



Do Diligence Sounding Board Report

To: Interested Parties

From: Eric Eckl, Water Words That Work, LLC

Re: Review of the "Think Blue San Diego" Water Awareness Commercial

Date: 01/13/2010

Water Words That Work, LLC is preparing to launch a new market research service -- tentatively titled the "Do Diligence Sounding Board" -- for nature protection and pollution control organizations to use to evaluate marketing materials and messages.

The purpose of this forthcoming service is to allow you to **quickly** and **affordably** pre-test materials *before* they are final -- giving you an opportunity to improve your piece before you release it into the wild. Once the service launches, Water Words That Work, LLC will provide DDSB feedback to our clients in complete confidence.

As part of our field trials for this service, we tested 10 "social marketing" pieces from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Nonpoint Source Outreach Toolbox (<http://www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox/>). These EPA offers these materials up as examples for others to emulate -- so they are fair game for a public critique by the panel.

This report summarizes what 25 "everyday citizens" have to say about the "Water Babies" commercial produced for the "Think Blue San Diego" campaign. To watch the video, point your browser to:

<http://www.epa.gov/nps/toolbox/tv/waterbabieseng.mpg>

By the Numbers

Compared to the 9 other pieces reviewed in this pilot, the Do Diligence Sounding Board rated the "water babies" below the average on every criteria, sometimes by quite a bit.

Statement	1-Strongly Disagree	2-Somewhat Disagree	3-Somewhat Agree	4-Strongly Agree	Average for this Piece	Average for similar pieces
The piece gets my attention	3	4	10	10	3.00	3.29

All sounding board answers are verbatim -- including spelling and typographic errors.

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The piece has a clear message	8	5	5	9	2.56	3.46
The piece is believable	3	8	5	11	2.89	3.38
The issue is important to society	1	1	5	20	3.63	3.60
It is urgent to address this issue now	2	2	8	15	3.33	3.43
The issue has affected me personally, or people I care about	11	6	6	4	2.11	2.23
I could take this action, if I choose to	2	2	6	17	3.41	3.57
If I take this action, I am confident it would make a difference	1	11	7	8	2.81	3.14
If I take this action, I'm confident others will do their part, too	7	10	8	2	2.19	2.55

One Word Summary

Question Wording: "Pick one word that summarizes your opinion of this piece:

They answered:

- OK
- So-So
- Bland
- convincing
- disturbing
- Confusing
- Interesting
- Compelling
- informational

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- inspiring
- Awestruck
- Inspiring
- OK
- Prevention
- OK
- informative
- Inspiring
- OK
- Overkill
- good
- motivating
- Moving
- Motivating
- Motivating
- Depressing
- uninformative
- Touching

Your Message in Their Words

Question Wording: "Imagine that you are telling a friend, coworker, or family member about this piece. In your own words, how would you summarize the message?"

They answered like this:

- "Water Pollution in San Diego."
- "Pollutants such as excess motor oil, dirt, fertilizers, and leaves are being washed into the storm drains when it rains and it is harming our water".
- "Water pollution, starting at the home, can end up contaminating water elsewhere such as beaches and bays. It is important to prevent water contamination even at home".
- "Water pollution affects us all".
- "I saw a great little piece encouraging everyone to work for clean water by showing babies swimming in clear or polluted water".
- "A bunch of infants are swimming in a lake that may or may not be polluted. the ad wants us to think about our future (the babies) and how we will provide for them (clean/unclean lakes)".
- "Water pollution affects all of us".
- "It is a video about clean water and how water pollution can hurt or affect everyone".
- "Water pollution in San Diego starts at home, but doesn't stay there. The piece shows babies 'swimming' in clean water, cut in with images of DANGER signs and polluted water".
- "The message is that water pollution begins with activities that we do at home that can cause pollutants to get into storm drains and be transported to beaches and bays and contaminating the water".
- "Water pollution is a serious problem that can have lasting consequences. If we want our kids to have access to clean water, then we need to act now."

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- "An excellent compelling public service announcement about preserving our water supply and keeping it clean".
- "This message is telling the importance of our water. It is important to keep our water pure and not pollute it not matter where you are".
- "Water pollution begins at home. Products we use can enter public waterways".
- "This video encourages people to strive for clean water resources by not allowing pollution to damage them".
- "It seems that people in Sandiego California are polluting there water".
- "We need to act now in our own homes to stop or slow down the pollution of water".
- "The message of this video is to help control and prevent water pollution and contamination".
- "This is a very short but powerful video about how polluted water can effect not only adults but little children lives. This video is really worth watching and it will Not take much of your time at all".
- "Contaminated water from our homes is entering our oceans and threatening our future and our quality of life. We should all "think blue."
- A short but powerful piece about water pollution
- Water pollution begins at home, but reaches the beaches and bays. Clean water is important to San Diegan quality of life.
- People need to be mindful of water pollution and its effects on the future of every community.
- Water quality is something that impacts us all. San Diegans should support clean water.
- Water pollution is a problem and we need to take action.
- The message is to "think blue" and keep the waters of San Diego clean
- This message drives home the point that water pollution begins at home. It shows babies swimming in nice clean water, then shows what looks like a sewer grate where the pollutants enter the water system.
- Water pollution is not just caused by industries. Our activities at home also cause water pollution. We must take steps to control it.

Strengths of the Piece

Question Wording: "In your opinion, what is the strongest or most compelling thing about this piece?"

They answered like this:

- "Baby swimming"
- "Cute babies floating around kept my attention around."
- "I don't think this piece had any strong points".
- "The strongest part of the piece is the juxtaposition of the swimming babies and the signs of pollution".
- "The swimming babies make me very nervous. that's what i remember most".
- "The babies swimming in the water".
- "The babies in the video. It makes you think about young ones futures and how we need to think about them and not just us".
- "The images of the babies swimming in clean water vs. ucky stuff being dumped into water. I don't usually go for 'pull the heart strings' messages, but this one was pretty good without going overboard".

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- "The most compelling thing about the piece is the part where it shows polluted stormwater run-off being discharged into the water".
- "Using the images of babies as a way to get the message across".
- "The babies swimming in the clean water".
- "The babies swimming in the water".
- "Water pollution can be caused at the individual level".
- "We have wonderful water resources which can be easily lost if we so not control pollution and contamination".
- "The video is good".
- "The babies swimming in the water".
- "I think the most compelling thing is how the video shows clear blue water, and then goes to show a runoff that is murky and nasty looking. It really makes you think".
- "Water hurts adults which really is a bad thing, but not realizing that it hurts little defenseless kids is a very bad thing. We have to work together to take care of our water".
- "Honestly, I didn't like anything about this commercial".
- "Children and the possibility of pollution in waters they frequent".
- "It uses an emotional approach to appeal to San Diegans, has a nice voiceover, and moves people to take action".
- "What's most compelling is the contrast of the clean water that the babies are swimming in against the polluted water and beaches".
- "The contrast between the clear blue water and the polluted water coming from the pipe".
- "By using the babies it forces people to think about the future generation and what they are doing to harm them and their future".
- "The piece used babies to portray the futures. It was trying to convey that we need to keep water clean, or it will affect our children in the future. They were trying to show fresh water".
- "The strongest point is showing the babies in the nice clean blue water, enforcing the fact that it's safe for them to be in, it's fresh and clean".
- "Babies swimming in water".

Weaknesses of the Piece

Question Wording: "In your opinion, what is the weakest thing about this piece?"

They answered like this:

- "not very clear what you should do".
- "Not enough material regarding the pollution of the beaches/bays (perhaps more dramatic images would be better)".
- "The video tells the viewer that water pollution begins at home, but gives no further information about causes or prevention. The imagery of the babies in the context of water pollution seems overly dramatic and/or inflammatory".
- "Actually, right at the beginning as the first baby's hair fans out in the water it looks like chemicals are coming from the baby's head. That really turned my stomach and made me wonder if the kid was going to dissolve or something".

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- "it could have shown some more pollution. instead of showing the same "caution" sign over and over, i think it would be a little more motivating if you threw in some disgusting sludge or something that obviously threatens the babies".
- "What causes the pollution. Is it corporate or is it something I'm doing at my house. Where does that contaminated water that comes out of that pipe come from and where is it going".
- "It didn't really sum up the pollution problem or what we need to do to fix it. It was just very broad and barely touched on what to do".
- "nothing comes to mind".
- "The weakest point is that the piece only tells you to "think" about the water pollution impacts caused by your activities around the house - it doesn't give examples of harmful activities and it doesn't actually tell you to that you should change your habits".
- "The narration seemed a bit weak, maybe a stronger voice would help".
- "I really didn't find a weak point".
- "Clear examples of water pollution".
- "What percentage of water pollution actually comes from individual users - consider using a carbon footprint analogy".
- "There is little explanation about the types of pollution that threaten our clean waterways nor how to prevent the pollution".
- "The words spoken were not very memorable. Im not even sure what its talking about. Get more specific with word choices".
- "It does not tell us what we need to do in order to help".
- "I don't think there is a weak point about this piece. I think it's up in your face, and real, just the way it should be".
- "The one weak point of the video is that it show too much clean water. Some people need to be reminded of the way polluted water looks and the garbage that some of them put in it directly or in-directly".
- "I found the whole thing overly dramatic and lacking in facts. The juxtaposition of the swimming babies with the sewage flowing into the ocean was just "icky" and unpleasant. Phrases such as "why are we ruining tomorrow?" and "our future is threatened" seem intended to manipulate the viewer's emotions to provoke action - but then the viewer is not told what action he or she can take to help combat the problem."
- "very short, doesn't have much information or anything to back up its claims".
- "The piece doesn't explain the details regarding how water pollution starts from home. The piece also doesn't explain whether you can get more information by calling the specified number".
- "I don't think this piece really has any weak points".
- "It is not clear what action it would like the viewer to take".
- "The weakest thing about this is that it doesn't give any options or ways to help stop water pollution. It tells you that water pollution is happening but not how to stop it".
- "I was a little disturbed the the babies in the water. It sometimes looked like the were drowning. But it didn't really show "dirty" water".
- "Showing the red-headed baby going under water and his/her hair flowing up, looks a little strange to me".
- "Not enough polluting sources are shown. Does not give any tips about how to control water pollution at home".

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Shop Talk vs. Plain English

Question Wording: Imagine that your friends, coworkers, or family member are looking at the piece themselves. If there are any words or phrases that might be difficult for them, please share them below:

They answered like this:

- "none"
- "N/A"
- "Vocabulary is fine".
- "Some of my friends would find associating "think blue" with babies as having something to do with "code blue" and/or with the baby "turning blue" in death".
- "there was nothing hard to understand in this ad".
- "No it's fine".
- "Nothing difficult but please see the answer above. I think they didn't give nearly enough information for the length of the video".
- "nothing"
- "I don't think there are any words or phrases that might be difficult".
- "none"
- "none"
- "N/A - the video used clear language".
- "It may be difficult for people to understand how to prevent the contamination".
- "The whole thing except for the fact that its in the San Diego, California area".
- "It reaches our beaches and Bays" How?
- "The language is perfectly suitable for anyone. There is no language that is hard to understand".
- "No difficult words".
- "n/a"
- "There were no difficult words or phrases in the piece".
- "None I can think of".
- "I think the words and message were clear".
- "It was all easy to understand, and I think it would be for all the people I know".
- "None, the wordings are very straight forward".

How They Summarize the Issue

Question Wording: The piece touches on a social issue or problem. In your own words, what is this issue?

They answered like this:

- "Water pollution in San Diego".
- "The polluting of the beaches and bays of San Diego needs to be controlled and prevented".
- "Water pollution affects future generations".
- "Water pollution resulting from carelessness".
- "it highlights the pollution of lakes, etc., and how that affects us and our families"
- "Water Pollution"

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- "That water pollution takes its toll on more than just water. It affects things like beaches etc. and we need to do everything we can to erase water pollution".
- "Water Pollution at home doesn't stay at home - it affects others too".
- "The issue is that water pollution is caused by activities around the house that cause pollutants to get into stormwater run-off and contaminate bodies of water when the stormwater is discharged into them".
- "Water Pollution"
- "The importance of water pollution. It starts at home so be careful what you put down the sink".
- "Water pollution".
- "Water pollution is not limited to major polluters".
- "Improper control and disposal of pollution is an extremely important social issue".
- "Water pollution".
- "The pollution of water generated from our own home".
- "The issue is clearly water pollution/contamination. It is stressed that we as people need to do something about it".
- "Must think about our kids future, even if the future is not so important to us personally".
- "Contaminated water from our homes is entering our oceans".
- "not realizing the far reaching effects of pollution at home"
- "Water pollution, which can start right here at home and grow into a bigger problem".
- "The issue is water pollution, particularly in San Diego".
- "Water quality"
- "Water pollution and the harm it holds for the future"
- "Water pollution is the issues".
- "The issue is water pollution and the fact that it begins at home and that everyone has to do their part to keep the water free of pollutants".
- "Water pollution caused due to activities at home".

How This Issues Touches Them Personally

Question Wording: "If this problem has touched you personally or someone you care about, please briefly share how:"

They answered like this:

- "none"
- "N/A"
- "None"
- "It has only effected me in a general sense".
- "my mom used to swim in a lake by her childhood home until it became too polluted".
- "I really don't know from this ad if it's affected me or not".
- "I have friends that can no longer keep fish they catch because the water is contaminated. That is very sad that fish in wild live in high level of pollution".
- "n/a"
- "Pollutants in stormwater run-off has made several ponds and rivers in our area unsafe for swimming due to contamination of the water".

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- "none"
- "The city water main had be shut down because of contamination. We had to boil our water for a day until the problem was resolved".
- "Keeping water clean is something that affects every living person".
- "N/A"
- "I have experienced the degradation of water recreational areas due to pollution. Places that used to offer clean, healthy recreation (such as swimming, boating, fishing) have become more polluted and less accessible for recreational use".
- "N/A"
- "I was not aware that polluted water from our homes could affect beaches and bays".
- "When I have children, they won't be able to enjoy the beach or water because it is going to be disgusting and disease ridden. I want my children to be able to enjoy the things I have, instead of having it taken away from them before they ever even get the chance".
- "Time after time people for get that the same water that we pollute is the same water that kids drink. Just because there are water filter systems in place does Not mean the water will be 100% safe to drink".
- "I live in Southern California where waste water pollution is a big problem. Beaches here are often closed to swimmers due to high bacteria levels".
- "this problem has not really touched me personally".
- "Water pollution has never directly affected me or anyone I know".
- "This problem hasn't necessarily touched me personally, but water pollution is an important issue".
- "It has not in any way that I know of".
- "This issue has not touched me personally".
- "This has not affected me personally".
- "Our water comes from Lake Erie. Need I say more? That water is always very nasty looking and very unclean, and the nuclear power plant Davis Besse isn't too far from here".
- "It just reminded me of the already existing problem of water pollution".

The Action That is Called for

Question Wording: "The piece urges you to take some action to address the social issue or problem. In your own words, what is this action?"

They answered like this:

- "stop water pollution at home".
- "Preventing pollution in the water starting at the home. As to what action I could take, this was not made clear in the ad".
- "We were simply told to think about water pollution".
- "Hm, I am not clear what action the piece wants me to take, besides to take stands and actions that support clean water".
- "keep trash and runoff out of the lakes and rivers so they'll be healthy enough for our kids to swim in".
- "Stop polluting the water but I really don't know what they want me to do".
- "To do everything we can to erase water pollution. The piece was not clear on what exactly to do".

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- "Don't pollute the water that comes from your home".
 - "The action that is urged is to think about the water pollution problems caused by activities around the house - it implies that you should do something about it but it never comes right out and says so".
 - "Taking steps at home in prevent water pollution".
 - "To be careful how we dispose of our things at home because those things we dump can get into the public water systems, lakes, and streams".
 - "To be careful and keep our water clean".
 - "Look carefully at the products that can directly or indirectly enter the water system".
 - "Demand that companies and society handle the disposal of harmful pollutants in a responsible manner and that the society and government oversee these actions".
 - "Clean water is good".
 - "To be more conscious about the water we use at home; however, I don't know how".
-
- "Help keep our water clean and help control contamination of the water".
 - "As hard as it maybe, try to get everyone to understand why it is so important to at least try to keep water as pollution free as possible".
 - "The ad didn't really urge people to do anything except "think blue." There is a phone number listed on the last screen which I assume the viewer is supposed to call to find out precisely what action they should take".
 - "Be more mindful of my pollution at home".
 - "Take action to stop pollutants from entering storm drains."
 - "The action that this piece urges one to take is to to be mindful of water pollution and its effects on our future.
 - "To contact Think Blue by phone or web".
 - "To try and stop water pollution before it is too late and harms the next generation."
 - "Be careful what you do with waste, because it can affect the water in your area".
 - "The action is to keep the water cleaner for all the people in San Diego by not putting things in the drains that will harm the water or the environment".
 - "Prevent water pollution at home".

About the Do Diligence Sounding Board

Just whose opinions are these, anyway? The "Do Diligence Sounding Board" is a standing body of U.S. residents who provide feedback on marketing materials and perform related tasks in return for payment.

A major corporation recruits the board members, maintains the system for securing their feedback, and handles the financial transactions. Water Words That Work, LLC pays to access to this service, as do other marketing firms.

The feedback that you receive from the sounding board is different from feedback you receive from your peers, for three reasons:

- The sounding board members who review your materials approach them like actual everyday citizen "in the wild." They are not professionals in the field and have not participated in the drafting of the materials.

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- The sounding board members have never met you, and will provide their feedback anonymously. Their feedback will not be influenced by their personal relationship with you.
- The sounding board more closely approximates the demographic makeup (especially race and education) of the U.S. "public" than the staff and board of most nature protection and pollution control organizations.

Demographic Trait	Environmental Professionals	Do Diligence Sounding Board	Traditional Telephone Poll, U.S. Sample	Actual U.S. (Census)
4 Year College Degree	95% or higher	~50%	~40%	24%
White/Caucasian	95% or higher	~80%	~80%	79%

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