Strategic Communications

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At the core of strategic communications is *influencing human behavior*. Although this presentation is focused on giving a broad overview of engagement concepts, the overall goal is to encourage you to begin thinking more strategically about how you engage with others through your work.
Engagement.

For your consideration: What kind of engagement is regularly occurring in your profession? Mostly one-on-one or to groups? What kind of people and for what purpose? What are some of the challenges you experience?
Defining Purpose

Are you…

Trying to get people to do a specific, concrete action?

Trying to influence values and attitudes?

Or do you…

Need to change policies and laws or enhance enforcement?

Furthermore, you can ask yourself these three questions. All three approaches are factors for social change, whether that’s at a more individual level, attempting to influence behavioral decisions, or at a more indirect public scale, influencing policy systems and environmental development.
This presentation will address the collaborative and advocacy elements of policy, systems and environmental development.
How often do you think something like this after engaging in a conversation with someone?

It is not uncommon to come away from a conversation thinking, “We are speaking two different languages”. It is all too easy to “talk at” someone or think “they just don’t get it.” However, how often do we attempt to translate our messaging, becoming a multilingualist in our work? Translation is a creative process that requires active listening, comprehension and synthesis skills. It is critical to understand the values underlying another individual’s communication methods and style.
Video: Why Facts Don’t Convince People.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3wd39N1C_84
The New Yorker came out with an article in 2017 that explored the concepts talked about in “Why Facts Don’t Convince People” video explaining some of the neuroscience behind the formation of our beliefs. Once formed, impressions are remarkably perseverant because of confirmation bias, or the tendency that we have to embrace information that supports our beliefs and reject information that contradicts them.

Furthermore, there is the concept of cognitive dissonance, or the state of having inconsistent thoughts, beliefs, or attitudes, especially as relating to behavioral decisions and attitude change. When met with new information, it challenges our identity and we must decide if we will openly accept the new information, integrate it with what we already know, or reject it.
We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.

-Albert Einstein

“What if we don’t change at all ... and something magical just happens?”

Despite the challenges at hand, we must find alternative pathways to address complex issues for the sake of progress. More specifically, we need to act strategically and adaptively because “we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used to create them.” Or, for that matter, the same language that contributed to it.
### Levels of Engagement

#### Roles for Social Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Connector</th>
<th>Mavens</th>
<th>Salespeople</th>
<th>Agitator</th>
<th>Innovator</th>
<th>Orchestrator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individuals with vast connections to others, who keep track and introduce networks of people and resources.</td>
<td>Meticulous people who keep track of social details, trends and changes, and are influential through sharing information.</td>
<td>Influential people who are very convincing and influence change based on charisma, emotion and relationships.</td>
<td>Brings the grievances of individuals or groups to the forefront of public awareness, creates sense of urgency.</td>
<td>Creates an actionable solution to address the grievances, facilitates community response and development of solutions.</td>
<td>Coordinates across action groups, organizations and sectors to scale the proposed solution.</td>
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*From Malcolm Gladwell’s “The Tipping Point” (2006)*

*From the Stanford Social Innovation Review’s “Roles Supporting a Social change Movement” (Battilana & Kimsey, 2017)*

We can inhabit many roles, but where does your skill set most naturally align?
Levels of Engagement

Social change roles contribute to public engagement, but you must examine your motivations. What are you trying to acquire from individuals? What kind of “buy-in” are you seeking? For community-based work, there are levels to the public role in engagement and decision-making. However, regardless of the level of engagement, there are three intended outcomes of public conversation:

1) Issue or project outcomes, like a Strategic Plan
2) Improvement in the Process of public talk, such as a broader cross-section of community input
3) Improved public engagement, resulting in sustained citizen involvement in civic issues

Through these outcomes, a facilitator will generate public knowledge and uncover a sense of purpose.
The Role of Facilitation

What is facilitation?
“To make easy” or “ease a process.” Facilitators plan, guide, and manage the process of public conversation to ensure:

1. Good participation: listening, speaking, thinking
2. Shared responsibility for decision outcomes

Before the event, facilitators: determine goals, select a Process
After the event, facilitators: enable quality participation, work with/adapt the Process as needed

Facilitation skills are critical to uncovering the motivations and values in a room to make progress on goals.
Thinking more strategically, facilitators ascertain the type of conversation that needs to occur and choose a particular Process (our conversation style). This presentation does not address Process options, but they can be found at the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation website, http://ncdd.org/6857
EXPLORATION is important when a group or community seems stuck or muddled and needs to reflect on their circumstance in depth and gain collective insight.
CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

is important when relationships among participants are poor or not yet established yet need to be.

Issue can only be resolved when people change their behavior or attitude, expand their perspective, or take time to reflect and heal.

The Role of Facilitation

Engagement Basics
DECISION MAKING is important when the issue is within government’s (or any single entity’s) sphere of influence.
Engagement Basics

**COLLABORATIVE ACTION**

is important when the issue/dispute requires intervention across multiple public and private entities, and anytime community action is important.
Engaging Stakeholders

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head.

If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

-Nelson Mandela

Decision-making is not simply a matter of fact. We must consider who exactly our audience is and how to resonate with them at an individual level.
Who is the Audience?

**You may not know** where they stand on the issue...

1. **Target(s) for Change** are those individuals whose behavior you desire to influence.
2. **Drivers** contribute to the problem.
3. **Influencers – Decisionmakers**
4. **Fence Sitters** do not seem to have an agenda, do not commit, and relations are riddled with doubt.

You **know** where they stand on the issue...

5. **Allies** support your efforts.
6. **Bedfellows** are agreeable but may have hidden motives, may not be able to commit, or lack follow-through.
7. **Opponents** do not agree with you, but they are open to dialogue and help you to identify where support is needed.
8. **Adversaries** do not agree with you and relations remain adversarial even after negotiations and attempts to influence them have failed.

Activity:
Charting Target Audiences
You can overcome communication barriers by better understanding stakeholders’ motivations. The key to motivation is understanding that values inspire action through emotion.
There are individual inhibitors to action; however, there are also messaging strategies to overcome these inhibitors. For example, a message inciting urgency can overcome inertia. When you are presenting a message, there are two things to be aware of:

1) "What are you asking of someone?", or the call to action, and
2) The W.I.I.F.M., or "What’s in it for me?", the motivation to act
## Engaging Stakeholders
### Creating Compelling Messages

#### Questions to Consider:

1. **Who are you trying to reach with your message?**

2. **What does your audience care about?**

### TIP:
It is important to be sure that your message taps into one existing value that your audience has rather than the values that you want them to have.

Messages that are **consistent with the values of your audience** will do a better job to ensure that whatever behavior or policy change is being proposed will be easier to accept and implement. Effective messaging also **narrows focus** and **makes a few strong points** that people will remember, rather than multiple points that your audience then has to sift through to **decide** what is important. This means the **right** message points must be developed for each specific target audience.
Here are considerations for developing strategic relationships.
Creating Compelling Messages

Strategic Influencing

**Fence Sitters** Tell them your position and state what you want from them. If they still don’t commit, express your disappointment about not knowing where they stand and ask what it would take for them to support your ideas.

**Adversaries** Express your concern about the relationship and invite them to do the same. Acknowledge your contribution to the problem and your hopes for improved relations. Make no demands, but do let them know if you plan to pursue your agenda despite their opposition.
The Message Wheel is a tool you can use for developing target audience messages. Begin in the center box by identifying a specific issue, target audience, and a particular value position the target audience holds.

The Top Section is reserved for the Value Message, the opportunity to make the connection to the audience. For those who already agree with you, you can make this point quickly and move to the next topic. For new audience members, this is an area you want to spend a little more time in, preparing materials and, perhaps, a speech or address.

The Section to the Right is reserved for the Barrier Message, or countering misconceptions. Here, you will need to think about the “urban legends” that have emerged around the issue. The key to a successful barrier message is that you do not repeat your audience’s misconception. The focus is obtaining buy-in. Present new or unexpected information to change the course of the conversation.

The Bottom Section is reserved for the Ask. At least one of your message points should be focused toward this end. You must keep in mind degree of change and audience comfort zone. Is this ask easily attainable? Can you help bridge the gap?

Finally to consider: what’s in it for your audience? This is addressed by the Section to the
Left through the Vision Message, the “If you do what I ask, then you will get what you want.”
The community does not have a grocery store to provide healthy foods. In turn, there is a high rate of unemployment and diet-related chronic disease.

Who is the target audience?
Economic Development

What is their value position?
Increase investment in the local community for its vitality.

Improving access to healthy food through healthy food financing brings a triple benefit to the community: revitalized economy, job creation, and better health. Expanding access to healthy foods creates new markets for local farmers. There is potential to lower healthcare costs in the long run and healthy workers are more productive.

(-) "Local grocery stores have unaffordable foods. Why don’t we invest in a Dollar General that offers food access at affordable prices?"

(+) Local grocery stores are cornerstones of a community. They reinvest dollars back into the community at a higher rate than corporate chains, which generates dollars for more services.

Would you be willing to collaborate with the local food and farm council to develop some options for local food retail access? We have already collected this data and could use your help to fill in gaps and expand the options.

Here is an example using Healthy Food Financing as a model and Economic Development as the target audience.
Engaging in social change strategies to influence individual behaviors and policies, systems and environments is political. “Political” is often a highly charged word; however, there is a difference between political and partisan.

Politics refers to “activities within an organization or community that are aimed at improving someone’s status or position and are typically considered to be devious or divisive.” For clarification, the work you do may not be devious, but it can be certainly be divisive any time you are attempting to influence someone’s or some group’s values and disagreement is present. However, political work can also be characterized by shared values, working toward a common goal, and an end result that is best for the community as a whole. It is a way to influence legislation and regulation through government or public affairs.

Partisan, on the other hand, refers to “an adherent or supporter of a person, group, party, or cause, especially a person who shows a biased, emotional allegiance.” Partisanship differs from political in that partisan activities have a firm adherence to a party, faction, or person.

“Action aimed at policy” is a practice for building healthy communities and eliminating health disparities. It serves as a bridge between research and practice, because evidence and data alone are not sufficient to gain political momentum to address more deeply rooted and problematic social conditions. And more often than not, social motivations underlie economic and environmental conditions.

If we combine evidence-based practices; inclusive, civic engagement; and political momentum in our communities, then we can move a food system disparities agenda up to a “front burner issue.”
Knowing When to What

Are you trying to get people to do a specific, concrete action? ➔ Consider social marketing.

Are you trying to influence values and attitudes? ➔ Consider education and communication.

Do you need to change policies and laws? Does enforcement need to be enhanced? ➔ Consider advocacy and social marketing.

NOTE: There is also community outreach and capacity-building.
Social marketing is “a communication and education strategy that focuses on the process of influencing human behavior on a large scale, using marketing principles for the purposes of societal benefit rather than commercial profit.”

**NOTE:** “Marketing is the most effective strategy when societal goals are not directly and immediately consistent with people’s self-interest but citizens can be influenced to change by making the consequences more advantageous.”


**Advocacy** “encourages people to speak out on issues of concern to support a cause or proposal. Goals may include increasing public awareness on a particular issue and/or set of issues or encourage political action.”

The overall focus, **strategic communications**, applies tools of communication, education, and public outreach with the intention of disseminating right messages - through the right media, to the right audience, at the right time. This includes two-way communication and dialogue, messaging and positioning, campaigns, media relationship, writing and materials development, and other strategies to achieve social change objectives.
Outreach Tools

**Mass media**
- Education/Interpretive Media
- Events
- Educational
- Press Releases
- Survey Results with Media Interest

**Programming**
- Posters/Brochures/Flyers

**Social Marketing Campaigns**

**Op-Eds**

**Earned Media** is favorable publicity gained through promotional efforts other than advertising and differing from paid media

Social Marketing

Step 1: Do your research

Step 2: Strategy Development

1. Identify target audience(s)
2. Define program goals & objectives
3. Determine the 8 P’s of the Social Marketing Mix
Social Marketing

8 P’s of the Social Marketing Mix

1. **Product**: The intended behavior change, benefits, and alternatives
2. **Price**: Loss incurred by the target audience or barriers to change
3. **Place**: Where the targets engage in the desired behavior, best channels to reach targets through, and how you can make it easy
4. **Promotion**: How to best package the message for the target audience, what are the most trusted channels, and who is the most credible and engaging spokesperson
5. **Publics**: Who do you need to address outside of your organization and the targets to be successful? Who are the internal champions?
6. **Partnership**: Who are the best organizations to join forces with?
7. **Policy**: Which types to address?
8. **Purse Strings**: Is current funding sufficient? Are there additional sources of funding? Can you partner with other organizations to leverage resources?
Social Marketing

Step 3: Program & Communication Design

1. Develop effective messages
   Utilize the Message Wheel

2. Identify appropriate channels
   TV, radio, print media, social media, websites, print materials,
   posters & flyers, direct mail, outdoor media (i.e. billboards), word
   of mouth, professional channels, e-mail, POP materials, mobile
   phones

3. Produce creative communications
   Combine messages, channels, and outreach tools

Program and communications design simply requires weighing options and combining methods to fit the issue context.
Social Marketing

Step 4: Implementation

1 Deployment Plan

• What are your dissemination channels?
• What non-communication elements that should be in place before launch?
• What quantities of your materials are needed?
• Does everyone know how to distribute materials?

2 Public Relations Plan

Kick off your campaign with media coverage

• Organize an event?
• Develop a press release?
• Be a guest on a local radio program?

3 Social Media Plan

Social media engagement can be easily tracked.

• What channels does your target audience use?
• What types of stories or information generate buzz?

10 C’s of Social Media Use

Communicate your message  Collect information online
Converse with others  Collaborate and Co-create content
Connect with people with similar interests  Collect and Categorize information online
Community building  Consumer research
Customer service  Customized online environment

Social Strategies
Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy 101

Lobbying vs. Advocacy

**Advocacy** is a request for a policy change or government action **WITHOUT** a call-to-action.

**Lobbying** is a more direct and formalized appeal to lawmakers.

Do Your Homework

- Know who your representatives, the bills they have passed or co-sponsored, and the committees they sit on
- Visit [www.govtrack.us](http://www.govtrack.us)
- The staffers who work on particular issues are more important than the member of Congress

From “Intro to Advocacy”, Kansas Action for Children, [https://kac.org/take-action/toolkit/](https://kac.org/take-action/toolkit/)
Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy 101

Do Your Homework (cont’d)

• Know the Congressional calendar
  • https://www.congress.gov/resources/display/content/Calendars+and+Schedules

• Legislative session is hectic; be flexible on scheduling

• Recess period is a good time to get to know both the DC and field staff

From “Intro to Advocacy”. Kansas Action for Children. 
https://kac.org/take-action/toolkit/
Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy 101

Communication with Elected Officials

• Any communication is better than none
  • Invite members of Congress to local events. Even if they can’t make it, it garners attention.

• Putting a personal face on an issue is advantageous.

• Amplify the message
  • Write an op-ed mentioning federal policy and post to social media with links to national organizations
  • Request that field staff relay your message to DC

Did you know that your Constituent Services member of Congress can write a letter of recommendation for a federal grant?

• [https://governor.kansas.gov/serving-kansans/constituent-services/](https://governor.kansas.gov/serving-kansans/constituent-services/)
Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy 101

Communicating with Elected Officials (cont’d)

Only have 90 seconds?

• Make an ask through an email, tweet, or phone call
• A phone call is best. Call the DC office first, then field staff.

Correspondence should be short, simple and to the point. Include:

• Your full name and address
• Brief background about the issue
• Supporting data
• Story of personal or community impact
• A specific request

Follow-up is critical after making a request to increase accountability and show that you are monitoring the issue.

Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy 101

The Ask

• Know your ask: frame the problem and a solution
• Ask the right person
• Make your ask memorable; stories before #s! (but use both)
• Amplify your ask: leverage people power, relationships, publicity, and transparency
• Bring a leave-behind (a fact sheet to help inform your representative)
Advocacy Campaigns

Advocacy 101

What is a campaign?
A set of coordinated strategies by a group of people designed to influence a decision that you either win or lose.

www.planningtowin.org
Advocacy Campaigns

6 Stages to a Rock Solid Campaign Plan

Stage 1: Defining the Victory
Stage 2: Evaluating the Campaign Climate
Stage 3: Charting Your Course
Stage 4: Choosing Your Influence Strategy
Stage 5: Messaging for Impact
Stage 6: Managing the Campaign

Planning to Win | The Just Enough Guide for Campaigners

Developing an advocacy campaign has similarities to social marketing.

Access the guide here:
https://planningtowin.org/assets/53a4d20da56919006b2003ad/SPITFIRE_PTW_GUIDE_WEB.pdf
If you are looking to take action this summer, consider advocating for Healthy Food Financing. At the local level, you can get organizations to start thinking about the impact of HFFI, ready everyone to provide testimony when legislative sessions start, and collaboratively develop the “ask”. If there is no legislative agenda in your community, you can talk to local commissioners. Bringing together organizations, law- and decision-makers, and media outreach is all foundational to communications planning.
Advocacy Campaigns

A Final Policy Resource for Food Waste

Includes:
- Liability Protection for Food Donations
- Tax Incentives for Food Donations
- Date Labeling
- Food Safety for Food Donations
- Food Waste Reduction in K-12 Schools
- Feeding Food Scraps to Livestock
- Organic Waste Bans and Waste Recycling Laws
- Government Support for Food Waste Reduction

...Click here!

Access *Keeping Food Out of the Landfill* here:
In closing...

Just because you are right, does not mean, I am wrong. You just haven't seen life from my side.