



INNOVATIVE LEARNING TOOLKIT

PROJECT TITLE: Political Leadership and Engagement

Tags; communication tools, humour

Overview:

This is a snapshot from Colombia, where the (ex) Mayor of Bogota uses art, humour and creativity to empower and sensitise citizens.

Antanas Mockus has employed a range of innovative techniques to communicate with and engage his community.

When there was a water shortage, Mockus appeared on TV programs taking a shower and turning off the water as he soaped, asking his fellow citizens to do the same. In just two months people were using 14 percent less water, a savings that increased when people realized how much money they were also saving because of economic incentives approved by Mockus; water use is now 40 percent less than before the shortage.

He hired 420 mimes to control traffic in Bogotá's chaotic and dangerous streets.

He launched a "Night for Women" and asked the city's men to stay home in the evening and care for the children; 700,000 women went out on the first of three nights that Mockus dedicated to them.

He asked citizens to put their power to use with 350,000 "thumbs-up" and "thumbs-down" cards that his office distributed to the populace. The cards were meant to approve or disapprove of other citizens' behavior; it was a device that many people actively - and peacefully - used in the streets.

When, faced with a rowdy auditorium of the school of arts' students, he dropped his pants and mooned them to gain quiet. The gesture, he said at the time, should be understood "as a part of the resources which an artist can use."

The mayor has noted: "The distribution of knowledge is the key contemporary task," Mockus said. "Knowledge empowers people. If people know the rules, and are sensitized by art, humor, and creativity, they are much more likely to accept change."

Ideas and tips for PTS:

This demonstrates that a bit of passion and personality can go a lot further than the standard forms of communication, in making an impact and effectively influencing the community.

Contact and further information:



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This information was directly sourced

from: <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2004/03.11/01-mockus.html>