

Political Party Development Training Seminar

Developing Political Party Messages

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Communications Strategy

- Leo Tolstoy said, "*Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.*"
- The lesson is, there is no magic bullet to communications.
- Building a successful party is not the result of doing one thing right, but doing many things right.
- There are, however, proven communications tools (strategies) one can use to effectively develop and deliver messages.

Elements of A Successful Communications Strategy

- Achieves the creation and acceptance of specific images in the minds of the audience.
- Persuades the audience.
- Motivates the audience.
- Differentiates your message from others in the arena.
- Adapts to pre-existing conditions in the political environment.

Communications Strategy

Themes/Sub-messages

Selecting the medium

Framing

PHD

M=EC₃

Issues Matrix

Develop an overarching theme, then create sub-messages directed at specific groups.

Themes and Sub-messages

- Unified theme creates a positive image in the minds of the audience, and ties together the specific messages aimed at groups within your identified winning coalition.
- Simple, positive, incorporates your vision, offers contrast.
- Speaks to existing voter concerns.
- Sub-messages are specific messages rooted into the theme, and directed at targeted groups.

Themes and Sub-messages

Example #1

McBride for Governor (FL)

- Theme: “*Send a Marine to Restore Order in Tallahassee.*”
- Positive: “Restore Order”
 - Government should work, be orderly.
- Contrast: Implies disorder exists under the current governor.
- Simple.

McBride for Governor (FL)

- Theme: “*Send a Marine to Restore Order in Tallahassee.*”
- Possible sub-messages:
 - Education: “Our children are suffering because the politicians in Tallahassee are too busy fighting, and not putting the interest of Florida kids first.”
 - Environment: “Florida’s waterways are being polluted because while the legislature and governor fight, polluters aren’t being prosecuted.”
- All sub-messages are rooted into the theme.

Themes and Sub-messages

Example #2

Mark Price for School Board (CA)

- Theme: “*Excellence in Education and Taxpayer Accountability.*”
- Positive: Both concepts are desirable to most voters.
 - Education should be excellent, taxpayers deserve accountability.
- Contrast: Implies a possible lack of excellence and accountability now.
- Simple.

Mark Price for School Board (CA)

- Theme: “*Excellence in Education and Taxpayer Accountability.*”
- Sub-messages:
 - On making it easier to raise taxes to pay for schools “I oppose it because it reduces the accountability of school boards to the taxpayers of Alpine.”
 - On building a new high school: “I support building a high school in Alpine to ensure our children receive an excellent high school education right here in our community.”

Communications Strategy

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Issues Matrix

Select the right medium to deliver your messages.

Selecting the Medium

- Visual + Audio = Most powerful (TV, in person)
- Broad reach versus targeted
 - TV/Radio/Newspaper: Reach a broad audience, focus at the thematic level.
 - In-person visit: Targeted communications, focus at the message level, rooted in the theme.
 - Earned media: Free, but limited control.

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Issues Matrix

Answer the four framing questions before developing your messages.

The Framing Questions

- Anchor your messages in reality.
 - **Who is the audience?**
 - **What do I want them to do?** Be clear about the behaviors you hope to influence.
 - **What is the relevant context?** Understand the life situations of those whom you are communicating.
 - **What are the competitive choices the audience has available?** Evaluate what the opposition is saying and offering.

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Issues Matrix

Personalize

Humanize

Dramatize

PHD

- Personalize your message.

Use specific individuals in examples and stories to illustrate your point.

- Humanize your message.

Show the human side of your ideas/proposals in human terms to which people can relate.

- Dramatize your message.

Use examples/stories that are interesting enough to hold the audience's attention.

Communications Strategy

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Issues Matrix

Four components for
winning sub-messages.

$$M=EC^3$$

- Emotion and Values

Messages must connect with voters on an emotional level. Persuade through reason, but motivate through emotion.

- Contrast

Offer voters a clear choice. But make sure the choice you offer is one that leads the voter back to you.

- Connection

Messages must be relevant to people's lives.

- Credible

The messenger but convey credibility. Messages must be believable.

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Issues Matrix

Use the labels and terms that favor you, not your opposition.

Issues Matrix

<p>+/+ What is the Party saying about itself?</p>	<p>+/- What is the Party saying about its opponent?</p>
<p>-/- What are they saying about themselves?</p>	<p>-/+ What are they saying about the Party?</p>

Enlist Your Supporters

- Circulate a draft of your plan among supporters, members, staff, activists, committees, candidates, elected officials
- Revise the plan as necessary to account for new events that may require the Party to take a position.

Group Exercise

- Break into groups and appoint a team leader
- Assume you are competing on a panel with representatives of other party members.
- The audience is 100 people who have stated themselves as generally loyal to the party.
- Every member of the audience has said they are going to join a party, but are not decided which to join.
- Exercise: Take 30 minutes to draft a 3 minute statement that develops a theme. Use sub-themes and contrasts. Focus on relevant issues. Draw on the items discussed in this presentation and the Stump Speech presentation to make a concise and organized plan.