

Project Zero Phase Two Proposal

i. Background

The Project Zero Committee is committed to eliminating preventable avalanche fatalities. During the 2013/2014 season, the Committee adopted a social marketing approach focused on changing the behavior of a target audience – this approach is distinctly different from broadcast communications that raise public awareness. Project Zero Phase One segmented snow sports industry audiences and completed extensive research to understand the barriers and benefits associated with backcountry safety behavior. Phase One also identified priority communications objectives, including: belief objectives (what people need to believe); knowledge objectives (what people need to know), and behavior objectives (what people need to do).

The snow sports industry is now poised to reap the benefits of continued collaboration. The ultimate goal is to significantly influence a “new normal” of backcountry safety across North America. To help create this new normal, Project Zero Phase One identified a number of communications success factors:

Price: what motivates target audience action

The highest risk target audience – young people who access backcountry terrain from resort lifts – do not identify as backcountry riders, and as a result, current avalanche center messaging is not often viewed as relevant. This group is most open to improving safety skills prior to the start of the season and are motivated by “special-offer” incentives. Peers influence their decisions about safety gear and skills training more than any other source of information, and much of their communication about exploring the mountains occurs through online social media channels.

Promotion: how to reach target audiences

As with all marketing experiences, most people ask the advice of their friends before making a decision. Avalanche skills training, and the responsible application of the training, is no different. Messaging needs to create the impression that the “new normal” of safety in the mountains has arrived, and that people who don’t adopt the knowledge and behavior objectives being promoted are lagging behind. Interactive and dynamic promotions will yield the greatest results.

Place: where and when to reach target audiences

Avalanche skills training promotion may be most effective in late Fall, just before the start of the ski/snowboarding season. This presents a tremendous opportunity for mutually beneficial partnerships with retailers. Both online and in-store marketing will benefit the target audience by reaching them when they are most receptive, and also industry leaders when shoulder-season sales are lowest.

Partnerships: who can effectively reach target audiences

While avalanche centers and other “expected” sources of safety information are appropriate for people who already possess avalanche skills training, new high risk lift-accessed backcountry visitors need a different approach. Resorts and retailers have an opportunity to cross-promote safe practices by: sponsoring avalanche training events, offering discounts to people who have training, broadcasting local avalanche bulletins in stores, and many other creative methods to meet the growing market demand.

ii. Current Needs

Project Zero Phase Two requires a consistent brand to apply the proven social marketing strategy and establish a sustainable funding model for long term success. The risks of inaction are as significant now as they were one year ago; as increased access to backcountry terrain continues, the need for a cohesive approach is urgent.

The 2013/2014 social marketing strategy and pilot project fulfilled the needs of Project Zero Phase One. Major outcomes include:

- Establishing a collaborative, cross-industry committee dedicated to pursuing creative methods of reaching and influencing new target audiences who have been largely unserved by existing snow safety broadcast information;
- Exploring the particular barriers and benefits facing the lift-accessed backcountry target audience through extensive primary and secondary research; and
- Experimenting with the emerging social marketing strategy through a multimedia pilot project that promoted peer to peer influence.

There is already momentum and commitment to the Project Zero Committee vision among snow industry leaders, and significant public interest to increase promotional efforts from national media, industry leaders, and avalanche center community members. Thousands of people were reached with the limited resources available through Phase One. Investing in Phase Two has the potential to drastically expand that scope of reach, and most importantly, to foster a new culture of safer winter sports behavior among all backcountry target audiences.

iii. Service Outline

Project Zero Phase Two is action oriented, requiring a combination of strategic oversight and practical implementation. By working with experienced fundraising and branding leaders, I can maintain collaborative Committee oversight and support the consultant team to deliver effective strategies that integrate Phase One research findings. Fundraising and branding consultants can be selected by myself or by Committee.

Phase Two has been divided into three Sections: A Project Management; B Promotional Campaign, and C Ambassador Program. The major deliverables and costs associated with each of these Sections are outlined in detail throughout this proposal. The Sections will be pursued simultaneously and the benefits of completing them are mutually reinforcing. Phase One illustrated the value of having a dedicated project manager, and Section A can be best viewed as the foundation of Phase Two, upon which Sections B and C can be layered. Additional marketing opportunities may arise throughout Phase Two and can be incorporated as necessary.

A. Project Management

Fundraising Strategy

Building a successful funding model that will support the long term success of Project Zero Committee goals requires a coordinated and strategic approach that transcends short-term stakeholder needs. Potential areas of opportunity are:

- Exclusive partnerships for one aspect of Phase Two (i.e. sponsor film distribution, branding design, ambassador programs, etc.) or future support for Phase Three (i.e. ongoing project management support, year over year);
- Targeted private sector approach for Project Zero goals: initial list could include: REI, GoPro, MEC, any resorts, etc.;
- Targeted public sector, foundation, or association requests to support Project Zero goals.

Branding Strategy

A brand strategy is essential to achieve the belief, knowledge objectives identified through Project Zero Committee collaboration and target audience research. The brand needs to be simple and easy to share, and it must resonate with multiple backcountry target audiences, including the high-risk lift-accessed riders as well as seasoned backcountry riders. The branding approach could include:

- Adopting a personified *Backcountry Starts Here* brand, tying into the peer influencer model. This approach connects well with the recommended Ambassador Program (see Section C);
- Applying the existing *Get the gear Get the Training Get the Forecast Get the Picture* brand currently used to reach the snowmobiling target audience;
- Developing an entirely new tagline, message and graphics.

An equally important task associated with developing and implementing the brand strategy is the effective maintenance of any new online tools. This proposal budgets for six month, part-time additional capacity to bridge the gap between Phase Two and Phase Three.

Committee Coordination

The unique strength of the Project Zero Committee is its collaborative leadership design. To maximize the benefits available through shared project oversight, dedicated Committee management is required to determine and maintain project goals, decision-making processes, and shared responsibilities. Ensuring full representation across geographic and industry role boundaries is an important to build accountability to the outcome.

Deliverables:

- Complete branding strategy: icon, tagline, messaging and additional graphic illustrations as necessary (to be determined) are designed, tested, and implemented
- Initiate fundraising strategy: phased approach to achieving target budget (to be determined) that maximizes existing opportunities and ensures long term sustainability of process
- Committee: establish terms of reference for transparent and accountable decision making processes; develop work plans and provide communications support; facilitate stakeholder strategy session at ISSW; facilitate committee planning meeting before start of 2014/2015 season
- Project monitoring and evaluation will be ongoing, and a final report will summarize the outcomes and prepare the Project Zero Committee for success in Phase Three

B. Promotional Campaign

Building on the social marketing strategy developed in Phase One, a newly branded campaign will be developed, tested, and launched to influence the beliefs, knowledge and behavior of untrained backcountry riders. While we are unlikely to identify a sound bite or marketing campaign that sufficiently captures the full complexity of “being prepared” for avalanche terrain, the following best practices in social marketing will be incorporated into the promotion:

- Social currency: help people feel good about being “the one who knows the snow”
- Emotion: create messages that evoke powerful feelings will have the greatest impact
- Narrative: uncover real stories with strong characters to increase message retention
- Simplicity: craft messages that are concrete and easy to convert into action
- Visibility: determine how to make desired behaviours easily seen and easy to follow
- Triggers: find ways to make the message top of mind so that it can be “tip of tongue”

Deliverables:

- Oversee completion of Phase One film montage project, with consistent appeal to register for avalanche training before the start of the 2014/2015 season
- Establish broad representation of retail sector partnerships, distributed across major ski and snowboarding destinations in North America, committed to broadcasting the film and sharing local avalanche center materials
- Manage launch of new branding materials online and at targeted offline locations to ensure the promotional campaign is audience-focused and aligns with the strategy recommendations from Phase One

C. Ambassador Program

People who have just completed avalanche training are perfectly positioned to become advocates for snow safety. Recognizing their status in their skiing/snowboarding communities, and assigning them responsibility for motivating their friends to develop similar levels of safety training, will advance the Phase Two objectives. Phase Two outreach efforts will include this untapped resource of additional promotional capacity. Peer influence was identified as a major motivating factor for the high risk target audience, and an ambassador program provides

Deliverables:

- Develop avalanche center/Project Zero branded ambassador program model that can be applied across committee organization memberships and beyond, to build on the peer influencer findings from Phase One
- Establish informal network of avalanche center supporters for ongoing communications testing throughout Phase Two, beginning with focus group participants and encouraging others to become involved
- The informal network will evolve into the first wave of avalanche center ambassadors, aligned with both their local avalanche center goals and the comprehensive Project Zero Committee vision.

iv. Success Measures

I look forward to working in close collaboration with the Project Zero Committee again this year. Social transformation is a long term process that requires persistence. Most social marketing programs target a 5 - 10% rate change within 2-3 years based on focused and consistent communications programming. While our progress in achieving the collaborative objectives must be evaluated over the long term it is clear that the collective efforts of the Committee are greater than the sum of their parts.

Specific Phase Two objectives will be determined at the Fall 2014 Project Zero Committee planning meeting, and will build on the broad Phase Two branding and outreach goals. Behaviour change is challenging to measure, and while we cannot draw direct correlations between planned interventions and observed changes in public behaviour, some encouraging outcomes from Phase Two may include:

- Increase snow industry financial and in-kind support for Project Zero Committee goals
- Increase in avalanche skills training across North America, and especially in Project Zero Committee locations
- Increase in positive avalanche media stories; more good news
- Increase in backcountry safety gear sales
- Decrease in number of Search and Rescue lift-accessed backcountry incident reports **assumes a verifiable baseline can be established*

v. Project Schedule

A preliminary schedule appears below which can be revised as necessary.

Timeline	Deliverables
August 2014	Contract awarded + project work-plan refined
September 2014	Present at ISSW + expand industry support
October 2014	Host committee strategy session + confirm Phase Two goals, identify consultant team
November and December 2014	Promote film + build private sector support
November and December 2014	Develop fundraising and branding strategies + ambassador program
January 2015	Launch new Project Zero branded website + communications materials
February 2015	Launch avalanche center ambassador program
March 2015	Launch media + fundraising campaign for Phase Three
April 2015	Evaluate project outcomes + produce final report