

Behavior Change Digital Marketing Campaign Proposal
To Address Problem Gambling Behavior

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Problem Gambling Behavior (PGB): Behavior Change Campaign



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Problem Gambling Defined

Gambling is not to be relegated to casino poker and games of Blackjack, or even limited to sports betting or lottery scratch-off ticket games. To truly understand why gambling is so prevalent, globally, a much broader definition brings the activity into better view. Any activity where an individual risks something of value, with unpredictable circumstances or results is considered gambling (The Gambling Clinic, 2023). With the expansion of technology, gaming entertainment, and globalization, the variety of ways in which to engage in gambling behavior are forever increasing. In a healthy context, gambling can be a fun social activity. However, with such fun and risks, comes the occasional opportunity to obtain substantial rewards. This is the genesis of what is known as *Problem Gambling Behavior* (PGB).

Almost 50% of people worldwide, have engaged in some form of gambling in the past 12 months (Tran et. al, 2024). Gambling becomes classified as problem gambling behavior (PGB) when the activity interferes with an individual's daily life (NCPG, 2024). This component of the PGB definition, where the activity becomes concerning or identified as a *problem* based on the impact to daily living, is a common qualifier amongst many other diagnosed behaviors such as alcoholism or drug addictions. Like these more commonly known addictions, PGB is characterized by gambling behavior that often adversely impacts or inhibits individual's ability to work, pay bills, or even sustain their families and intimate relationships. It is also important to not confuse PGB as simply someone engaging in gambling activity often. In fact, gambling behavior that only occurs a handful of times within a year could still be classified as problem gambling if the behavior causes one to engage in such a manner that their daily life is adversely impacted; for example, spending money you cannot afford to spend, or even stealing money to spend (Mental Health Foundation, 2021).

PGB is problematic from an objective lens because it destroys the quality of life for those struggling with the side-effects of excessive gambling behavior. The loss of tangible things of value being risked when gambling is only the beginning of a domino-effect of losses. PGB's impact on health and well-being can be devastating, causing increased stress, depression, anxiety, and even having significant links to suicidal ideation (Mental Health Foundation, 2021). However, the problems do not stop there for the individual gambler, there are also the affected family members (AFM) that are on the receiving end of a struggling relative. PGB is often at the center of AFM experiencing income being spent on gambling rather than sustaining household bills, newly incurred family debt, or experiencing the loss of family valuables to pawn shops for money spent on PGB (Orford et al., 2017).

From a societal standpoint, problem gambling behavior (PGB) costs our communities and financial infrastructures about \$14 billion dollars annually. These costs are associated with healthcare, legal expenses, bankruptcy, and unemployment costs (NCPG, 2024). Again, the losses that occur when problem gambling, reach far beyond the activity itself or even the individual themselves. The increase in public debt is also compounded with gambling. Considering just 20% of male sport betters, their average debt ranges anywhere from \$55,000 - \$90,000 (Kindbridge Behavioral Health, 2024). These additional numbers below are alarming, showing PGB's impact through so many facets of society, and they reveal just how important behavior change campaigns should be widely adopted and deployed:

- Impact on Marriages- 65% end in divorce when one intimate partner has PGB.
- Impact of Suicide- Research shows that 42% of high-risk gamblers, at some point wished they were dead, while 28% of those with PGB suffer from suicidal ideation.

- Impact on Military Veterans- Gambling is 3.5 times higher among veterans than civilians, and the rate of PGB amongst veterans is 69%, compared to 19% for civilians (Kindbridge Behavioral Health, 2024).

Campaign Target Audience

The targeted audience for this behavior change campaign consists of a detailed breakdown of the targeted demographic, geographic, psychographic, and key behavioral patterns. Numerous sources of data have been cited to ensure the targeted audience breakdown is both specific and relevant.

Demographic: The targeted demographic for this campaign will consist of the following

- Black indigenous people of color (BIPOC)/ethnic minorities (Gateway Foundation, 2024).
- Males, age 18-25, with a GED/high school diploma education level (AddictionHelp.com, 2025; Latvala, Salonen, & Roukka, 2022).
- Individuals with income level of \$0>\$30,000 (Day et al., 2020; Wisconsin Council on Problem Gambling, 2022).

Geographic:

- Urban areas will be targeted with this campaign; specifically, areas of low-income levels (making sure to target that income demographic above).
- Urban areas that are particularly within 10-50 miles of a casino. Research (Weaver, 2005).

Psychographic:

- Sensation seeking, desire for control, and impulsivity.

- Have positive attitudes about risk taking and gambling in general. Believe they have control over gaming outcomes.
- View having more money as a measure for success (Carver & McCarty, 2013).
- Believe that gambling is an effective solution for overcoming poverty (Blaszczynski, 2002).

Behavioral Patterns:

- Frequent impulsive decision-making (Carver & McCarty, 2013).
- Introverted signs or gambling alone, avoiding social contact.
- Frequently borrowing money, or the sell of personal items to fund gambling behavior (Delfabbro & Griffiths, 2012).

Key Considerations of the Context

Broader issues to consider when it comes to the social influences that contribute to problem gambling behavior (PGB) are the normalization of gambling by society and the social networks that exist to support and encourage gambling behavior, economic employment factors, and environmental dynamics. Not only does research show that gambling behavior is normalized through the individual social networks, but that these networks also normalize the harm caused by PGB (Russell, Langham, & Hing, 2018). The impact of these social influences help shed light on why behavior change campaigns that leverage that power using elements of social learning theory/social cognitive theory (SLT/SCT). The larger issues surrounding PGB extend to economic factors as well, such as unemployment rates and poverty in some of the most urban geographic locations. Rates of PGB and at-risk gambling (ARB) have historically been higher in areas where unemployment is high. The reality of these broader issues only fortifies the argument that problem-gambling policy prioritize the pursuit of reducing these harmful

conditions related to gambling (Latvala et al., 2021). One of the key environmental dynamics surrounding PGB previously discussed, is the proximity to more gambling venues. However, the increase in popularity and favorable legislation, have now positioned online gaming as the omnipresent gaming venue. Not only is gambling more accessible with online gambling, but it is also a much more tempting space to frequent with those with PGB increasingly seeking isolation and a growing number of adolescent youth and young adults frequenting these digital spaces (Responsible Gambling Council, 2016).

Some of the potential barriers to PGB reduction or intervention include the following:

- Fear of judgement or feelings of shame.
- Denial of having a gambling problem at all.
- Lack of awareness, and support service capacity.
- Personal beliefs surrounding the behavior.

The fear of judgement or discrimination acts as a huge barrier to behavior change for a number of reasons. Surveys showed that over 60% of those who struggled with gambling behavior had never told anyone about it. Another 30% of individuals who did speak to someone, waited over a year before seeking help, and over 30% of individuals not opening up about their condition because they felt ashamed (GambleAware Stigma Polling, 2024). Being in denial of having a gambling issue at all, is also a barrier to change, alongside personal beliefs surrounding PGB that suggest the problem can be handled without help (Dabrowska, Moskalewicz, & Wiczorek, 2017). The lack of awareness when it comes to the signs and symptoms of PGB, in addition to limited intervention resources of qualified professionals, are barriers to treatment in some communities (Gordon-Davis, 2022).

Opposed to barriers to change, some of the adverse impacts problem gambling behavior (PGB) can have on an individual's daily life, have also been known to be catalyst for changed behavior. Some of these enablers have included self-recognition of actually having a gambling problem, fear of destroying intimate partner relationships due to PGB, mental health problems, and financial pressures causing individuals to go bankrupt (Lischer et al., 2023). Some other enablers that could help facilitate change in PGB are empathy for others, discrepancies between self-image and PGB, and any other negative consequences stemming from PGB (Johansen et al., 2019). An increased sense of empathy causes problem gamblers to explore what might their actions mean to some of the family members that are close in their lives. As discussed previously, the collateral damage of PGB impacts so many loved ones connected to a family member with problem gambling. When dissonance is a motivating factor for changed behavior, it can come as a result of the problem gambler recognizing certain behaviors as not something they would normally do and goes against their self-image. An example of this could be, individual's stealing from others just to have money for gambling, when they otherwise do not view themselves as a thief (Johansen et al., 2019).

Campaign Messaging

In developing the messaging of this campaign, it was important to ensure the messaging took into account the audience (gamblers with PGB or not), their demographic and psychographic characteristics, and that there was an emotional appeal (Lewis, Watson, & White, 2016).

- **Campaign Title:** "Play. Walk Away. Play Again."

This title was chosen with the target audience in mind, but specifically, taking into account the psychographic components cited previously in the *Targeted Audience* section. The target

audience enjoys gambling, and since the research does not suggest that simply gambling alone is unhealthy, the campaign title affirms that with “*Play.*”

The campaign title message *is* designed to draw attention to and be a subliminal call-to-action for, motivating the target audience (TA) to make the desired behavior change of knowing when to “*Walk Away*” from gambling when it begins nearing the unhealthy limits.

The title messaging then provides an “anchoring” emotional appeal to end with, “*Play Again.*” *Play Again*, is not a call to become a frequent gambler, but a call to remind those who gamble that playing *again* is something you only get the opportunity to do when you have learned when to *walk away*. This messaging is not dissimilar to campaigns seen surrounding alcohol consumption like, “Drink responsibly”. They aren’t designed to discourage drinking entirely, but to encourage its appropriate and responsible use.

Other key messages that will be a part of this campaign are crafted to make use of theoretical principles of *Social Cognitive Theory* (SCT) and elements of its much broader scope associated with *Social Learning Theory* (SLT). Other key messaging for this campaign listed below with the associated principle of SCT/SLT:

- “We never take an L, when we choose to take the W. Don’t Lose, Walk.”
- “It’s not losing, when you walk away.”
- “Walking away, is still winning.”
- “Play the game, don’t let the game play you.”
- “Staying, could mean never playing again.”

With this messaging the SCT/SLT principles of reciprocal determinism, self-efficacy, social influence, and the understanding of consequences and reinforcements, play a role. First, understanding the social context in which this particular campaign messaging will exist (casino

gambling), it was important for the language to include “we”. The language, and the associated campaign artifacts that will carry said language, is to show individuals acting out the desired behavior change (knowing when to walk away from a casino game). The reciprocal determinism principle posits that interplay of social context (peer presence/”we”) and social norms, can impact positive behavior change and impact personal factors such as attitude and beliefs (Main, 2023).

Self-efficacy is an integral component of social cognitive theory, and with campaign messaging mentioned above, the goal is to impress in the mind of the target audience (TA) that they are capable of stopping or walking away at the appropriate time (Parrado-Gonzalez, Fernandez-Calderon, & Leon-Jariego, 2023). Messaging above like “We never take an L, when we choose to take the W. Don’t Lose, Walk.”, completely redefines for the TA what it means to win. For the TA or problem gambler, “winning” is often this forever elusive thing. So, this campaign messaging redefines winning as “walking away”.

- You win the chance to play again when you walk away.
- You win the opportunity to keep your family ties intact when you walk away.
- You win the chance to keep your job when you walk away.
- You win the chance to be that closer to debt freedom when you walk away.

The environmental dimensions of SCT/SLT such as the physical/social, observational and vicarious learning, are addressed situationally through both campaign messaging and the associated creative imagery and video ad content. The campaign seeks to synthesize these environmental components through effective storytelling strategies.

The storytelling seen in the creative also draws further upon SCT/SLT with vicarious learning being able to occur from behavior being observed in the images and/or video. This can

influence the future behavior of the campaign's TA. Ensuring that the media being used is attention grabbing and easy to be comprehended will be a key component. Additionally, the vicarious reinforcement allows the TA to learn by witnessing the consequences portrayed in the attached creative.

Creative Campaign Artifacts: *Draft/Samples Only*

Exhibit 1.



*Image created with Canva

Exhibit 2.



*Image created with Canva

For all creative content developed, a contact number or website for any needed support would be listed. Not only does this provide a next step for any of those struggling with PGB, but it also will allow for an easy to track key performance indicator (KPI), when later measuring the campaign's success.

Communication Channels

The communication channels, where the above messaging and creative content will exist, will primarily be social media platforms such as Instagram, Tiktok, Facebook, and print media within and around casinos. Research shows that anywhere from 86% to 91% of the target audience (TA) uses Instagram and Tiktok (Sprout Social, 2025). Rationale for selecting social media for a communication channel is rooted in the popular use by the TA. Social media platforms like Facebook have been known to be great sources for content reaching a large number of people due to its global platform size and reach.

Keeping the TA in mind, its important to also use communication channels that deliver short-form video content. Social media channels like Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook all have functionality for both creating and easily disseminating short-form videos. Videos are not only shared more than images, but there is a higher level of engagement potential with short-form videos among our TA used in this campaign messaging, and viewers are more likely to watch shorter videos until the end (UCAS, 2024; Buffer, 2025).

Lastly, the print media for the campaign will exist within available ad space inside and around casinos. This placement is key, because proximity to casinos play a significant role in the increased risk of problem gambling behavior (PGB). Placement of printed posters or billboard

ads along highways leading to and around casinos will be beneficial. The same printed media images can also be used across social media channels.

Implementation Plan

The resources needed for the campaign will cover key personnel, materials, logistics, and budget required to execute all stages. Past this campaign design herein, resources are needed to develop the identified creative components (videos and print media). The resources and associated budget needed are as follows:

- **Campaign Videos-** Three campaign videos needed, to craft three different iterations of the campaign messaging.
 1. Full-time (contract) campaign *project manager* needed to provide general oversight. Said manager will ensure the campaign messaging aligns with the guidance of this document, coordinate all logistics, contracts, payments, and ensure all timelines are adhered to. **Budget = \$104,000** (13-month contract)
 2. Studio location rental needed for campaign video shoots. Orchestrated by the campaign manager. Studio needed for approximately 3-hours for each video (x3). Studio rental needed for total of 9 hours throughout the campaign. **Budget = \$900**
 3. In-studio professional video recording services personnel needed. Two videographers needed, along with an audio engineer. Total of 9 hours for entire campaign project. \$200/hr per videographer. \$100/hr for audio engineer. **Budget = \$4,500**
 4. On-camera talent needed for campaign video role-playing all three separate days. Will need project manager to recruit talent/handle on-boarding of different talent for each filming date. Acting talent can be recruited from www.Backstage.com.

Group of four on-camera actors (Black and Hispanic males) needed. \$275/per actor/per day, plus a one-time \$500 Media Buyout paid to each actor. Project manager will also coordinate signed contracts and media releases for all acting talent. 12 actors total needed. **Budget = \$9,300**

5. Post-editing video services needed. One video editor contracted to edit all three campaign video iterations. The project manager will ensure QA and campaign messaging alignment both on-scene during filming and at post edit stage. Paid at \$150/hr for an allocated total of 18 hours of work over the course of three videos.
Budget = \$2,700
- **Print media** (posters/billboard)- Three campaign images needed that will act as posters in physical casino spaces, then reformatted for use as billboards at highways located within close proximity to both casinos and within the identified radius mentioned herein this campaign proposal.
 1. Photographer needed. Photographer hired by project manager (PM). Photographer needed for two hours each date that video production is occurring. The same on-camera acting talent will be utilized for print images, to save on budget expenses.
Budget for Photographer = \$900
 2. Graphic designer needed. Graphic designer also hired by PM. The graphic designer will edit the photography and create finished posters and billboard images to be submitted for placement. Paid at \$40/hr with an allocated 24 hours for three images total. **Budget = \$960**
 3. Cost of poster placement/ ad billboard space needed. Cost for full campaign period. **Budget = \$49,500**

4. Content placement for social media (SM) management team needed, made up of a SM content specialist, to help with social post placement, engagement, oversight, and analytics. SM Manager paid at \$45/hr and SM Specialist paid at \$25/hr. Hired on temporary contract for 10-month period at 40 hours/week. The PM will provide oversight and ensure campaign messaging continuity and alignment.
Budget = \$112,000
 5. TOTAL budget needed for entire campaign implementation plan = **\$284,760**
- **Timeline-** The total timeline for the campaign implementation project will be a 13-month period. This time period will be broken down as follows:
 1. Phase One- PM will begin recruitment of acting talent and professional services vendors (videographers, photographers, editors, graphic designers etc), and have video produced and static poster/billboard creative completed. **Timeline = 3 months (January – March).**
 2. Phase Two – The SM management team will begin the placement and monitoring of the creative video and image content on social media, and billboards will be put in place. **Timeline = 9 months (April – December).**
 3. Phase Three- The review period. **Timeline = Up to 1 month** following December. Phase three will entail measuring all KPI's and the reach/engagement of creative content with the target audience across social media platforms listed above.

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