

Breaking through the Clutter: Effective Leadership Communication

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Goals

- Understand what is meant by communication – and how to “employ” it successfully
- Learn why communication is important for a multitude of audiences
- Engage in hands-on exercises
- Have fun!

What is communication?

- The exchange of thoughts, messages, or information by speech, signals, writing or behavior
- Interpersonal rapport
- The art and technique of using words, actions, or behaviors effectively to effect change or action

Adapted from *American Heritage Dictionary*

Why is communication important?

- To further your agencies' mission/values, you want others to:
 - See you as a viable asset *of* the community with direct benefit *to* the community
 - Achieve buy-in
 - Spread the “gospel” about your work
 - Help build capacity (human, financial resources)

Communication: Aligned with mission and goals

All communication efforts must start with the mission and goals of your organization or agency.

Ideas need selling

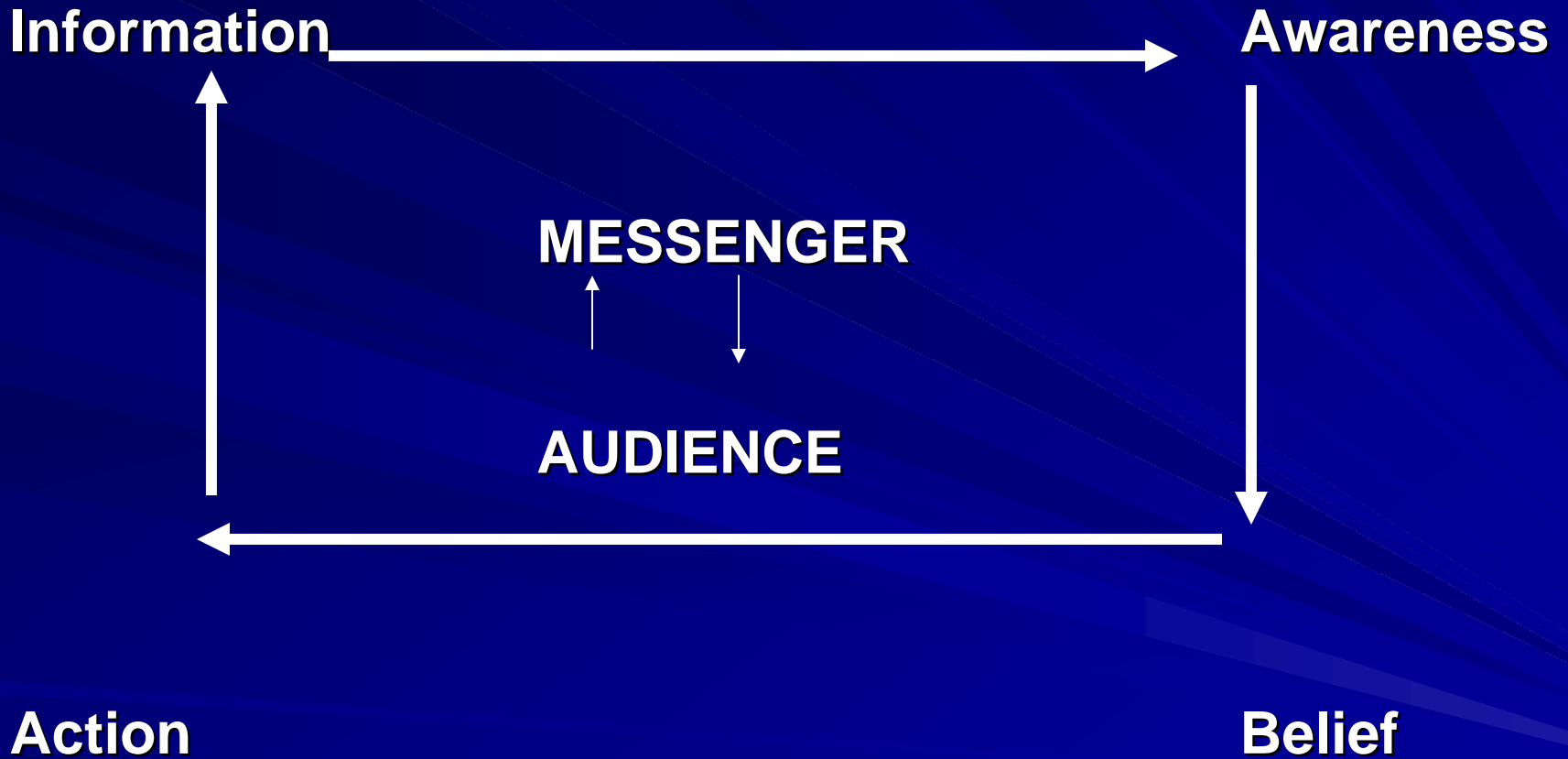
“Someone must recognize when an idea is good. It is important that when an idea is good it is sold to those who can act on it – those who have the power to evaluate and adopt it. Understanding users is an important activity for any change agent. People must be convinced that a particular idea or innovation has enough merit to warrant adoption”.

-- Principles of Communication, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee

How to Sell your Idea = How to Communicate Effectively

- **Know your audience (persuasion)**
 - Press? Funders? Business community?
- **Be well prepared (mission, vision, resources)**
- **Understand your intent (what do you want)**
- **Provide direct benefit to the audience**
- **Anticipate pushback**

Communication as a Process



Communication is an Evolving Process

- The message is never static
- The audience changes as do expectations
- There are different ways in which an audience receives and processes information
- Communication is about people and relationships

Effective communication

- Know your audience:
 - How does your audience need to hear/receive communication?
 - What's important to them?
- Understand your intent:
 - What do you want your audience to do?

Effective communication

- Provide a direct benefit to audience
- Recognize that listening is your most important tool
- Anticipate pushback

Effective communication

- Understand bias – yours and theirs
- Recognize context
- Look for signals (unspoken)
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know"

Effective communication



Medium

- Most effective
- What's your comfort level
- Accessible and adaptable

Message

- Know your topic
- Be clear
- Understand your intent

Audience

- Understand what motivates them
- Know how they can hear you best
- Listen to them

Use of communication

- Emergency preparedness
- Fundraising
- Community connections/liaison
- Financial, media, other skills

Developing your message

- **What is your goal and what is your *communication* goal?**
- **Who is your audience?**
- **What criteria did you use to select your audience?**
- **What resonates with your audience?**
- **What's your intent (or, what action do you want your audience to take)?**

Activity:
**Developing Your
Message**

Disseminating the message

- What do you consider?
- When to disseminate?
- What medium(s) to use?
- How to achieve optimal impact?

Disseminating your message: What to consider

- **Urgency**
- **What else is going on in the environment**
- **Other (mitigating) factors**

Timing: When to disseminate your message

- Are you tied to a deadline or activity?
- Is there a follow-up strategy?
- Are there other activities such as advocacy, education, or outreach?

Which communication channels to use?

- Print
- TV, radio
- Website
- E-mail
- Press conference
- Phone call
- One on one conversation
- Paid advertising
- Flyers or posters
- Collateral

Channels: Factors to consider

- Audience
- Intent
- Urgency/time frame
- Resources (human and financial)

Activity: Disseminating Your Message

Challenges to communication

- Lack of **clarity** in your audiences' needs
- Not **listening** to your audience
- No **alignment** between the first two
- **Cluttered** messaging environment

Challenge: Clarity

- Determine your greatest needs; prioritize
 - \$\$; management skills; PR; inroads to the business community
 - Ensure others are in agreement on priorities

Challenge: Listening

- Understand what your audiences' needs are
- Listen to your audience

Challenge: Aligning needs

- Sometimes the synergy is obvious
- Strategies to use when not clear
 - Identifying related needs
 - “Bridging” the needs
 - Continuing the conversation
- Be careful of square pegs in round holes

Challenge: Cluttered messaging

- People are busy; lack of time & attention
- Environment is cluttered with messages considered “important”
 - How do you break through that clutter?

Developing a communication plan

Why a communication plan:

- A guide and template
- Keeps you focused and on task
- Reminds you of your (communication) goals and objectives

Elements of a communication plan

- Goals and objectives
- Audience
- Message
- Materials
- Medium
- Timing
- Resources
- Follow-up
- Evaluation
- Partners

Don't forget...

- Communication is never static
- Communication will break down
- Need to delegate
- Actions speak louder than words

Communication is not

- Absolute (but relational)
- Adversarial (but consensual)
- Finite (but ongoing and evolving)
- Informational (but action and goal oriented)

What's missing?

- Feedback from the field



“We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.”

- *Epictetus, Greek philosopher*

Thank you!

■ Questions?

Contact information

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