

CHAPTER

8

MESSAGES, STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

“Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory. Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.”

—Sun Tzu

CHINESE MILITARY GENERAL, STRATEGIST AND PHILOSOPHER

LEARNING IMPERATIVES

- To be able to design effective messages for each key public that incorporate relevant self-interests.
- To be able to design strategies that reach a public with a message to motivate a desired behavior.
- To understand how to select the best channels to deliver messages to key publics.
- To be able to design creative tactics delivered through specific channels.
- To understand how to use strategy briefs to develop effective tactics.

Now that you know what you need to do to resolve your problem and who you need to reach to accomplish that, you are ready to design and deliver the messages to motivate your key publics to do what you want them to do. Remember that messages are public-specific. You cannot successfully incorporate a public's self-interest into a message generalized to all publics. Each public will need a different appeal based on its particular self-interests.

Message design

Messages are written in two parts: primary and secondary. Primary messages are the leading drivers in the campaign, and secondary messages are more specific details that fill out the primary messages and make them believable.

Primary messages

Primary messages are the main categories of information for each public. They often resemble sound bites that might be given during a media interview. The primary messages encompass what you want the public to understand, believe or do. They also include a short self-interest appeal (see the Matrix Applied box in this chapter). A campaign to reduce obesity among children, for example, will have a number of primary messages. For parents of children 12 and under, a primary message in this campaign might be, "Healthy adults come from healthy kids — ensure your child's future with a healthy diet today." You want parents to take a more proactive role in looking after the nutrition of their children, and parents want their children to grow into healthy, successful adults.

As you begin developing primary messages for each key public, remember that all messages should, at least loosely, support the big idea strategy and message of the campaign.

The number of primary messages for a key public will depend upon the breadth and duration of the campaign. This is best determined by the objectives (measurable outcomes) you have set. If you need a particular public's help and support for only one outcome, you may need only one primary message. Several different outcomes or desired actions may require more primary messages. Typically, a key public will have two to four primary messages.

Secondary messages

Secondary messages contain the meat, or evidence, that validates the primary messages. There are usually far more secondary messages than primary messages. The secondary messages contain all the facts, statistics, case studies, anecdotes, testimonials and other details that support a primary message. In the above campaign to



PRIMARY MESSAGES

Sound-bite statements that encompass what you need the public to do and an appeal to the public's self-interest to act.



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SECONDARY MESSAGES

Bulleted details that include facts, testimonials, examples and all other information or persuasive arguments that support a public's primary message.

STRATEGIC PLANNING MATRIX

ACTION PLANNING

5. BIG IDEA, KEY PUBLICS, MESSAGES, STRATEGIES AND TACTICS

Messages Message design is public-specific and focuses on self-interests. Create a small number of primary and a larger number of secondary messages for each public.

Primary messages are short summary statements similar to sound bites. They identify a category of information and/or communicate what action you want a public to take. They also tie the desired action to a public's self-interest(s).

Secondary messages are bulleted statements that give credibility to the primary message with facts, testimonials, examples and stories. They provide the ethos, pathos and logos of persuasion.

Strategies Strategies identify what a public must do to fulfill an objective and the channel(s) through which messages will be sent to motivate that action. Multiple strategies may be required for each public.

Tactics Tactics are the creative elements and tools used to deliver messages through specific channels. A number of tactics are required to support each strategy. Examples are story placements, YouTube videos, Twitter posts, special events, infographics, websites or blogs.

combat obesity in children, secondary messages to support the primary message to parents with young children might be:

- Obesity among children has increased 23 percent during the last decade.
- Most eating and exercise habits among adults form before the teenage years.
- The FDA recently updated its nutrition recommendations for children under the age of 13.
- Ninety percent of obese children have self-esteem issues.

Remember that strong motivational messages always tap into a public's self-interests. Never forget that people don't do what you want them to just because you ask them. They must first become informed and then motivated. Richard Wirthlin, a world-renowned market researcher and founder of Wirthlin Worldwide, advised communicators to "persuade through reason and motivate through emotion." In order to do so, your message must contain rational information (logos), be delivered by someone the key public trusts (ethos) and contain an emotional appeal (pathos) to a public's self-interest.

At the heart of the planning process are the decisions we make about the messages we want to send to our key publics and the best way to get those messages to

TIPS FROM THE PROS

Massaging your message

Trevor C. Hale, director of corporate communications, Asia Pacific and Africa at Ford Motor Company, tips you off on how to craft a message that's crisp, cool, clean and contains no transfat.

Joseph Pulitzer gave some famous advice about writing: "Put it before them briefly so they will read it, clearly so they will appreciate it, picturesquely so they will remember it and, above all, accurately so they will be guided by its light."

One of my mentors, University of Alabama at Birmingham's John W. Wittig, said, "A good speech should be like a skirt or a kilt: long enough to cover the subject, but short enough to be interesting." Whether drafting a news release, tweeting a corporate update, trying to make your boss seem funny in a dinner speech or choosing the best hashtag for your Instagram photo, your message should be crisp, customized and memorable and have purpose.

Where's the beef? Garnish is nice, but messages need meat to be newsworthy. Don't make a journalist or deadline or blogger wade through filler to find something digestible. Yuck!

Tough crowd! Know thy audience. Using ancient words like "cool" or "hip" with teenagers in order to appear cool and hip will most assuredly be seen as neither cool nor hip. Can you D-I-G I-T? And if you ever find yourself addressing the Communist leadership of the People's Republic of China at an important state luncheon, don't welcome them as the Republic of China (also known as Taiwan, China's "renegade" province).

There is no B-3 bomber. While not to be used lightly or frequently, according to the famous Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu, misdirection and ambiguity can be very useful in warfare.

It's cliché to avoid clichés. But avoid them like the plague or you'll sound like a broken record. Listen to your heart. Follow your instinct. Stick a fork in me — I'm done.

those publics. It is in this central part of the process that we need most to be guided by our research. Yet, we are most tempted to rely on instinct alone. Not that instinct is necessarily bad. It is often a subconscious process of integrating bits and pieces of knowledge and information and charting an appropriate course given the data. But, it can also be an unwillingness to believe information and data because it conflicts with limited personal observation. In the latter case, instinct usually leads us to follow courses that fail to solve — and often exacerbate — the problem. To avoid that error, we would be wise to always test our instinct against the information and data gathered through research.

If you learn through your research that a particular target public is motivated on a given issue by its self-interest in quality of life for their children, your message must convey the importance of that result. Parents concerned about their children's safety from gang violence are motivated by messages and arguments that promise a safer environment, not by arguments of taxpayer cost. ("Can we place a monetary value on a child's life?") On the other hand, if your target public is more concerned about higher taxes and the government's growing demands on their income to solve social problems, they will be more motivated by messages that focus on perceived low-cost solutions. ("Lock them up; we can't keep spending money on expensive programs for the socially deviant!")

Essential factors

How you **segment publics** to achieve your objectives and the self-interests you identify dictate the messages to be sent. Your message strategy should contain two essential factors: 1) Your purpose — what you need to accomplish, and 2) Your appeal to a key public's self-interest — what will motivate them to act favorably to accomplish your objectives. Messages will essentially be both informational and motivational.

Designing primary and secondary messages in this way provides you with an array of messages that can be combined for use in channels that allow for in-depth coverage such as magazines and brochures, or used individually and in small combinations in social media channels such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

This structure of a few primary messages and a number of more specific, fact-driven secondary messages is also perfect for media training. Top executives and other spokesmen and women can be trained on what the primary messages are for a media interview. But having a wealth of secondary messages that support the small number of primary messages will give them more tools and added depth in responding to inquiries. A CEO might explain that the company is being forced to relocate part of its manufacturing to Asia in order to remain competitive. She/he could then support this assertion (primary message) with a number of secondary messages that contain facts and examples of how the move will enable the company to be more competitive and continue employing most of its existing workforce.

Delivering messages

Once messages have been carefully crafted, you can now design **strategies** and **tactics** to carry your messages to their intended publics. Strategies and tactics are public-specific — they are designed with one public in mind. They are the best way to give a key public its own message to motivate desired behavior.

We can draw a simple analogy to military strategy. In an overall challenge to win a battle, one objective might be to secure a certain piece of ground or a particular town. A strategy would be devised on how to approach this objective. The strategy may be to weaken the town's defenses and attack through a particularly vulnerable spot in the wall. The tactics supporting the strategy may be an artillery barrage, aerial bombing, a Special Forces patrol to plant explosives to create a breach and a ground assault through the wall into the town. The strategy provides the overall approach to a particular objective answering what and, very generally, how it will be accomplished. Tactics are the specific step-by-step activities necessary to achieve the strategy.

SEGMENTATION

Defining and separating publics by demographics and psychographics to ensure more effective communication.



STRATEGIES

Public-specific approaches specifying the channel to send the messages to achieve objectives.



TACTICS

Strategy-specific communication products that carry the message to key publics.





Figure 8.1 Formula for writing an effective strategy

A strategy is an approach, not a list of tasks. Strategies are public-specific and identify a channel or group of related channels you will use to reach a target public to accomplish an objective by appealing to the public's self-interests.

Formula: *Action verb* the *target public* through *communications channel(s)* that *the objective* will satisfy the *target public's self-interests*.

Example: *Convince* the *Orange County Commissioners* through *in-person meetings with company officials and engineers* that *approving the new plant* will have *a significant positive economic impact on the community*.

In communicating with an organization's publics, the strategies are the approaches to reaching a designated public for a particular purpose with the message that will inform or motivate that public. There are many different ways to craft a strategy. Figure 8.1 provides a proven formula for writing an effective strategy.

The tactics that support each strategy identify in greater detail the specific tasks required to send your messages (e.g., blog posts, tweets, employee meetings, newsletter articles, payroll envelope stuffers, special events and emails from the company president). Tactics are strategy-specific because they support a single strategy targeted at a particular public.

Strategies

As we said earlier, your strategy for message delivery is public-specific. In other words, you don't determine how you are going to send a message until you know who you are trying to reach and what you are trying to tell them. The strategy inherently identifies the public, and then addresses what you are trying to do in support of your objectives and the **channel** you propose to use to send the appeal.

Informational versus motivational strategies

Strategies directly support the objectives by identifying what action or behavior is desired. The action part of a strategy may be informational or motivational. Informational strategies (also known as awareness or educational strategies) lay a significant foundation of information for the motivational strategies that ask the key public to act in some way.

As with objectives, it may not be necessary to have a separate informational strategy. If a public is already sufficiently educated and is latently ready to act, necessary information can be carried by the motivational strategy to avoid the risk of fragmenting your strategies and messages. All motivational strategies will contain some information messages either in separate tactics or within each tactic. A tactic that appeals for a citizen's vote will almost always include some information



CHANNEL

The conduit or medium through which messages are sent to a specific public to accomplish a specific purpose.

to justify the action. Your job is to determine whether a separate informational strategy is necessary for that public. If there is a significant lack of knowledge and understanding, you probably need an informational strategy to lay a foundation before you can implement strategies to motivate behavior. If the information is already pervasive and people just need to be reminded, the informational tactics within a motivational strategy will be sufficient.

For example, many people still do not understand that many mental illnesses — like depression — have a physiological cause that must be addressed with medication. Any effort to motivate people with mental illness to see a doctor would require creating a better informed public environment. But to motivate people to give blood, you may only need to tell them where and when to show up. Virtually everyone understands the need and the process.

As you know, objectives always require a metric of some kind. Each objective must specify improvement that can be measured. The action identified in a public-specific strategy may also be stated in measurable terms. While not all strategies will detail the action this specifically, it may be necessary for some to do so. If a campaign supporting a local municipal bond requires 55 percent of the vote to pass, public-specific strategies may break that overall percentage down into manageable pieces for each public. A 55 percent overall vote may translate to 85 percent of business leaders, 65 percent of white-collar workers, 45 percent of blue-collar workers and 58 percent of stay-at-home parents. The strategies for each public may include these specific measurements to support the overall objective.

Choosing strategic channels

Determining the right channel or group of channels to send the message in a strategy is dependent upon both the message itself and the public being targeted. Take a look around. Some marketing and communications strategies have become so pervasive in our society that we don't give them a second thought. What has become the almost exclusive strategy to market beer to an age-segmented male audience? The primary strategy is to use humor and celebrity athletes, and the channel is to use sporting events to deliver beer-drinking messages to that target public. This channel has literally hundreds of potential tactics to carry the message. What is the predominant fundraising strategy of your local United Way? It is an annual campaign that leverages workplace peer pressure. The main channel is workplace communication from which you can select specific tactics such as personal invitations from management, department competitions, posters and personalized emails. United Way annual campaign messages are focused at a specific public with the ability to give using tactics that overlap and reinforce one another to accomplish the purpose.

Another example is an objective to double participation in educational programs for disabled children. Parents of disabled children would be a key public. They would require an informational strategy to inform them of the resources available and a motivational strategy to persuade them to tap into these resources.



NASCAR driver Kasey Kahne watches cars practice at the Food City 500 race in Bristol, Tenn.

MATRIX APPLIED

Message design, strategies and tactics

Once the Arizona State Department of Health has identified which key publics need to be motivated to meet the challenge faced by the recent outbreak of bubonic plague in rural areas, the state must develop effective message design and delivery for each public. This example will cover message design, strategies and tactics for outdoor recreationalists.

OUTDOOR RECREATIONALISTS' MESSAGE DESIGN

Primary message one: You can have many more seasons of outdoor fun by practicing smart plague prevention.

Secondary messages:

- Bubonic plague is a deadly disease transmitted by fleas that are often carried by animals and rodents in rural areas. This plague is believed to be the cause of the Black Death that swept through Europe in the 14th century.
- The plague has been found in rodents living in rural areas of the state.
- To stay healthy and safe, always use insect repellent containing DEET applied to both skin and clothing when in the outdoors. Stay away from debris and other areas where rodents may hide. Never touch or handle wild animals or rodents. Wear protective clothing as appropriate.
- Tell your friends about the outbreak, and encourage them to prevent the spread of the plague.
- Go to www.AZfightsplague.org for more information.

Primary message two: Know the symptoms of plague infection and seek immediate medical attention if you have any symptoms. Your life depends upon it.

Secondary messages:

- Plague manifests itself with flu-like symptoms such as aches, fever and chills.
- The most obvious symptom of bubonic plague is an infection of the lymph glands, which become swollen and painful.
- Without treatment, bubonic plague kills about two out of three infected humans.
- People potentially infected with the plague need immediate treatment and should be given antibiotics within 24 hours of the first symptoms to prevent death.
- Plague can be successfully treated with antibiotics if caught early.
- Tell your friends and encourage them to immediately see a doctor if they have symptoms.
- Go to www.AZfightsplague.org for more information.

OUTDOOR RECREATIONALISTS' MESSAGE DELIVERY

Strategy one: Raise awareness among outdoor recreationalists of the bubonic plague threat and prevention through retailers of recreation products and rental equipment outlets.

Tactics:

1. Letter from state health director and governor explaining threat and asking for their cooperation and participation in an awareness and prevention campaign.
2. Follow-up calls to retailers and rental outlets to encourage participation in the AZ Fights Plague campaign.
3. Information kits containing:
 - a. Posters to be displayed in stores.
 - b. Flyers to be distributed as bag stuffers with each purchase.
 - c. Fact sheet for employees with suggested preventive measures and a list of suggested products.
4. Links to participating retailers on the www.AZfightsplague.org website and Facebook page.

Strategy two: Raise awareness among outdoor recreationalists of the risk of plague in certain areas through targeted recreational venues.

Tactics:

1. Signs prominently placed at trailheads, campsites and other recreational venues with QR code link to AZ Fights Plague website.
2. Posters at fee stations and information booths.
3. Flyers distributed by park rangers and venue employees at fee stations, information booths and park shops and restaurants.
4. Information and AZ Fights Plague links on official BLM, Forest Service and state and National Park Services reservation and permit websites as part of the purchase process.

Strategy three: Use social media to motivate outdoor recreationalists to employ plague prevention behaviors and seek immediate medical treatment when necessary.

Tactics:

1. Launch official Arizona Fights Plague website at www.AZfightsplague.org, which includes:
 - a. Fact sheet about bubonic plague.
 - b. Map showing areas where plague has been confirmed.
 - c. Preventive measures checklist.
 - d. Bubonic plague infection warning signs.
 - e. Medical treatment options.

(Continued)

Message design, strategies and tactics (continued)

- f. Link to YouTube AZ Fights Plague video.
- g. Infographic about plague risks, prevention and how to identify symptoms.
- h. FAQs.
- i. Participating retailer links with downloadable posters and flyers.
- j. Links to recreationalists' blog posts.
2. Set up Facebook page featuring news and information (similar to website) on plague and plague prevention linking to participating retailers and rental outlets.
3. Smart media release to recreational bloggers and local TV/cable recreational shows on plague, symptoms, treatment and prevention.
4. Links to Facebook page and official plague website on state and county venue sites, as well as on websites of groups, clubs and associations organized around outdoor recreational activities such as four-wheeling, rock climbing, hiking and mountain biking.
5. YouTube video about plague prevention and warning signs, which can be shared through social media channels.
6. Infographic about plague risks, prevention and how to identify symptoms.

An informational strategy for this public would be to increase awareness of the resources available to parents of disabled children through a health fair sponsored by the state that showcases the services available to them. Tactics would probably include things like printed materials, videos, websites, Facebook groups and other tactics available at or publicized by the fair.

A motivational strategy would be to persuade parents of disabled children to sign up for one or more of the state's free health services through one-on-one consultations with health care professionals. Tactics for this strategy might include email invitations to meet, referrals from health care professionals and an in-home consultation sign-up at the health fair.

As we've already seen, opinion leader influence is best exerted by people the parents perceive to be operating credibly in a relevant issue environment. In the above example, nurses and other health care providers would have high credibility. Peers — in this case, other parents with disabled children — would also have very high credibility. Volunteer PTA leaders may also wield significant influence with this key public. Design strategies and tactics so that you can use opinion leaders to both inform and motivate your key publics.

The channel stipulated in a strategy should be the best way to get the message to the public for the outlined purpose (e.g., health fair, workplace communication or opinion leaders). In order to be sufficiently planned, each strategy requires the development of specific tactics within the channel (communication tools like signage

and T-shirts at staged events, brochures and personalized emails in the workplace and meetings with printed collateral material or tablet presentations for opinion leaders).

How channels help focus your tactics

The tactics specify the communication tools within the channel more precisely. In the previous example, one of your tactics might be to create an app for parents of disabled children that explains all of the services available to them. Other tactics could be an infographic, video or printed brochure. Perhaps a follow-up tactic would also be helpful, such as an email survey following the fair to see how beneficial it was and what parents learned.

By focusing tactics within a specific channel, you ensure that members of the key public will receive the message at least once, but likely more than once. Such focused overlap makes it more certain the message will be selected to be perceived, retained and acted upon. The latest research suggests that a person must be exposed to a message three or four times before it is remembered.

The point is that you must carefully consider your public in determining the best ways to reach them. How a particular public best receives a certain type of message for a specific purpose is the relevant question. You must also carefully consider the message being sent to ensure the channels and media selected are appropriate for the message.

Declining importance of mass media channels

It is critically important to recognize that the effective and extensive use of the mass media to communicate with target audiences mostly belongs to past decades. While mass media can still be highly effective in generating name recognition, their information-disseminating utility is not as great as before because of the proliferation of options and declining trust.

In the Golin/Harris 2002 Trust Index, the communications business sectors all had negative trust scores (Golin, p. 240). Of them all, public relations had the least of the negative scores (-31), followed by journalism (-38) and then advertising/marketing (-41). The situation isn't much better for the media today. In the 2014 Edelman Trust Barometer, media ranked seventh among eight industry categories on trust. Only banks came in behind the media.

While mass media channels have their place, in an environment where media are not trusted, it is unwise to rely on them too heavily. In fact, with peers or "someone like me" being among the most credible sources of information today, social media has largely overtaken traditional media as the best channel for messages.

We are accustomed to segmenting publics for the purpose of persuasion. We have long recognized that identifying a group of people who share common interests and lifestyles (and who may interact with one another) is the best way to devise an appeal that will motivate them. Now, segmentation is required not just to persuade, but to reach our



desired publics. Readership of traditional newspapers is declining and almost non-existent among Gen-X and Gen-Y publics. But even those who still read a newspaper have increased their selectivity in what they read and how they read. Most broad audience magazines have disappeared. The final edition of Newsweek, a popular weekly current affairs magazine, hit newsstands on Dec. 31, 2012. Some of these broad audience publications are still available online, but many have been replaced by highly segmented special-interest and professional or trade publications.

The explosion in cable and satellite television technology is already creating highly segmented viewership, which will continue to increase. In 2013, NBC Universal launched Esquire Network for communicators and marketers looking to reach men outside of sports. The new network is aiming at the elusive upscale man, metropolitan and educated, or as Esquire magazine President David Granger calls them, “the high-normal American male.” Another example of the proliferation of channels is the fact that there has been a channel devoted exclusively to tennis for more than a decade. And radio has long been segmented by listeners’ preferences for differing formats and music.

The lesson to be learned is that mass media (which arguably never did reach a mass public) are declining in their ability to reach our publics with the messages we need sent. The good news is that as a medium becomes more specific and segmented, it becomes a better buy in terms of reaching the public segments we need to target. So while our jobs may be a bit more difficult in that we need to exercise a greater range of creativity and expertise in using differentiated communication tools, we are promised higher rates of success because of the emergence of social media and the narrowing of mass media audiences.

New technologies and the Internet

The widespread use of technologies has made the digital production and distribution of communication materials (such as infographics, videos and blogs) relatively easy and inexpensive. The range of diversified and alternative media has, as a result, burgeoned. Mobile phones, tablets and laptop computers have all become ubiquitous devices for viewing, creating and sharing information. Most information is consumed electronically — and mobile devices now provide more news to people than laptops or newspapers. News aggregators like Digg, Google News, Pulse and News360 have fueled the use of mobile devices for information consumption because they reduce the need to navigate by doing the leg-

work for you. These aggregators pull together syndicated Web content from online newspapers, blogs, podcasts and video blogs or vlogs in one location for easy viewing. The rise of mobile apps has also made it easier to access information of interest to users.

The opportunities provided by the Internet include a growing range of options to creatively communicate messages. As in the early days of radio, sponsors and website owners now create online programming — similar to soaps and sitcoms — to secure vehicles for product promotion. Skype, ooVoo, Google Chat and other services now make online video conferencing and chatting easy. WebEx and other software platforms have proliferated the use of **webinars**. And affinity portals, websites



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WEBINAR/WEB CONFERENCE

An online conference or workshop where participants can all see and hear a presentation simultaneously and interact with the presenter and each other.

visited often by a particular group of fans or alumni, are an excellent way to reach some targeted publics.

Online newsrooms are now a standard tool used to provide information not only to journalists, but increasingly to opinion leaders and other information-hungry consumers. Electronic newsletters offer specialized information on virtually any subject — from finance to sports to crossword puzzles. Chat rooms, electronic email lists, online forums and many other Internet features are effective tactics to be considered. Smart use of search engines, QR codes and website links can also provide opportunities to communicate additional messages to publics predisposed to be receptive.

While making it easier, faster and less expensive to send messages to certain publics, the Internet also makes it easier for opposing publics, or just someone with a grudge, to attack your organization or products online. Especially with social media, the backlash can be brutal. It is virtually impossible to block or even monitor everything anyone wants to post regarding your organization. And there is no filter or screen for lies and misrepresentations. No one asks whether the attack is credible — sometimes not even the media whose responsibility it is to ask. It is tremendously difficult to deal with false information that can be published so broadly, freely and anonymously. This dilemma underscores the importance of continual trust-building efforts among all key publics.



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Citizen journalism and blogs

The astronomical growth of blogs has created new subject-matter experts and opinion leaders that in many cases have far surpassed the influence of mainstream media. Public relations agencies often give prominent bloggers better media credentials than mainstream journalists to attend conventions, product launches and industry events like fashion week. For example, one 16-year-old male fashion blogger was recently seated in front of professional journalists from papers such as USA Today and Daily News at New York Fashion Week. This is because top bloggers have a bigger following than the mass media outlets among a niche group of consumers that really matter. The bloggers are also more likely to be trusted. A 2013 report showed that 81 percent of U.S. consumers trust advice and information they read on blogs, and 61 percent say they have made a purchase based on a blog post.

As of 2012, there were more than 170 million blogs. In the U.S. alone, there are now more than 31 million bloggers. The rapid rise of citizen journalism has been driven by three factors: open publishing, collaborative editing and distributed content. Blogging is more than a pastime. It has grown, for some, into a lucrative and rewarding career. Learning how to effectively pitch content and work with bloggers is an important part of today's media relations.

Social media and the way we connect

Despite all the advances in technology and the extreme segmentation of entertainment and news sources, social media has had and will increasingly have the biggest

TIPS FROM THE PROS

Building a successful blog

Brittany Watson Jepsen, a professional interior designer and creator of the popular blog, *The House that Lars Built*, tips you off on how to create a successful blog.

Starting a blog from scratch can feel like a daunting task, but it doesn't have to. One way to find out if you are up to the challenge is to try guest blogging for other sites. This will not only strengthen your writing skills but also help you know if blogging is something you're passionate about. When you know you're ready to dive in, follow these five tips to improve the likelihood of your blog taking off.

1. **Find a niche.** Choose a topic that you really enjoy as well as something that you know a lot about or are willing to learn about.
 - Become a subject-matter expert.
 - Do some market research to discover what's already out there and to see what's missing.
 - Leverage your background and training.
2. **Create a unique and cohesive brand.** Decide on an overall theme that you want to carry through long-term.
 - Develop a look and feel with colors, pictures, fonts, logo, tagline and design elements that support your theme.
 - Write your bio in a way that emphasizes the theme and your special expertise.
 - Think about your theme every time you post. If something isn't relevant to your brand, don't write about it.
3. **Keep to a schedule.** Give your readers information about what to expect at different times.
 - Create an editorial calendar for the year that includes your vision of what main events and topics you'd like to cover.
 - Build short-range calendars that have daily, weekly and monthly topics and scheduled posts.
 - Stick to your editorial schedule so your readers know what's coming.
4. **Know your audience.** Have a good idea of the type of person you're writing to.
 - Use analytics to pull together your audience demographics: gender, age, location and income level.
 - Ask questions of your readers, conduct occasional surveys on your blog and regularly read your comments to learn what your readers' goals are, what excites them and how to best cater your content to them.
5. **Use social media to amplify your reach.** Strategic promotion of your blog is crucial to your success.
 - Pick the right mix of social media channels such as Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, Facebook and others to get the word out.
 - Strategically time your posts to maximize exposure among your social media users and demographics. Experiment with different times to get the best reach.
 - Use appropriate hashtags including those that are currently trending or tied to your brand.

impact on how we interact and communicate. A writer at Pollock Communications, an independent agency specializing in health and wellness, summed up the impact of social media this way:

“Social media has become an integral part of our everyday lives. We find and share our new favorite clothing and food brands on blogs; we meet people with similar interests on Facebook; we get our news in one sentence on Twitter; we share a picture of that awesome eggs benedict we had for brunch on Instagram and we can even find our future husband or wife on dating sites. We have an amazing ability to be connected, stay in-the-know and share our own interests, ideas and opinions on just about everything.”

As public relations and marketing practitioners, it's important to understand how social media is evolving. We need to grasp how people are connecting with each other, how information is passed among individuals and groups, how things go viral and how trust is built and maintained between people who may never meet in person. Much of the information we considered private only a few years ago is now broadly shared. Most people spend a significant portion of their week on social media “working” to stay connected. It almost feels like keeping up with at least a few social media channels is a daily chore. The proliferation of and accessibility of personal information through social media has changed so many things that it may be hard to remember a world without it. One of the changes that may have gone unnoticed is the higher premium that is now placed on honesty and truthfulness. We leave a pretty visible trail across social media that includes our beliefs, interests and behaviors. We are now all, in some sense, public figures.

We'll explore how to effectively use social media for message delivery in Chapter 9. But suffice it to say, social media should be considered an important and dynamic channel with untapped opportunities to explore creative and innovative tactics. This is particularly the case when your strategy involves constructing grass-roots and word-of-mouth campaigns.

Tactics

The first thing that students and many practitioners do when presented with a challenge is jump to tactics. It is what communicators and marketers do the best — and the worst. We're pretty good at developing catchy slogans, social media contests, fun special events and attention-grabbing visuals. The problem is not a lack of ideas for interesting tactics; it is rather not enough careful calculation to ensure the tactics will accomplish your strategies and objectives. Tactics, or communication tools, always need to be approached in the context of your research and the problem/opportunity you're tackling. Following the matrix approach and developing tactics only after your objectives, publics, messages and strategies have been determined will ensure they are aligned to help you accomplish your goal. The creativity required of good tactics must be carefully channeled to ensure strategic alignment of your campaign.

Tactics as strategic tools

Tactics are the tools — the hammer, nails, lumber and paint — you need to build a successful campaign. You can also think of them as the tasks you must perform in your campaign. The activities you undertake to implement your campaign are all tactics. Everything that costs money, aside from research and measurement, is a tactic. This is why the items that show up on your calendar and in your budget are all tactics. So regardless of how well you have planned your strategy, the success of your campaign will ultimately rest on the implementation of your tactics. The majority of business strategies fail not because they were ill-conceived, but because there was a breakdown in implementation. Their tactics either did not support the strategies or they were poorly executed. To avoid this scenario, we strongly recommend you use strategy briefs for all of your tactics (see Figure 8.2). **Strategy briefs** are concise design tools that help you plan each tactic around your strategy. We'll explain more about them later in this chapter.



STRATEGY BRIEF

An analytical tool that infuses strategic planning into the creation of effective tactics.

Difference between strategies and tactics

One of the hardest things to work through when learning the matrix is the difference between strategies and tactics. It's simple, really, when you think about it this way: A strategy is an approach, and a tactic is a task. You need many tasks to accomplish a strategy. A helpful question to ask is, "Can the tool be broken down any more?" If the answer is no, it's a tactic. Mass media, for example, can be broken down into many different tactics — news release, radio actuality, public service announcement, op-ed piece — so it's a channel within a strategy. A brochure, on the other hand, can't be broken down any further so it's a tactic. A special event is trickier. It can be either a strategy or a tactic. If it's a large event with many elements to it such as a conference or the FIFA World Cup, it's probably a strategy. If your special event is more straightforward and simple, like an employee awards ceremony, it's probably best treated as a tactic.

Diversity of tactics

In addition to not always tying tactics to strategy, another problem has been the tendency to rely on the same tactics or communication tools over and over. Although there is nothing wrong with reusing tactics that work well with particular publics, communicators should be careful not to fall into the routine of the processionary caterpillars described earlier. Using a tactic repeatedly sometimes causes us to select that tactic without thinking about its appropriateness to get a particular message to a particular public for a particular purpose. We fall into a pattern of selecting tactics because we've always used them, or because the tactic worked before.

Remember to review the analytical process to select communication tools each time you design messages and strategies for publics. Change is one of the only constants in business and marketing. Publics change, circumstances change, purposes change, messages change and communication channels change. If communicators stay with the same plan for the same publics without recognizing the constantly changing environment, communication efforts will miss their targets. A practitioner will be left (possibly without a job) wondering why it didn't work this time since it had always worked before.



Figure 8.2 Strategy brief — news release

Key public (brief profile including motivating self-interests):

Secondary publics (if any):

Action desired from public(s):

Proposed headline:

Proposed lead:

News hook:

SEO terms (10-20 key words or phrases):

Primary messages (two-five short statements, similar to sound bites)

Secondary messages (bulleted supporting data, facts, examples, stories, testimonials, etc.)

1. Primary:

Secondary: •
•
•

2. Primary:

Secondary: •
•
•

3. Primary:

Secondary: •
•
•

Opinion leaders and how they will be used (testimonials, quotes, etc.):

Photos/charts/graphics (if any):

Where and when distributed:

Additional uses after publication:

Timeline/deadline:

Tip: Use the strategy brief for an email news pitch to send your news release to targeted reporters, bloggers, etc.

The other inherent danger in using the same tools continually is stifling creativity. Communicators may ignore new creative and innovative ways to get messages to publics. But in a society flooded with messages in the typical media channels, creative and innovative delivery of messages is necessary to cut through the message clutter to reach our targets. Remember the challenge is twofold: You must motivate the members of your key public to choose to perceive the message (and retain it), and to choose to act upon it. Both require an appeal to the public's self-interests, but self-interest appeals alone will not get you over the perception hurdle. You may not find a solution to your specific need in textbooks that teach how to design communication tactics. You must be able to create innovative delivery systems and then follow the principles of persuasive communication theory to send your messages in creative ways that command attention.

The diversity of tactics available is limited only by the imagination. Nevertheless, there are abundant numbers of books, articles and other references that identify a variety of some of the standard communication tools and their appropriate uses. We refer you to a broad range of easily available resources (some of which are identified in this chapter's references and additional readings) that suggest dozens of tactics and instructions on their preparation and use. Because of the vast resources which give specific direction on preparing and using communication tools, it is not our purpose here to review specific tactics. Rather, it is more important to provide a process to assist communication professionals in determining how to select the tactics most appropriate for a specific public, purpose and message.

Most popular introductory textbooks in communication segment tools and tactics into written, spoken and visual categories. But today's communication professionals focused on key publics and messages recognize that, in the radically changed communication environment, such divisions are artificial, especially considering that the most effective tactics combine at least two, and often all three, of those senses. Further, that type of categorization puts undue emphasis on the medium or channel, with less thought of the purpose, the target audience and the message itself. Such categorization may be partially responsible for communications practice that is excessively tactic-driven rather than strategic.

It might be more sensible to address tactics in a grid (see Figure 8.3) with one axis ranging from personal communication to mass-produced messages, and the other measuring the level of interaction (two-way communication) from highly interactive to noninteractive. The grid visually depicts how we design tactics for a specific public. When we need a highly interactive approach, we also make the tactic highly personal — increasing the likelihood of selection and retention. The other end of the grid forms a megaphone that depicts a wide distribution of a message with little or no **interactivity**. For example, if the public and the specific message to be delivered requires a personal or peer influence, the tactics will be designed to invoke personal interaction and may include phone calls, Facebook posts or handwritten notes. If, however, a breadth of coverage rather than personal influence is needed, a medium with a broader reach to publics may be more appropriate, including tactics such as radio public service announcements, podcasts or news releases. In the middle of the grid would be highly segmented media like special interest magazines, tweets to followers and blog posts.

Identifying communication tactics in this fashion helps us select the best communication tools for the public, purpose and message. Otherwise, the medium

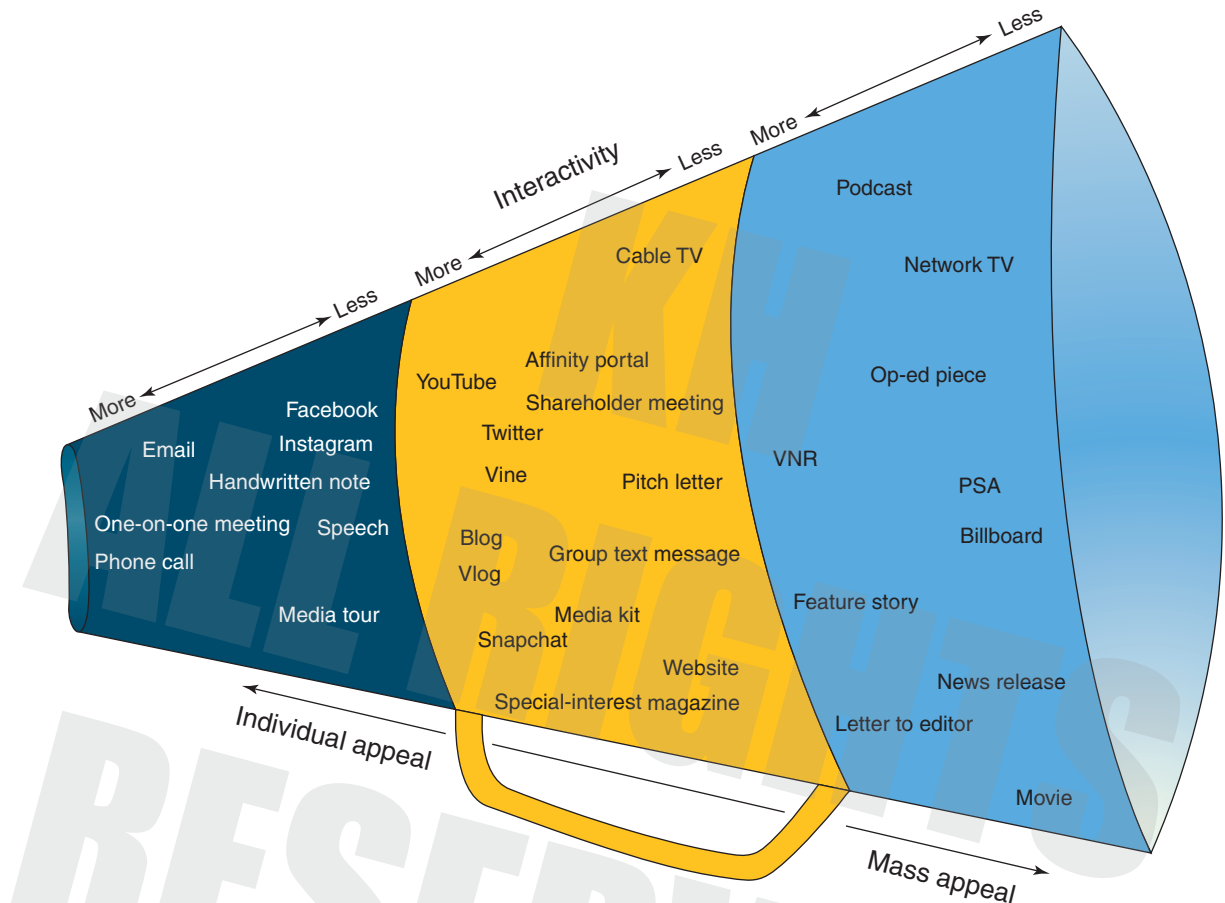


INTERACTIVITY

The degree to which the tactic provides interaction between the sender of the message and the receiver.



Figure 8.3
Interactivity grid of communication tactics



(print/broadcast/Internet/social media) and budget tend to determine what tactics we use rather than which tool would best accomplish our purpose. Using the grid, tactics fall into three categories: highly personal and interactive, segmented and moderately interactive and mass-produced mass media.

Highly personal and interactive

The basis of the relational or cooperative community approach to public relations is the overwhelming power of personal and interactive communication. The personal influence of opinion leaders and peers is particularly important in a persuasion campaign. It is in this area of tactics that creativity and innovation are most needed. This type of tactic is very specifically tailored to the public (usually made up of identifiable individuals) and personalized in its delivery. It is has typically been direct human-to-human communication, often handwritten, spoken one-on-one and/or delivered in person by an influential. However, social media now makes this

MINI CASE

TACO BELL

What's in your taco?

BACKSTORY

Taco Bell's dominance of the fast food market — as the sixth largest chain in the U.S. and holding 52 percent of the Mexican fast food market — came into question when a class-action lawsuit claimed its meat wasn't beef. Its stock price, sales and reputation dipped as the claims received national media attention, requiring a rapid and aggressive response.

KEY FACTS

- Beasley Allen, an Alabama law firm, filed suit in January 2011 alleging Taco Bell meat contained less than 35 percent ground beef.
- Following the lawsuit, stocks fell approximately \$1.80 per share — an \$82.8 million decline in shareholder value.
- Taco Bell's YouGov BrandIndex score — which measures reputation — dropped from 25.2 to 11.7 the week following the lawsuit. The national BrandIndex average was 12.2.

How would you respond?

TACO BELL'S STRATEGY

Taco Bell, knowing the claim was inaccurate, responded aggressively by attacking the accuser. The company demanded an apology from the lawyers and threatened legal action for the false claims. It stood firmly behind its products, even revealing its taco meat recipe: 88 percent USDA-inspected quality beef; 3 percent to 5 percent water; 3 percent to 5 percent spices; and 3 percent to 5 percent other ingredients, such as oats for texture and taste.

Taco Bell immediately took out full-page advertisements in national papers such as The New York Times, USA Today and the Wall Street Journal, as well as in regional papers including The Boston Globe and Chicago Tribune. It spent \$3 million to \$4 million in ads to tell the truth about its product. Taco Bell President Greg Creed was a fixture on major TV media outlets defending Taco Bell's reputation and product quality.

Creed also appeared in YouTube videos addressing the suit. One video was viewed 170,000 times by mid-February. Coupons for free tacos were distributed via Facebook and Twitter, allowing consumers to test the meat themselves. Taco Bell engaged in search engine optimization efforts and purchased sponsored Web links to control



the online story. It also created a website containing the campaign's ads, press releases, YouTube videos and detailed ingredient information.

RESULTS

- Within a few weeks, the stock price had fully recovered, and six months later the stock was up \$9 per share.
- After the lawsuit was dropped in April 2011, Taco Bell repeated many of the same tactics to demand a public apology from the firm. Trust increased immediately.
- Taco Bell's BrandIndex score rose to 20.5 by May and continued to rise.

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kind of interaction possible, to some degree, digitally, and to a much larger group of “friends.”

A personal delivery system engenders interactivity. Interactivity is important in several ways. First, interaction is a basis of strong relationships and cooperation. Second, as discussed in the chapter on persuasion, it is a key to the crystallization of opinion. Third, interactivity provides a personal commitment and stimulus for action. For these reasons, this kind of tactic is highly effective. Nevertheless, it is also time-consuming and often expensive. The advantages must be weighed carefully against the costs (time and money) to determine the best circumstances in which to use personal communication channels and tools. Although not quite as personal, social media channels offer a low-cost way for many opinion leaders to connect with key publics. The ease of sharing through social media makes these tools less labor-intensive and less expensive. The tradeoff for those benefits is that you must largely relinquish control of the message and its distribution.

In some situations, it's possible to create the one-on-one communication hierarchically. A good example is United Way's workplace campaign. Companies that support the United Way in their community by running workplace campaigns identify a company representative who is trained by local volunteers to hold an employee information meeting and to subsequently personally ask each individual in the company to support local community social service efforts through monthly payroll deductions. Often the company provides an endorsement of the campaign by making a corporate, or leadership, donation. In larger organizations, the company representative trains representatives in each department to do the personal asking. This hierarchical system uses opinion leadership, personal influentials and one-on-one communication supported by collateral materials to reach hundreds of thousands of people within a community. Nevertheless, it is highly labor intensive, even though the laborers are volunteers.

Segmented and moderately interactive

Tactics in the middle of the grid — segmented and moderately interactive — combine elements of mass and personal as well as interactivity (see Figure 8.3). Although not nearly as personal, this category still provides a highly targeted message to a larger target audience than personal communication typically can. These tactics use, or sometimes establish, a channel that is specifically designed for an already segmented public. Good examples include blogs and special interest magazines that are clearly designed and targeted to meet the needs of a very specific group. Other examples might be a shareholder meeting for all stockholders which, in some companies, can be thousands of people, or mobile phone apps providing a specific kind of service. The segmentation of cable channels also allows for the effective use of this kind of tactic.

These types of tactics are more interactive than the mass media. Because the target audience is an interest group, it tends to be more responsive to surveys, and more active in initiating feedback, phone calls and emails. This environment is perfect for communicators to build in response mechanisms that provide the interactivity



necessary for symmetry in communication with the organization's key publics.

Further, because the segmented channel has already identified the needs of its audience, it is a fairly simple matter for the public relations practitioner to tap into and help satisfy those needs. Such channels are often shorter on funding than traditional media channels, and are therefore hungry for material that honestly meets the needs of their audiences. It is to the practitioner's advantage to identify such channels that target the organization's key publics and to include them within the plan to build strong, mutually beneficial relationships.

Most Internet tactics, including websites, typically fall in this moderately interactive and semi-personal category. Websites today are prime real estate for most organizations. They represent the company to its stakeholders. They are as important as a storefront or headquarters building and represent the primary communications hub for many organizations. As a result, websites must be carefully planned and intuitively organized to communicate messages to key publics. One public, journalists, for example, should be able to quickly find an organization's online newsroom. Each element of the website should be mapped out like a separate tactic with particular publics, purposes and messages in mind. From frequently asked questions (FAQs) to corporate histories and product information pages, the needs and self-interests of various key publics should drive the messages for each element and their delivery. Journalists get a specific message aimed at them from the online newsroom. Investors get their own message from the sometimes password-protected elements targeted at them. Consumers get their specific message from product information pages on the website. The various key publics access the website to meet their needs. Their needs are all different and their messages public-specific.

The savvy practitioner will always remember that today's publics differ from publics of the past in that they have much more control over access to information. Past practitioners had the control over channels, messages and their delivery. With the rise of Internet communication and particularly the explosion of social media, our publics now control how, when and where they receive messages, and they are also in a new role as senders of messages. They vacillate between being hungry for information and tuning it out because of overload. And they control the switch. In this environment, public relations has become the content provider, giving rise to the mantra "content is king." Such an environment reinforces the necessity of public-specific messages (or content) delivered by channels and tactics our publics themselves choose to access.

Mass-produced mass media

Although we pronounced mass media nearly dead, mass-produced and mass media tactics still have their place in some campaigns. The use of electronic media to broadly disseminate messages will undoubtedly keep this category alive for years to come. The technology facilitates broad coverage of certain publics that probably would not be reached any other way. Nevertheless, it is important to remember



PUMA hosts annual shareholder meeting in Nuremberg, Germany.

the advantages and disadvantages of specific mass media channels and to use them appropriately. Further, just because we use mass media does not mean we are targeting a mass audience. It is just as important to segment publics and design public-specific messages for mass media as it is for segmented media.

Mass media can provide immediacy, credibility and a strong impact. Nevertheless, practitioners often take a passive approach to mass media placement. While we can't directly control news placements, there are communication tools available that help us be more active in building relationships with media. Active corporate Twitter feeds, YouTube channels, satellite media tours, syndicated columns or programs, B-roll accompanying video news releases and other techniques can help get a message used more readily than it might otherwise have been. Such tactics can be quite effective if you remember a few important guidelines:

- Become familiar with your media contacts and work to meet their needs as they meet the needs of their audiences. Be familiar with their past work and what kind of material they prefer. Your job is to help make their jobs easier.
- Know the media market or audiences and adapt your material to meet their needs. Don't expect media to accept copy or programming that is blatantly self-serving. You must provide solid news.
- Localize your material. Whether it is a video news release, a feature story or a public service announcement, unless it specifically targets the local community it will not be used. For special interest media — print, broadcast and online — the community is not geographical, but it is still a community.
- Provide quality media products. Use their writing and editing style, and provide error-free copy well in advance of deadlines. Provide a consistent point of contact and train executives and experts for interviews. Select interviewees who are knowledgeable and personable.
- Don't call a news conference unless you have a story that legitimately requires one. If it can be handled in a news release, statement or interview, do so.

Sponsored content and social responsibility

The digital disruption is not just upending traditional editorial coverage — it is also changing how news and information are funded. The price of digital advertising has declined by 75 percent in the last two years. Media outlets now generate more revenue from circulation than from advertising. And a growing percentage of the content we consume is paid for and produced by public relations and marketing people. This **sponsored content** differs from the advertorial placements of a decade ago in that it is as well-read as regular editorial. Further, brands and companies are increasingly looked upon to address societal needs. A recent example of this occurred when 13 brands disassociated themselves with the Los Angeles Clippers after racist comments were made by owner Donald Sterling. The brands acted on their own and more quickly than the NBA, which eventually banned Sterling from the league. CVS Pharmacy recently announced it would stop selling tobacco products — a highly profitable segment of its business — because the product conflicts with its mission. And Gap recently raised its minimum wage for all employees to \$9 per hour with plans to jump to \$10 per hour in June 2015. These organizations all moved to put societal needs ahead of money (Edelman, 2014).



SPONSORED CONTENT/NATIVE ADVERTISING

Online editorial content paid for by a company that is designed to feel more like regular editorial content so it is less intrusive.

What's happening now is a convergence of marketing, advertising, digital and public relations into what Richard Edelman called, "communications marketing." This is storytelling through earned, owned and paid media channels. Edelman explained, "The goal of communications is to provide information that moves people to action. I believe that the market is beginning to understand that marketing has things backwards. We believe in communications marketing because it is based on substantive storytelling."

There is little doubt mass media has a role to play in this emerging paradigm. Communicators will continue using mass media extensively for message dissemination. Make sure you establish strong media relationships based on honesty, trust and ethical practice to enhance your ability to use mass media to target key organizational publics.



Pedestrians walk past CVS Pharmacy in New York City, NY.

Other considerations in selecting tactics

Although tactic selection should depend primarily on the public and the best way to reach them to accomplish your purpose, the content of the message will also be a determinant. For example, detailed messages with lots of information usually require a printed or online medium that allows a receiver the luxury of rereading or studying. Similarly, broadcast messages must typically be simple and highly memorable because they cannot be reviewed at will unless they are also posted on the Internet. In both of these cases, the content and length or complexity of the message are factors in media selection.

Further, the practitioner should consider the degree to which he/she controls the medium selected. Heitpas discusses two types of media channels: controlled and uncontrolled. Controlled channels allow the practitioner to dictate the content, timing and placement or distribution. Examples are paid advertising, trade shows and brochures. Such tactics are entirely designed and written by the communicator. No intervening gatekeepers affect the final product and its placement. Nevertheless, that advantage is tempered by a typically higher cost and lower credibility. Publics are well aware that controlled tactics convey exactly what the organization paying for the space wants. There is no doubt in the consumer's mind that when he/she is reading paid advertising, that the advertiser is telling only one side of the story to motivate consumer purchase.

On the other hand, uncontrolled channels are typically more credible because of the intervention of a third party, most often a reporter or blogger. They are usually less costly because much of the work is done by the "objective" third party. But the practitioner is unable to dictate the exact copy or message, placement or timing. The risk that the message may be buried or distorted is the price paid for credibility gained through perceived third-party objectivity.

Finally, you should remember that combinations of tactics are often preferable to tactics used individually or in isolation. If you determine that a critical company

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Matthew McConaughey at the 86th Academy Awards at Dolby Theater on March 2, 2014, in Los Angeles.

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2012 Republican presidential campaign rally in Henderson, Nev.

policy statement included in a press kit may not be fully appreciated by key opinion leaders unless you use a more personally interactive tactic, mail it to them separately with a handwritten note from an organizational executive or some other influential indicating key points that may specifically interest them. If you think your key investors need more personal attention regarding the latest stock jump, email them a copy of the news clipping with an FYI corner notation from the president of the company. There are a number of ways to “personalize” existing mass and segmented media messages.

On the other hand, some personal and interactive messages may be made mass through media coverage, editorial comments or online posting. However, use care when deciding whether to turn a personal message into a mass message. It may not only dilute the appeal, but it may alienate those originally touched by the personal message.

Some communication tools lend themselves to all three categories of tactics. A special event, for example, may be designed to be personal and interactive (like a private dinner for a major donor), segmented and moderately interactive (like a media tour of facilities or an awards ceremony) or mass-produced mass media (like the Democratic or Republican national conventions). Turning a special event into a media

event requires that care be taken to stage the event with messaging for the immediate attendees, but it must be packaged in such a way that the messages will also appeal to viewers and listeners. Just remember that even though a special event is organized as a celebration or some other routine commemoration, you’ve wasted the organization’s opportunities and resources if you don’t also use it to convey primary messages to key organizational publics.

Additionally, combining tactics stimulates greater care in assuring they are integrated to support and enhance each other. Using name tags at a staged event can be planned to strategically support other tactics. You might color code the tags to identify separate key publics and prepare separate packets of supporting materials to be distributed

based on nametag color. All tactics should be developed to magnify the effect of other tactics. They should be timed to support and enhance each other. The whole of the tactics supporting any strategy should be greater than the sum of the parts. They are like pieces to a puzzle that must interlock and intertwine for the complete picture to appear.

Creating individual tactics

The process of developing communication tactics must employ creativity and innovation. The Strategic Planning Matrix provides the analytical framework necessary to channel creativity in the planning process. But it is also necessary to channel creativity at the tactical level. Otherwise, the creator may lose the proper focus on public, purpose and message.

Strategy briefs

The secret to maintaining focus in the creative process at the tactical level is to employ an analytical tool used to design the content of a tactic before actually producing it. Strategy briefs have been devised for this purpose to supplement and extend the strategic planning process. Take a minute to study Figure 8.2. Strategy briefs are simple outlines uniquely tailored to the development of a specific tactic. They ask questions and contain categories of information for the strategic planner to complete before beginning work on the specific tool or tactic. They ensure that tactics will be consistent with the overall plan and that all important details are included in the copy or visuals. Similar to an outline used to organize and detail a paper or presentation, the strategy brief is an analytical piece that joins the public, purpose and message in a logical, persuasive fashion.

Each strategy brief begins by identifying the key public, which must be one of the publics identified in the campaign plan and the public for which the strategy supported by the specific tactic was designed. If your strategy brief begins by identifying a public who is not in your strategic plan, then you need to reevaluate. Either you neglected an important public in your plan, or you're wasting time and money on an unnecessary tactic. The strategy brief also states the desired action as well as identifies the key public's self-interest as part of the appeal.

The brief then gets specific in terms of details. Keeping in mind the public and purpose identified at the top, it asks, what are the primary and secondary messages that the key public needs to receive to understand and perform the desired action? These become the copy for your tactic and, in effect, the first draft of the communication tool. The messages are pulled from those you previously designed for this public in step five of the matrix and should be stated specifically enough that another member of your campaign team, your firm or your department in an organization can edit and produce the communication tool without much other information. The messages contain each piece of information necessary to inform the public and motivate them to act. That means, for example, that you must be specific and accurate about dates and times of events you are publicizing, provide contact information for individuals to request more information and include statistics when supporting logical arguments.

After identifying the messages to be used in this product or tactic, the strategy brief requires you to list opinion leaders and how they are used either as part of the messages or in distributing the tactic. For example, in a brochure on personal hygiene for low-income parents, you might ask for testimonials or information from a recognized health care provider. You may also ask nurses at free clinics to distribute the brochure. Both methods use third-party influentials or opinion leaders to strengthen the appeal.

Make sure to include specific details in your strategy brief. When the brain is in the analytical mode, you can determine exactly what information must be included to accomplish your purpose. But when the brain shifts to the creative mode, you may fail to include critical information in the process of creating great copy. You must channel your creativity by knowing the public, purpose and message, and then you must check the resultant creation against the strategy brief that your analytical mind created for effectiveness. The most frequently omitted detail in primary and secondary messages (or copy) is the information that provides a way for the public to do what you have asked them to do. Nothing is more frustrating to people than to be persuaded to act but not be given the information necessary to do so. Provide

a phone number to call, a website to get more information or specific instructions on what to do.

Next, the strategy brief details your distribution plan. If it is a media product, designate each specific media channel (television or radio station, newspaper or other publication) that will receive the tactic. Indicate the delivery method and if any follow-up is required. If it is a brochure or flyer, indicate how it will be distributed. If it is a blog post, tell how you will direct other social media traffic to your post.

Appendix B contains strategy briefs for 23 different tactics. These include tools like a news release, website, special event, infographic and video. Each strategy brief has been appropriately altered to request the specific information needed for that tactic. Although the strategy briefs provided in this text cover a wide range of communication tools, you can create your own brief for any tool you wish to use. Before designing your own strategy briefs, make sure you understand each communication tool or product well enough to custom design your own briefs.

Remember that the strategy brief is an analytical tool used to guide the development of creative products that will support your strategic plan. Each must contain the specific detail that you determined was necessary to inform, persuade and motivate the public to action.

The use of strategy briefs will save you time and frustration in the development of your tactics. You should spend more time developing your strategy briefs than creating the actual tactics. You will find that, if you plan your strategy briefs carefully and completely, your communication tools will always be on target and will take less time and money to create.

Once a communication product (tactic) is completed, you can use the strategy brief to succinctly explain your product's purpose and use. It will demonstrate the quality of your planning and the strategic thought behind the development of each tactic. It also shows your client or manager that the product was the result of systematic planning and thought. Executives will be more assured of the wisdom of committing resources to production when products have been designed to achieve the purpose identified in your campaign to reach goals and objectives already established.

Summary

Messages are the way we get a public's attention and provide the information and motivation people need to act. Primary messages contain what we want a public to do and appeal to its self-interest in doing that. Secondary messages provide all the detail necessary to support the primary message and facilitate the public's accomplishment of your purpose.

Carefully planned strategies and tactics will ensure not only that your messages reach your target publics but also that they motivate a desired action or behavior. Strategies determine which channels are most appropriate to reach key publics. Tactics detail the creative tools designed to convey your messages and solicit action from your key publics. They are the specific tasks that are the implementation of the campaign. Strategy briefs are used to design communication pieces that are consistent with your overall strategy and plans. They also make sure important written and visual details are included and the desired action from key publics is clearly stated.

Because many practitioners often find themselves choosing and implementing the same strategies and tactics over and over, it is important to remember the need for creativity. Additionally, tactics are best chosen by how much interactivity and personalization is required by the strategy. Don't fall into the trap identified in the quote at the beginning of the chapter that reminds us, "Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat." Strategic communication requires creative thinking and implementation, particularly in the planning of strategies and tactics.

Exercises

1. Look up the Gap announcement about raising the minimum wage for its workers. Identify the primary and secondary messages the company used.
2. Next, draft a strategy to communicate the company's new wage policy to Gap employees through social media. Select specific tactics that you feel would be most effective.
3. Watch local news to discover an organization running a campaign to solve a problem or meet a challenge. Try to identify all the strategies and tactics being used to send messages to the publics. Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and tactics, and think about how you might have designed them differently or sent them through different channels to make them more effective.

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