Strategic communications

Developing and communicating your message is at the centre of your campaign.

Are your communications an afterthought that are not given enough attention?

Are your messages engaging?

Are you messages pushing people the other way?

Are your messages appropriate for different audiences, or do they only speak to the people who are already convinced?

Think of your message as a story, or a narrative, being told in the media. What is the headline and who are the people telling the story and what are they saying.

Communications overview

This briefing is based on workshops given by Frank Sharry from America's Voice which campaigns on immigration reform in the USA. This work came out of research they did on why it so difficult to convince politicians and the public of the value of migrants and the need to respect their rights?

For a video of Frank Sharry talking about this, see: <u>www.civilsocietyhowto.org/creating-</u> <u>powerful-messages/</u>

What is the top-line message? How will you talk about your concerns and what solutions will you put forward? What values will you base your message on? (see Narrative House)

WHO (spokespeople) says

Involve everyone in developing and practising messages. WHAT (narrative, messages) to

Consider who could be a particularly powerful messenger, e.g. people who:

- have credibility on the issue

are directly affected by the issue
are unlikely allies

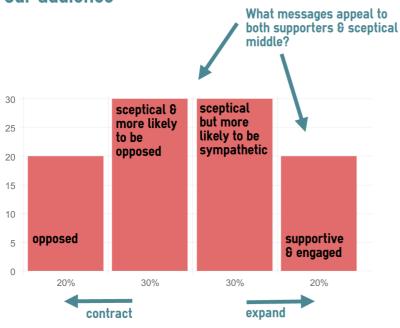
HOW (delivery method)?

WHOM (audiences) and

Which part of your audience are you talking to? (see Our Audience)

Press releases & letters to the media, video, blogs, publications, public meetings & events, social media etc.

Our audience



Try and avoid speaking in a way that mobilises your supporters but alienates the sceptical middle.

A key challenge is to stretch ourselves to connect with other people's concerns and values while remaining true to our own.

Build a narrative house

Use the narrative house (or message house) as a method for refining a top-line message, how you talk about the issue, your solutions and the shared social values that underpin your solutions.

This exercise will help you and your group think creatively and in a focused way to develop strong messages.

- Work as a group to develop the narrative so everyone shares it.
- There is power in moving from a critique narrative to a solutions narrative.
- Use simple and accessible language that you can imagine your target audience using.
- Make sure that your top-line message translates easily into a tweet or facebook post or media headline.
- Think of strong phrases that resonate. Metaphor can be a powerful tool for communicating complex ideas.
- For each top-line message, define no more than three or four points for the frame, solutions and values. Keep the language simple and accessible.
- Practising the ideas out loud can help identify strong and weak points in the narrative.

TOP-LINE MESSAGE

This is the one message that you want people to take away. Values can be an important element of it. Keep it short and memorable.

FRAMING

Define the issue on your terms.

What are the main points to make? These should describe your concerns succinctly and align with your top line message.

SOLUTIONS

Define solutions to the problems you have identified that are tangible and easy to understand. Think of key words and phrases that quickly convey the solution.

While it may not be easy to come up with long-term solutions, interim or partial solutions can be more achievable.

VALUES

What values are at stake if action is not taken? What positive vision should we be working towards? Think Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech which was rooted in the American dream!

Identify shared social values and the way they can be realised with the solutions presented.