staff	Not applicable	Critical review of program/management assumptions, (e.g. compare project design and evaluation with public health SM efforts).

^a Variables include data on (1) the CM (socioeconomic status, prior experience), (2) the LAP (size of organization, previous experience, resources contributed), (3) threats to biodiversity the campaign addressed, (4) target population (rural/urban, land tenure), (5) the flagship species (type of organism, endangered status, endemic status), (6) Pride activities conducted, and (7) the outcome variables including the (a) change in KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice), and (b) attainment of other measurable objectives.

species, that is chosen to provide an empathetic symbol of the local biodiversity, and that is used in all of the messages and activities. Between 1988 and 2007, Rare trained 120 CMs who have implemented Pride campaigns in almost 50 countries.

1.2. Adaptive management

The concept of a “learning organization” was introduced to management theory in 1978 to overcome the shortcomings of prior management philosophies, which tended to focus on short-term problem solving rather than on long-term systemic evolution of the organization (Preskill & Torres, 1999). Learning organizations develop systems of “evaluative inquiry” as part of a learning strategy to develop insights into their work, continuously assess their processes, and to adapt their strategies to evolving circumstances (Senge, 2006). AM is the systematic integration of these “learning strategies” to test an organization's underlying assumptions about what makes it effective in order to learn to be better at what it does and to adapt to changing circumstances. AM is conceived as a spiral, never-ending, self-reflective and evaluative process that drives program and management policy refinement (Salafsky, Margoluis, & Redford, 2008). The perceived benefits of AM are that management actions and decisions are based on experience and that it engenders a culture of continuous improvement (Smith, Felderhof, & Bosch, 2007).

International conservation organizations have broadly accepted the principles of AM (Conservation Measures Partnership (CMP, 2007)).⁴ Following CMP's *Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation*, evaluation is designed into the 5-step program cycle

beginning with Step 2 where the monitoring plan is developed, Step 3 where it is implemented, Step 4 where monitoring results are analyzed, and Step 5 where learning is shared to inform future program development, thereby “mainstreaming” evaluation into the program model (Sanders, 2003).

There are relatively few published examples of AM from conservation organizations. This is explained, in part, by “*deeply entrenched social norms and institutional frameworks*,” including such factors as the desire for “control by managers” and the need to follow “current management guidelines” that tend to promote “activity” and “comfort” over “reflection” and “learning” (Allan & Allan, 2005). Further, most published papers on AM in conservation organizations examine a particular conservation challenge in a given location. AM has often been used in situations where resource harvest quotas need to be adjusted in dynamic ecological and market environments. This paper assesses the application of AM to a learning portfolio⁵ of Pride programs that have been widely adapted to many different conservation challenges in a diversity of ecological and social circumstances.

2. Evaluations that drove adaptive management at Rare

Initial research done by Rare involved quantitative surveys that were designed to measure the impact of Pride on audiences. Retrospectively, the aggregated results of this impact research have been used in conjunction with qualitative studies designed to assess organizational performance. These evaluations are summarized in Table 1. They include a meta-analysis of the survey data from all completed Pride campaigns, a series of qualitative in-

⁴ Rare is a member of CMP, which is a collaboration of conservation NGOs that seek improved ways to measure the outcomes of conservation actions.

⁵ A learning portfolio is a group of similar programs that are studied collectively to draw generalized conclusions (Salafsky, Margoluis, Redford, & Robinson, 2002).

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