

# *Games Theory*

*Using the power of sport  
for pro-environmental  
behaviour change*




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## *how to use this guide...*

This research was commissioned by the Government. It provides insights on how to drive environmental behaviour change using large events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games. It contains 19 principles for seizing the opportunities to change behaviour at any large scale event. These principles are built on research from previous large-scale sporting events, from World Cups to past Games. Some of these principles apply to any behaviour, others can inspire campaigns and some are pitfalls to avoid. We've also included a short checklist to remind you of the principles as you develop your campaign.



# *imagine...*

Imagine millions of enthusiastic people across the UK going greener together. Some will recycle for the first time or try a meat-free meal. Others will find a route to walk to school or work. Millions of new behaviours, millions of people, 60 days of sport. This isn't wishful thinking, but a realistic vision for the environmental behaviour change that could be inspired by the Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The Games are more than a sporting event. They are a global spectacle, a gathering of millions of people bridging cultural, social and economic divides, an exhibition of intrinsically good values and one of the most recognisable brands on the planet. For those 60 days every four years, the Games are the main news headlines (and the only water cooler conversation) around the world.

This is an extraordinary and powerful audience for environmental behaviour change. If only a small proportion of people adopt new green behaviours because of the Games, we could achieve more in those 60 days of sport than we have in years.



*Against all the odds, the actions of this Bees club veteran have made a real difference. Not just for today, but for tomorrow too.*



# *change*

But that outcome isn't guaranteed. For decades, Olympic and Paralympic Host Cities worldwide have endeavoured to harness the power of events like the Games to catalyse green behaviours at home and abroad. Some of these initiatives have been very successful, others much less so.

This guide combines learning from those initiatives with the growing body of evidence on how large, inspirational events like the Games can drive behaviour change. We have interviewed people involved in the Sydney, Salt Lake City, Beijing, and Vancouver Games to identify the key benefits of the Olympic and Paralympic Games in driving environmental change. We have also scoured the literature from large-scale events, including World Cups and major concerts, and compared these insights with the psychological and marketing research on behaviour change. A compelling picture emerges.

*An electric performance by Tom there. He's worked so hard to put his teammate in a position that will make a real difference.*



# *The Games have four main attributes for encouraging environmental behaviour change:*

## ***1. The spectacle***

Above all, the Games are a global spectacle. In an increasingly noisy and fragmented communications landscape, the Games cut through and grab attention. Saliency (how prominent something is in one's memory) is crucial in behaviour change, and the spectacle of the Olympic and Paralympic Games have powerful saliency, almost unmatched by any other phenomenon in the modern world.

## ***2. The team***

The Games bring together millions of people, both in person and across media. This 'team' is unique in that it is exceptionally culturally and economically diverse, but also shares common interests and aspirations. Because people are influenced by those around them (known as 'social proof'), the Olympic and Paralympic Games generate exciting potential to start large-scale change. As well as providing a selection of heroic role models, the Games offer an unparalleled opportunity to get people to work with each other, to create change groups, and to make new behaviours seem normal.

## ***3. The optimism***

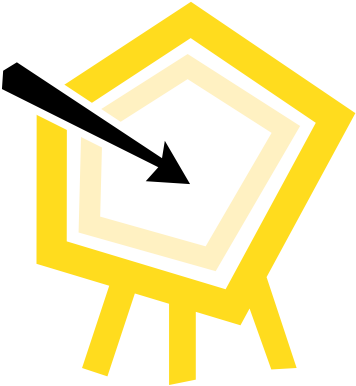
We already know that environmental messages should avoid gloom and fear.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately the Olympic and Paralympic Games are almost immune to these negative messages and carry with them a tremendous sense of optimism. Combine this with heightened national pride, celebration of achievement and a fun occasion, and you have a powerful platform for inspiring behaviour change.

## ***4. The brand***

The Olympic and Paralympic brands and visual identities are known and respected globally. They provide a 'halo effect' to initiatives associated with them. This is why sponsorship opportunities are so valuable, and the brands so well protected.

# Game Theories

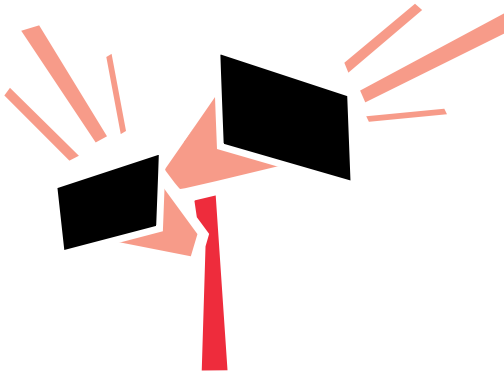
*The principles are organised under the traditional communications plan headings of Objective, Audience, Message and Tactics.*



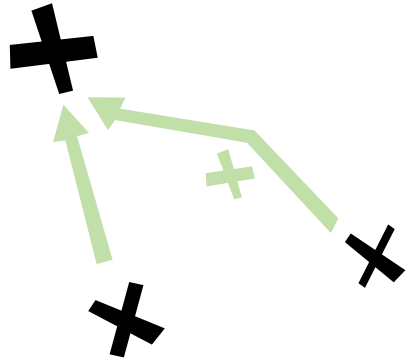
***objective***



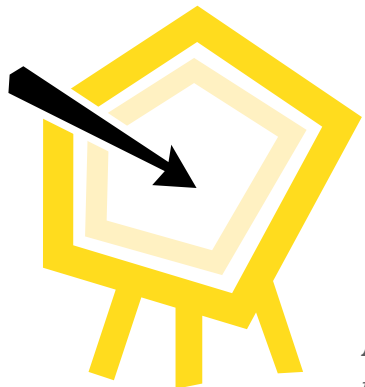
***audience***



***message***



***tactics***



## ***objective***

*Many behaviour change campaigns fail because they don't have a specific or compelling objective. Setting the right objective will help you focus your words, efforts and resources. If done right, it can also be an inspiration in itself. All your objectives should be specific and measurable. This, together with the behaviour change guidance below, will increase your chances of success.*

### ***1. Set out your vision***

Large events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games are about ambition. Imagine what could happen if we harnessed this ambition. If the whole of the UK took on green behaviours, what would our air, water and waste look like? Set a clear, compelling vision of what you want to achieve, and use it to steer the rest of your campaign. Open all communications with the vision as it will grab your audience's attention.

### ***2. Ask for what you want***

What do you want people to do? You must first understand the behaviour you want to change. Is it a habit, or a conscious decision? A daily activity or a major investment? Different behaviours need different tactics. Once you've understood the target behaviour, don't be coy about asking people for the change you want. Put the 'ask' at the centre of your work.

### ***3. Think legacy***

Behaviour change is a marathon, not a sprint. Use an event such as the Games to launch your campaign, or as a catalyst for change, but make sure your campaign stretches beyond them to embed new behaviours. Habits take time to change and need support every step of the way.

### ***4. Make it all about London***

Large events like the Games bring with them a surge in patriotism. Make the most of London's myriad of patriotic, historic and cultural peculiarities. What makes London and the UK unique and special? Designing a campaign that appeals to those national quirks will work well during the Games.





*Even with the decades between them, this duo make it look easy. It seems like everyone else is just standing still. They've got to be enjoying this ride.*

## Case Study:

*HIV prevention at the 2010 FIFA World Cup<sup>2</sup>*

Grassroots Soccer (GRS) uses the popularity of football to help prevent the spread of HIV. Its training role models (GRS Coaches) deliver the programme for youth aged 11-15. In South Africa, the programme built on the excitement around the World Cup. While the tournament was played, schools in South Africa were closed for nearly six weeks. GRS ran 45 holiday programmes for 5,000 children in each of their sites across the country during the school break. They were designed to keep kids healthy, safe, and learning during the long break. Skillz holiday programmes included GRS interventions, football matches, and a safe place for kids to watch the World Cup games. To create its legacy, GRS trained other organisations to deliver the Skillz holiday programme, to continue the work into the future.



# audience

*It is essential that you know whose behaviour you're trying to change. You will need to identify what they care about, who they listen to and what they can do. Every individual sees the world through their own eyes; beware of assuming that your own values, interests and messages are the same as everybody else's. Respect your audience enough to tailor your communications to fit them, rather than expecting them to fit your approach.*

## 1. Fix on your target

Large events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games have exceptionally broad appeal, so it's easy to try to target everyone with your campaign. This won't work for behaviour change. You must target specific groups if you are going to be successful. Previous Games have found young people a particularly receptive audience for behaviour change campaigns.

## 2. Be diverse

Use the extremely broad reach of large events like the Games to target new audiences. Not enough environmental change programmes target diverse parts of British society. Use the Games as a hook to get people from a range of communities interested in the environment. This is the perfect time to go beyond the usual suspects.



## Case Study:

*Building literacy in communities at the 2010 Vancouver Games<sup>3</sup>*

By connecting the issue of literacy to the Vancouver Olympics, non-profit organisation 2010 Legacies Now (2010LN) started conversations with people and groups across Canada who weren't willing to engage before. Particularly in rural areas, connecting literacy with the Games helped increase the perceived significance and impact of the Olympics. Communities of all sizes realised that there was much more benefit from the Games than previously expected. 2010LN's work made communities see literacy as a way to achieve a more fulfilling and better quality of life.

*Tan's technique is outstanding. Her actions are making a real impact on today's event. Her commitment is clear for anyone to see.*





*The research proves that your messages are the most important way to capture the pride of the nation during an Olympic and Paralympic Games. But don't get carried away. It's a momentous occasion, and people will see through any greenwashing or overpromising. The guidance below will help you strike the balance and bring the spirit of the Games to life in your project.*

### ***1. Use the power of partnerships***

Partnership working and collaboration are long-held values of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Similarly, the solutions to environmental challenges also need collective action. All our interviewees noted that the failure of campaigns during the past Games was often caused by isolation. Partnerships can bring skills, expertise, resources, contacts, credibility and much more to behaviour change projects, so use them.

### ***2. Let people 'join'***

The Games are a huge, collective undertaking. Many people experience a fleeting or deep desire to 'volunteer' to help. That desire to get involved is incredibly valuable. Make the most of it by showing how environmental action fulfils the desire to 'help out'. It's crucial to design-in ways to participate, as well as carefully identifying and removing any barriers to participation.

### ***3. Build on local and national pride***

During the Games, the eyes of the world will be on London and the UK. It will be a proud moment for British people. Pride is a powerful emotion that can be used for behaviour change. Pride in our beautiful natural environment, pride in our clean cities and pride in our own behaviours is a powerful driver for change. Position your campaign as part of what makes people feel proud that the Olympics and Paralympics are being hosted in our home.

### ***4. Make communications positive***

We already know the importance of avoiding fear or information overload when trying to change green behaviours. Research shows that leading with a positive vision of the future can catch people's attention and make them feel more eager for behaviour change. The Olympic and Paralympic Games are the perfect vehicle for positive environmental messages, because positivity is part of the Games' ethos. Make sure behaviour change communications equal the upbeat emotions of the Games.

### ***5. Sponsorship and association***

All our research proved that having the rights to use the official Olympic and Paralympic branding and visual identity helps projects succeed. Sponsors pay large sums of money to have the rights to use the brands, but non-commercial organisations can also apply to be involved through the London 2012 Inspire mark -

[www.london2012.com/get-involved/inspire-programme/index.php](http://www.london2012.com/get-involved/inspire-programme/index.php)

### ***6. Use emotional language and imagery***

Rational messages change minds but not behaviours. The Olympic spirit is innately emotional and that can be a powerful factor in change programmes. If athletes can cry with joy on the podium, then you can inject some feeling into your messages.

## Case Studies:

### *Linking organisations at the 2010 FIFA World Cup<sup>4</sup>*

Non-profit Action for South Africa (ACTSA) used the 2010 World Cup and Britain's bid for the 2018 tournament. It created new partnerships between organisations in South Africa and Britain. The partnerships aimed to strengthen the links between the two countries, and to make people in the UK more aware of South Africa's challenges. The groups, including schools, churches and local authorities, worked together across a range of social issues, from education to racism and healthy living. The World Cup was used as the introduction to engage the groups and communities. The partnerships have led to organisations working together to share best practice and resources, which has delivered long-lasting, positive impacts.

### *Volunteering to Plant it Green at the 2002 Salt Lake City Games<sup>5</sup>*

'Plant it Green' encouraged anyone who bought a tree in the run up to the Salt Lake Games to plant it in the name of the Olympic Winter Games. By registering their tree with the campaign, every person who planted a tree was recognised and celebrated. The original goal was to plant two million trees worldwide by February 2002. By working together with national and international associations, the Salt Lake Olympic Committee smashed their target. The campaign registered a huge 18 million trees planted in the name of the Winter Olympic Games.



*These homegrown talents are going to make an impact on history. It's going to be a truly memorable celebration for all those here to savour it.*





*The guidance below is based on research into previous Games and other major sporting events and sets out how to design and deliver your behaviour change programme in a way that will capitalise on the Olympic opportunity.*

### **1. Make it visible**

The Olympic and Paralympic Games are spectacular. Make your campaign a spectacle too. Publicly visible behaviours like recycling are more likely to persuade other people to change. Hidden behaviours, such as insulation, don't have this effect. This is called 'social proof' and is an incredibly powerful tactic. Find innovative ways to make change visible and profile new behaviours publicly, and you will increase the likelihood of that behaviour being taken up more widely.

### **2. No fun no gain**

People go to the Games to have fun. If your campaign is not fun, people won't engage with it. The Olympic and Paralympic Games also glorify hard but fulfilling endeavours. Use them as an analogy to make challenging behaviour change seem more rewarding. Inject a bit of humour, light-heartedness and pleasure to stop change feeling like a 'sacrifice'.

### **3. Feedback success**

Athletes, and indeed whole nations, count the number of medals they have won to judge their success. You need to feedback success too. By showing people who have made changes the impact of their actions, they feel good about change, and are more likely to go further. The best way to do this is to give feedback and say thank you.

### **4. Find the competitive edge**

The positivity of the Games doesn't rule out competition. Instead, it's the sense of competition that really gives them edge and excitement. Find a way to give your behaviour change campaign an edge, and get competitive. Use league tables, advertise results, challenge your audience. Show that people can 'win' at environmental behaviour change.

### **5. Hold trials**

'Trying out' a new behaviour (without having to commit) can overcome barriers to action. Use the Games as an opportunity to 'trial' a new behaviour and it will be more likely to lead to longer-term change. This works well when combined with the 'Think legacy' principle in the Objectives section.

### **6. Make the most of the heroes**

Olympic and Paralympic athletes are fantastic messengers (especially if they are changing their own behaviours too). They are authentic, well-respected high achievers, often without a false celebrity image. People look to them as role models, so if you can, try to get them to support your campaign.

### **7. Label people**

'Symbolic self-completion' is a terrible term for the powerful behaviour change tactic of 'labelling'. Unlocking long-term behaviour change requires people to label themselves as 'the kind of person who does green behaviours'. The Olympic and Paralympic Games are a powerful moment for behaviour change, but a fleeting one. If you can encourage people to emotionally label themselves as green during that time, your impact will be felt until the next Games and beyond.

## Case Studies:

### *Do-it-yourself climate protection at the 2005 FIFA World Cup<sup>6</sup>*

The Do-it-yourself campaign tapped into people's competitive nature to save energy in the German state of Rheinland-Pfalz. In the build-up year to the 2006 World Cup, local schools, associations, clubs, municipalities and households were encouraged to set up local teams to find smart ways to save energy. The more energy saved, the more points the team got. The top scoring teams were rewarded with World Cup-themed prizes, like a football match refereed by Dr Markus Merk, the World Cup referee. The collective nature meant team members shared ideas and encouraged their friends, relatives, neighbours and colleagues to take part. The campaign's competitive spirit paid off, saving a substantial 1,930 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>.

### *Gold medal messages at the 2008 Beijing Games<sup>7</sup>*

"We All Have to Do Our Part to Reduce Carbon Emissions" was launched by the Beijing Organising Committee and UNEP at the 2008 Games. The campaign used celebrities to drive green behaviour change. To grab the public's attention, the campaign featured eight public service announcements, fronted by 11 Olympic gold medallists. The announcements were broadcast on television and inside the Olympic stadiums. The star athletes talked about key environmental issues linked to the Games and what people could do about them. Topics ranged from conserving water to using clean energy. The campaign messaging created a strong link between the medallists' amazing achievements and their commitments to sustainability. It was this inspirational messaging position that allowed the campaign to reach out across such a diverse audience.

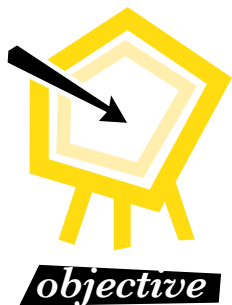


*The young talent on display here today are sowing the seeds for success tomorrow. The wins they'll see in the future will taste all the sweeter because of what they've done here today.*



# checklist

Here's a helpful list of questions to check you are using the research as effectively as possible:



- Are you focusing on a specific audience?
- Are you going beyond the usual suspects?



- What does your vision look like?
- What do you want people to do?
- Have you planned for the long term?
- Have you made it relevant i.e. about London and the UK?



- Who can you work in partnership with?
- Are you helping people to help you?
- Have you tapped into personal and national pride?
- Are you being upbeat?
- Are you eligible to use the Inspire mark?
- Is your language and imagery emotive as well as informative?

- How are you making new behaviours visible?
- Is your campaign going to be fun?
- How will you feed back progress?
- Can people trial new behaviours?
- Who is the hero or face of your campaign?
- Have you found a way to label people?



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<sup>1</sup> See The Rules of the Game – a communications guide produced to inform the Government's 2004 Climate Change Communications Strategy

<sup>2</sup> FIFA.com, Khayelitsha is Only the Start, 8 December 2009, <http://www.fifa.com/aboutfifa/worldwideprograms/news/newsid=1145177.html>

<sup>3</sup> Mr Joseph Weiler and Mr Arun Mohan, IOC and 2010 Legacies Now, Case Study, [http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/media-centre/download/?tx\\_2010media\\_pi3%5Bid%5D=923](http://www.2010legaciesnow.com/media-centre/download/?tx_2010media_pi3%5Bid%5D=923)

<sup>4</sup> Local Authority Action for South Africa, Action for South Africa, and Unison. Local Authorities and the 2010 World Cup in South Africa: Building Partnerships and Solidarity. <http://www.actsa.org/Pictures/Uplimages/pdf/LA%20World%20Cup%20Pack%20Final.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Winter 2002 WoodNotes Quarterly, News from the Winter Olympics, 19 December 2001, <http://www.treeblink.org/woodnotes/vol4/no4/article4.html>

<sup>6</sup> German Sports Federation, [http://www.dosb.de/fileadmin/fm-dosb/arbeitsfelder/umwelt-sportstaetten/Veranstaltungen/GreenChampions\\_Guide\\_070928.pdf](http://www.dosb.de/fileadmin/fm-dosb/arbeitsfelder/umwelt-sportstaetten/Veranstaltungen/GreenChampions_Guide_070928.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Li Jing, China Daily, Olympic Dream Leads to Greener Lifestyle, 21 August 2008, <http://www.asianewsnet.net/news.php?sec=9&id=993>

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## *about this document*

Large events like the Olympic and Paralympic Games represent a historic opportunity to springboard environmental behaviour change in the UK. This document reviews all the relevant evidence available to help seize this opportunity and ensure a lasting legacy of positive environmental and social change in London and across the UK. It was sponsored by Defra to provide guidance in support of their 'inspiring sustainable living' agenda in support of London 2012.

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