

Principles

of transformative communication

1 Informing to Transforming

Facts alone do not change people. We need to move from “informing” to transformative communication, engaging the whole person – intellect, body, heart, emotion, & instincts in our communications.

2 Motivating Differently

Common tactics do not actually motivate people, and very often are counterproductive, making people *less* likely to take action. Motivating long-term behavior requires creating an ecosystem of change, including personal relevance, evidence, tools for application, and community.

3 Shifting Perspectives

Our strategies must strive for producing a *shift in perspective* in our audience. We must work at an implicit (nonconscious) as well as an explicit (conscious) level. Far beyond informing, we want to help people reframe how they are experiencing, viewing, and thinking about an issue, and their relationship to that issue.

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The Invisible Opponent

People are hard-wired to filter out or dismiss information that runs counter to their current meaning system or cannot be easily assimilated, even at the expense of factual truth and even their own self-interest. Implicit assumptions drive behavior orders of magnitude more than conscious beliefs. Crafting experiences and messages foster reflection are more likely to inspire new actions.

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Framing Instead of Naming

The language we use, the stories we tell, the narratives we create, the context in which we place the very important content we want to deliver is key. Social science provides several tools for framing how we deliver our advocacy that rather than alienating people or losing them, can enroll them.

11 Being True

How can we as change agents embody dignity, trustworthiness, authenticity, genuineness, vulnerability, humility? These qualities cannot be faked, and they are both motivational and inspiring. What do both science and wisdom traditions have to tell us about ways to cultivate these qualities, and infuse them throughout our communications, strategies, and materials?

12 Standing Strong

As change agents, our work is incredibly rewarding. However, our schedules are demanding, being in the public eye is taxing, and we can sometimes feel that we are pushing boulders uphill only to have them frequently roll back down! We are more effective in our advocacy when we convey strength, power from within, passion, and vision. These are ways of being that arise from our own well-being and coherence, and they are also skills that can be trained.

6 Identity and Values

It's more likely people will take action they see as in alignment with their identity and values. Motivating behavior perceived as contradictory or not central to their values is extremely difficult. Aligning asks with values rather than attempting to change them is key.

7 Membership and Community

Identity, values, and behavior are socially mediated. The power of membership can create movements, and can also form strong immune antibodies, rejecting new ideas or ways of being, and ostracizing those attempting to introduce change. Harnessing the power of community is crucial to inspiring action.

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Storytelling and Narrative

Offering a vision of an alternate future – a new narrative – is key to inspiring (“I have a dream”). Storytelling is a pathway to the emotional, implicit, symbolic aspects of cognition, and also activates social learning through observation, imitation, and modeling.

Deep Persuasion

Reflective (systematic and complete pondering, changes are longer lasting and predictive of future behavior) vs. reflexive (snap decisions/judgments, automatic –lower energetic cost to the brain, transient and not very predictive of future behavior). The reflection system is more capable of arriving at novel decisions than the reflexive system.

Emotional Reach

A leader’s ability to perceive the emotions of others is the strongest determinant in the effectiveness of his or her leadership, more so than reasoning ability and personality. People make a decision when they reach a place of emotional *comfort* with a course of action. In addition, skillful emotional expressivity is associated with leadership charisma.

