

AN EFFECTIVE MESSAGE F.R.A.M.E.S. THE ISSUE

F.R.A.M.E.S. is a simple and memorable acronym for a checklist of qualities that help create an effective message. Messages are the bite-sized chunks of your narrative that will move through the world in public statements, campaign materials and media interviews. The best messages will embody the entire narrative and reinforce the framing that your group or campaign is presenting.

F = FRAME THE ISSUE

Does the message set the terms and define the stakes of the issue? Does it reinforce the vision and values that you are promoting? Framing means defining the problem, who will be broadly impacted and the solution. Don't communicate your tactics—what you are doing—but rather why you are doing it.

R = REFRAME OPPONENT'S STORY & REINFORCE OUR FRAME

Make sure your message is not just reiterating your opponent's frame. Reframing means changing the terms of debate on the issue. Does this message cast new characters, redefine the issue with different values, or expose a faulty assumption of your opponent?

A = ACCESSIBLE TO THE AUDIENCE

Who is your message trying to persuade? Be as specific as possible about the audience and insure that the message is crafted in terms of language, context and values that will be appealing to them. Your message should always be factual be it may need to be tailored. Finding the right messengers to deliver the message can help make it credible.

M = MEME

The message has got to be memorable, easy to spread and "sticky." How can you encapsulate your message in a symbol or slogan or metaphor that captures the essence? Is there an existing meme that you can reference or remix such as a popular catch phrase or well know idea?

E = EMOTIONAL

People don't swing into action because of a pie chart. An effective message should speak to people in terms of values,

and deliver some emotional impact. Making your message as concrete and connected to real world impacts as possible can make it easier to surface the emotional content. Sometimes elevating the right emblematic detail can make it more resonant. A comparison such as 10 times the amount, or that's 1 every 12 seconds can help. Trigger emotional responses with themes like tragedy, hope, anger, frustration and don't forget joy! Humor can really help a message spread as long as it doesn't undermine the importance of the issue.

S = SIMPLE & SHORT

This doesn't mean to dumb down your message. It means to get to the core essence of the issue. What is the most important point of the issue? What is it that makes it matter to your audience? As journalists say, "don't bury the lead!" Likewise a message has to be short. Paragraphs don't spread well but phrases do. If you aren't distilling your message then inevitably someone else will.

* This model was informed and partially inspired by the **Success** model of what makes an idea "sticky" as documented by Chip & Dan Heath in their book *Made to Stick* Random House 2009 (www.madetostick.com)