



XA04C1309

Can Marketing Increase the Legitimacy and Acceptance of Nuclear Waste Management?

*Osmo Kurki, Manager for Communication
POSIVA OY, Finland*

In Finland the most important decision concerning the nuclear waste management is a decision in principle. The decision in principle of the Council of State is needed for the final disposal of nuclear waste. Decision is made by the Finnish Government and then approved or rejected by the Finnish Parliament.

According to Posiva's plan we are going to apply for the decision this spring. If we succeed, a site for the final disposal will be chosen and all investigations concentrated to the selected area. For now we have four candidate areas.

The decision will be political - it is a fact. To be able to get the decision in principle approved requires that at least half of the 200 representatives of the parliament vote yes.

To get acceptance both in national and municipal levels is an exceptionally hard task. All possible communication and marketing mixes are needed in order to reach the goal. During Posiva's brief history three national marketing campaigns have been made. The results have been encouraging.

Swedish nuclear transport vessel M/S Sigyn has played an essential part in all our national marketing campaigns. An exhibition onboard has visited several harbours in Finland.

This year Posiva's marketing event was divided in three parts

- _ Advertising campaign
- _ Sigyn's visit to Helsinki, the capital city of Finland
- _ Expert seminars

All parts were linked to each other.

We launched the campaign three weeks before Sigyn's visit. Main message was: "Not everyone has to be highly precise with their facts. We must." The main goal of the advertisements published in national magazines and newspapers was to increase the publicity of Posiva and the Finnish solution for the nuclear waste management. At the same time we hoped to create public debate and open discussion, which is always needed in a democratic society before important national decisions. We also used movie advertising. A humoristic approach, which is always a demanding genre, was chosen.

The results of the Campaign

In the main target group, Finnish decision makers, the campaign was noticed quite well ñ every other person noticed the advertisements. Of all the Finnish citizens every third person noticed the ads. Based on advertising, people saw Posiva as a modern and open organisation which investigates best solutions for nuclear waste management.

Over 70 % thought that Posiva's campaign was better than the average public information campaigns. Also the opponents of nuclear power shared this view.

There were some negative reactions though. The most critical were people who were actively antinuclear or pro-nuclear. Environmental activists thought that the campaign underestimated the fears of the average people and was a bit chauvinistic.

The second phase of the campaign was Sigyn's visit to Helsinki harbour. The four-days nuclear waste management exhibition onboard was seen by over 4 000 visitors. The exhibition was created by swedish SKB but complemented by finnish parts and expert guidance. Almost everyone at Posiva worked as a guide. SKB's excellent exhibition got the attention it deserved.

At the time of the visit two expert seminars with international topics were organized. Representatives of media were also invited to the seminars.

During a two-week period there were over 200 articles, ten TV appearances and over 20 radio interviews concerning the seminars, Sigyn's visit and Posiva's advertising campaign. Over 80% of the stories were positive or neutral from Posiva's point of view.

After Sigyn's visit a Gallup poll was made. According to the Gallup every other Finn saw geological disposal of nucwaste as a reasonable solution. If the only alternative for the final disposal were prolonged interim storage, 62 % would prefer geological disposal.

Finnish Parliament members were also asked the same question. 150 members were reached and 103 of those were pro final disposal. 19 were against and the rest were indecisive.

I may now answer the question presented in the heading of this paper. The answer is a clear yes. Marketing can indeed increase the legitimacy and acceptance of nuclear waste management. But we have to keep in mind that marketing is only one part of Posiva's communication mix. Traditional communication is still the most important.

The situation in Finland looks very promising for the time being. In a few years time we will see whether our nuclear waste management will proceed according to the timetable - as it has this far, for almost 20 years. Next steps will be the selection of site in 2000, the construction of final disposal repository in 2010 and the beginning of final disposal in 2020.