

Summary:

Fewer accidents or costly experience? Evaluation of the campaign "Driver 2000"

Background, project and method

“Driver2000” is a campaign directed towards car drivers to reduce the number of fatalities and injuries on the roads of Norway. This reduction was to be achieved through rewards and a contract committing the members of “Driver2000” to respect the speed limits and to use their seat belts. Moreover, a “Driver2000” sticker should be attached to the rear window of the car to show that the driver had signed the contract. The primary reward was a free monthly lottery of cars and other prizes. The members, having signed the contract, should be persuaded to respect the speed limits, use their seat belts and be responsible in road traffic in general.

“Driver2000” was organized as a foundation in collaboration between private industry and the public authorities. Important partners were the Norwegian Automobile Importers' Association (B.I.L), the Public Roads Authorities and the Norwegian Society for Road Safety (Trygg Trafikk). “Driver2000” was planned to go on for three years, 2000 – 2002, but the grants for the campaign were reduced or stopped during fall 2001. Consequently the campaign activities came to an end.

The Institute of Transport Economics (TØI) was assigned to evaluate the campaign, to show the effects on road accidents, fatalities and injuries. A project was planned to show the development in damage and injuries reported to a large insurance company by members and non-members of the “Driver2000”. However, this project was not carried out because of the discontinuance of the grants for the campaign. Some questions concerning the “Driver2000” were included in opinion polls carried out by the Public Roads Authorities in 2000 and 2002. These polls show the possible effect on speed and the use of seat belts, activities focused by “Driver2000”.

In 2002 a description of the process of “Driver2000” was added to the contract, i.e. how the campaign started, what happened as it developed and why it came to and before planned. This report describes the results of the opinion polls as well as the results of interviews with people who were involved in the process.

Results

Membership

"Driver2000" was officially launched in March 2000. By March 30 the campaign had already obtained 10 000 members, and by the end of December 2000, 104 000 car drivers had signed the contract. The final number of members was 140 000 by fall 2001 or an estimated 5 per cent of Norwegian car drivers.

"Driver2000" reached their prime target groups, i.e. young men who drive extensively, the drivers who are most exposed to road accidents.

Use of seat belts

In 2000 94 per cent of the members stated that they always wore a seat belt when driving in built-up areas compared to 84 per cent of the non-members. In 2002 there was no significant difference in seat-belt wearing between members and non-members.

Speed limits

In 2000 61 per cent of the members and 48 per cent of the non-members stated that they drove at legal speeds in built-up areas. In 2002 54 per cent of both groups claimed that they drove at legal speeds, i.e. the difference in complying with the speed limit existing in 2000 had disappeared. This is the opposite of the intended effect of "Driver2000".

Short-term effect or biased recruitment?

In 2000 the members complied more with seat-belt wearing and speed limits than non-members. Was this difference due to a short-term effect on the members or biased recruiting of members? Both in 2000 and 2002 the members claimed to use reflective tags, bicycle helmets and bicycle lights to a larger extent than non-members. As these activities were not focussed in the campaign, the behavioral differences are most likely due to biased recruiting.

Fewer accidents and injuries?

As no long-term effect on driver seat-belt wearing or compliance with speed limits has been proven, there is reason to believe that Driver2000 had no significant long-term effect on road accidents or injuries, even if the campaign caught the attention of drivers and recruited a relatively large number of members.

The process – what happened and why?

The grants for Driver2000 from the Public Roads Administration were stopped after 1 ½ years instead of 3 years as planned, and consequently the campaign activities came to an end. Why did this happen?

Development of the idea

The campaign idea came from the Norwegian Automobile Importers' Association (B.I.L.), and the background was the number of young drivers killed in road accidents. The intention was to reduce the road fatalities by applying new and positive means and using the millennium as an occasion for increased attention to the problem of road fatalities. Rewards in terms of a free car lottery, commitment to reasonable behavior through a contract, and collaboration between the motor business and public authorities made this campaign different from previous ones.

Marketing and acceptance

B.I.L. invited a number of organizations to collaborate. The standing committee of transport and communications of the Storting (parliament) received the idea with enthusiasm, calling upon the Ministry of Transport and Communications to support the campaign economically.

The politicians were positively minded to trying out a new idea in the struggle against road accidents. Objections were scarce in the beginning and probably weakly voiced because the Storting and the senior political staff of the Ministry had supported the idea initially. The objections existed mainly within the road safety community, i.e. within the administrative staff of the Public Roads Administration and the Ministry and Transport and Communications as well as in the Norwegian Society for Road Safety. According to public affair codes the public servants should not communicate directly with the MPs and vice versa. All communication should pass through the minister, a fact that limits the communication severely.

The promoters of the Driver2000 created interest and enthusiasm among politicians and private industry. Moreover, even the more skeptical people were benevolent to the idea of positive means, i.e. rewards and contract. Thus, there was widespread support to the idea of testing positive means in road safety work, whereas the objections were weakly voiced.

Objectives

The objectives of Driver2000 were developed over time. At first the objective was just a considerable reduction in road fatalities and injuries. Later on when the road safety professionals joined the campaign, this objective was operationalized to a focus on seat belts and speed limits to achieve a reduction of 50 road fatalities per year. These objectives were generally agreed to, and so were the positive means. However, a shift of objectives may have occurred, especially the number of members seemed to become the more important objective for the campaign secretariat.

Means

There was a general agreement as to the positive means to be applied, as opposed to the official road safety means such as rules and regulations, restrictions, punishment, scare campaigns and moralizing. However, there was disagreement as to the practical framing of these means, and differences were expressed in the

daily operations. The crucial controversial issue was the relative emphasis put on attention and recruitment versus road safety messages.

Financing, planning and budget

The Driver2000 was developed from the original idea of being a private business contribution to road safety to a private-public cooperation. The campaign received a public grant of 1 million NOK, (125 000 US\$) for preparations in 1999. Moreover grants were promised for 5 million NOK (625 000 US\$) for each of the three years 2000, 2001 and 2002 through the Public Roads Administration, a condition being that the Public Roads Administration should cover 40 per cent and private business 60 per cent of the campaign budget, not counting payments in kind such as vehicles for the lottery.

Economic depression during the fall of 2001 reduced the grants from private business. The Public Roads Administration insisted on maintaining their 40 per cent of the budget, consequently the total budget had to be reduced.

Plans and budgets were agreed, but the road safety professionals and the campaign management disagreed as to the assessment of the budgets, the spending of money and especially the finance management. *“During spring 2001 we discussed the finances in the board. After the summer I proposed that the assets be taken to the bankruptcy court, and I repeated this proposal in October, when phasing out was approved”* stated one of the board members. In practice the activities of Driver2000 came to an end at this point.

Organization, implementation and collaboration

After the founding of the Driver2000, the campaign secretariat located in an advertising agency, carried out the daily work. Several interviewees considered the secretariat highly priced, having alternative ideas as to secretariat. No one objected to the marketing competence or work efforts of the secretariat staff.

A main point of Driver2000 was the private-public collaboration. The politicians were not in touch with the internal cooperation in the campaign. A clash of interests arose early in the process between the road-safety professionals on the board and the campaign managers. The finance management was the greatest problem in the cooperation. The public service representatives felt responsible for the public grants, thinking that the secretariat did not fully comply with board decisions. The secretariat, on the other hand, considered the professionals too traditional, too careful and too scared of competition.

Work methods and judgments were so different between the two groups that some interviewees mentioned “cultural differences.” More time should have been spent discussing the differences and antagonism between the two groups.

As mentioned above there was a general agreement as to the positive means, but disagreement as to the daily work. Media attention was important to recruit members, whereas the contents of the information were considered important to influence the members’ behavior on the roads. The board members were generally pleased with the number of members recruited, whereas they disagreed as to the media attention emphasizing the lottery rather than road safety, the contents of the

information disseminated and a municipal campaign initiated and emphasized by the secretariat.

Objective achievement

The majority of the road safety professionals involved do not believe in an accident-reducing effect of Driver2000, whereas the campaign leaders express a different view: *"Road accidents were reduced in 2001. Driver2000 contributed to this fact, I believe"*.

Experience

All interviewees emphasized experience as to organization and cooperation, whereas nobody expressed doubts as to information campaigns or rewards as effective accident countermeasures. Most of the road safety officers interviewed claim that the resources spent for Driver2000, could have been spent more effectively on other accident countermeasures. An important question for possible future road safety campaigns is whether the problem was the campaign itself or the organization of this particular campaign. Both parties consider the organization rather than the campaign as the main problem.

Discussion and conclusion

The application of positive means and trying out a new idea were generally agreed upon. Because the politicians supported the idea at an early stage, the public servants could not express their objections clearly. A major problem with the application of the positive means was the control of compliance with the contract – did the members actually use their seat belts and comply with speed limits? The only thing controlled was that the winners of the monthly car lottery actually had the Driver2000 sticker on their cars. To have a fair chance to influence the road behaviour of the members, the Driver2000 should have included some kind of monitoring of members' speed and seat-belt wearing.

To reduce the number of accidents by information campaigns, the extent of risky behavior has to be reduced. To achieve this modification of behavior the combination of information and increased police surveillance is generally recommended. Moreover, the behavioral modifications wanted should be expressed clearly. Instead of surveillance the Driver2000 applied positive means as motivation. Such means as rewarding right behavior and commitment to right behavior through a signed contract have not been extensively tested in road safety work. Consequently, it was difficult to anticipate the results. Another condition to campaign success is the actual carrying out of the campaign activities. As mentioned, the grants for Driver2000 were stopped, and the campaign activities came to an end after 1 ½ years instead of 3 years as planned. It is impossible to say what results could have been achieved if the campaign activities had been continued throughout the planned period.

The experience of Driver2000 is that objections should be expressed clearly at an early stage, to have them discussed, adjustments made and ownership of the countermeasure created with all parties involved. Moreover, new ideas should be tested to a minor extent before being implemented extensively. Until new

countermeasures have proved effective in the struggle against road accidents, the resources available should primarily be spent on countermeasures with a known accident-reducing effect. However, some resources should also be spent on the testing of new ideas. It is a challenge to persuade enthusiasts that testing of seemingly good ideas is reasonable. The limitations of the communication between civil servant and politicians make this challenge even greater.