

## **More on using crosswords as a health education tool**

### **Be clear about the audience for a puzzle book**

Be clear about what target groups a magazine of crosswords and puzzles would appeal to. Check out

- Whether the format is one they take seriously as a health education vehicle
- What kind of puzzles are appropriate and what level of difficulty
- Whether there is a need for a variety of puzzles or puzzle books for different target groups or if one size fits all
- What the puzzle book should look like etc. (See other sections below)
- What the demand is for the puzzle book. How many do you need and how often should you produce a new edition

### **Be clear about aim of a puzzle book**

The aims of a puzzle book could include

- To give out health education information
- To create a particular image. This is so the information is more likely to be accepted e.g. we aren't anti-fun, we just want you to enjoy a drink, safely
- To promote a particular image of the organisation e.g. we understand you or we're approachable

The kind of image created will depend on

- What the book looks like
- The choice of questions
- What the prizes are
- The supporting articles
- The pictures used

Appropriate quotes from the target audience or people they aspire to be might also be useful.

### **Possible variety of approaches**

Research will tell you what kinds of puzzles are most popular with your target audience and how hard they should be. As the main aim of the approach is educational, crosswords should probably make up the bulk of any health puzzle magazine. However, there may be uses for other formats as well.

#### *Crosswords*

It may be a good idea to vary the crosswords if evidence suggests that this would make the magazine more popular. Types of crosswords could include

- A 'normal' crossword on no particular theme. This might be useful if there is a danger of too many health based ones making the magazine appear too worthy
- One on general health topics
- A variety on different specific health topics. As well as educational questions they could include some lighter ones, For example around celebrity chefs on a nutrition themed crossword

- A slightly harder crossword which encourages readers to get information from health articles in the puzzle book to be able to finish it. (What hard means of course will depend on the audience)
- A prize crossword that requires readers to ask other people for help or look up answers on the internet. (This might also be away of encouraging people to find out about websites or services that you want to promote)

#### *Other kinds of puzzle*

- A word search might be useful to reinforce new concepts or familiarise people with necessary jargon
- A quiz might also be popular. Again consider what percentage of the questions should be educational and how many should be trivial or not health related
- A picture quiz might be a fun way of promoting new buildings, important services etc
- Sometimes people need reassuring that staff of a particular service are friendly or are like them. A spot the difference picture game might be one way of illustrating this
- Number based puzzles like Sudoku are probably impossible to link to health. However, they are popular and may help make the book feel less worthy. One might work well on a page of useful (telephone) numbers
- Personality tests similar to those in women's magazines, on health themes, might be popular with some target groups
- If you want to get mobile numbers to text people particular health information, consider a puzzle where they have to text to get clues, the answer or win a prize. This could be time consuming. People would also still have to give you permission for further texts. However, it might be worthwhile in some circumstances

If the puzzle book is for families from a particular background, some of the above formats may also want to be repeated at a level suitable for children.

#### **Spin-offs and follow on**

A further way of encouraging people to visit your website could be to tell them that there are more puzzles (and games) online. The answers could be there too. Alternatively you could have them in the next issue to encourage people to look out for it. Of course if issues are irregular or the target group aren't online, it would be easier to put the answers at the bottom of the page.

Remember to copyright the puzzle book so that you can sell it to other organisations if you want to

**Mark Burns December 2008**