Articulating the Case for Change

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Why a Case for Change?

• Not enough to know our cause is noble
• Have to inform, persuade, and motivate others to action
• Be political:
  ➢ Is timing right?
  ➢ Is audience ready?
  ➢ Is environment supportive?

Objectives

• Draft key/consistent messages to articulate need for change with different audiences
• Develop techniques to better reach desired audience
• Identify reasons to defer to others to carry the message
What we’ll cover

• Why we need a clear Case for Change

• Your Case for Change Toolkit:
  ➢ WHAT is your goal/top-level message?
  ➢ WHO do you need to reach?
  ➢ HOW can you best reach them?

WHY Make the Case for Change?

• Believing change is “right” is not enough—have to motivate to action
• Motivate who don’t see the need—inertia/ambivalence are powerful
• Help understand those who oppose our desired change

• Ensure we use all the tools to lead change in clear, consistent way
• Make sure we best use resources by getting right messages to right audiences
• Recruit others in our effort and work
Good communication cuts through the clutter, it doesn’t add to it. It does this by getting the **right message**, in the **right medium**, delivered by the **right messengers**, to the **right audience**.

From Now Hear This: The Nine Laws of Successful Advocacy Communications
Fenton Communications, 2001

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Building a case for change communications toolkit

1. Define the WHAT
   - What change do you want to see?
   - Frame the issue by answering:
     1. What’s wrong?
     2. Why does it matter?
     3. Why does it matter now?
     4. What’s the solution?
Example: Framing the Issue

- **Goal:** Preserve the historic properties of Americana County by adding them to the National Historic Register to protect them from future development interests.
- **What’s wrong?** Americana County stands to lose 3 of its most iconic properties that serve as education and cultural destinations for locals & tourists alike.
- **Why does it matter?** Without these properties, schools and families lose an important space for learning, and our county loses a source of tourism revenue.
- **Why now?** Because an outside developer wants to tear them down to build condos!
- **What’s the solution?** Convince the County Council to add the properties to the historic register and to change the zoning of the land.

Top-level messages: Americana County stands to lose three historic icons to outside development interests. These places preserve our history and culture, and help us compete as a tourist destination. We must act quickly to protect these assets for our schools, families, and community — tell County Council to add them to the historic register and rezone the land!

2. Know the WHO (and their WHY)

- More specific than “The General Public”
- **Who?**
  - Primary Targets: Decision-Change-makers
  - Secondary: Those who influence change
- **“Why?”**
  - What motivates them? What do they care about (or not)?
2. Know the WHO (and their WHY)

- Tailor your message
- Should inform, persuade, and inspire action
- Keep it consistent across audiences/channels!
- Consider both allies and opponents

“Practice isn’t the thing you do once you’re good. It’s the thing you do that makes you good.” - Malcolm Gladwell

Instructions

- Break into groups of 3-4 (no more than 4)
- Pick an advocacy issue
  - From someone who has already defined top-level messages
- Working together, identify primary and secondary targets
- Each group member picks one of the audiences to “play the part” of
- Define the “why” for your own audience and draft tailored messages
Reframing the Issue/Message

- Sometimes this is needed to break through
  - Particularly with opponents
- Instead of COUNTERING what your opponent is thinking/saying...
  - Change the discussion (tone and content) to build on shared values

Example of Reframing: High Fructose Corn Syrup

- Original message might be:
  - People need to be aware of calories in/out so we can beat the American obesity problem.
- Reframing:
  - American families know value of sharing meals; we can continue to build on healthy American family values by preparing/sharing healthy meals together.
  - “We” mentality creates inclusive picture & won’t trigger the defenses of opponents.

Tips for Reframing

- Find common ground and values
- Make it a problem that affects “Us,” not just “Them”
- Avoid jargon / value-laden / politically charged terms
- Be solutions-oriented
Reframing Practice

- Stay in same groups
- 15 minutes for group to share feedback by “audience” and practice
- Start with “likely opposed” audiences (most likely to need reframing)
- Discuss opportunities to reframe to align with some of the tips/techniques
- Further tailor message with reframe in mind
- If time allows, have “likely supportive” share too

Recap

Up to this point you’ve...

1. Identified the WHO
   • Your Audience(s)
2. Defined WHY
   • What they care about
3. Drafted tailored and/or reframed messages

Define Proper Channels
3. Plan the HOW: Channels and Formats

RULE OF 3

1. If folks hear about it once, they’ll often ignore
2. If they hear from a second source, they may stop and think
3. A third time, and they may act

BE CONSISTENT

- Different channels/formats/messengers important
- Ensure the message STAYS consistent

REMEMBER...

"Slow & steady wins the race"

3. Plan the HOW: Channels/Formats

Consider the Channel:
- Go where your audience is already
- Pick 3 places where the majority will find/engage with you

Consider the Format/Approach:
- Pick format for your audience
- Will it be broad (town hall meetings/press conference) or personalized (1-on-1 emails/calls/meetings)?

Prioritize:
- Which can you afford? (think time & $$$)
- Which do you have access to and ability to pull off?
- Which do your allies/supporters have access to?
3. Plan the HOW: The Messenger

Consider:
- Who has the ear/trust of the change-maker you need to reach? Who has the best access?
- Are they “upstream” from the change-maker you need to reach?
- Who has the most reach, and/or influence?
- Who can get folks’ attention?

Examples:
- Board member that has a relationship with a city council member
- Person from within an underserved community vs. someone from outside
- Chef in the sustainable fish movement vs. FDA regulator
- One of your interns vs. a well-read blogger in your field
- Celebrity vs. scientist in climate change

Review: Build a case for change communications toolkit

Reflection: Actions and Takeaways

- What is one action that you will take to strengthen your advocacy communications strategy?
- What is the most important takeaway you are leaving with?
- Who will you share today’s learnings with? Why?