



How to Frame Your Campaign to Win

By Resource Media

September, 2010

Introduction

Your campaign has a great issue, solid data and a strong organization. What could go wrong? Unfortunately, plenty. If your opponent frames an issue against you, all your hard work could possibly fall flat. To win, you need to set the frame. You need to command your campaign's own narrative. Here are some tips and resources for how to frame your campaign to win, and create powerful messages—the bedrock of any communications campaign.

Framing

What's a frame? Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. They shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act.

Dimensions of a Frame:

- The story that's told
- Who tells it
- Where they tell it/setting
- The world view of the listener



Keys to Reframing:

- Identify the problem
- Substitute a better question
- Reframe positively
- Create a choice we can win
- Provide a common sense solution

Steps to Taking Control of your Frame—Shoot Your Movie

1. Script your story—define the problem. Explain its relevance in terms of fundamental values. Define the solution.
2. Cast the actors—if you don't, someone else will. Determine who your villain is, who's the hero, and ask yourself, with whom would you rather ally yourself?
3. Build a set—think about where your story will take place and how that place reflects your values.
4. Work the camera—choose and direct attention to the parts of the story you want to tell—do you want to focus on the big picture or get up close and personal?
5. Know your audience:
 - Know competing interests.
 - Don't rebut. Reframe.
 - Arm yourself with polling.
 - Analyze your website through Google Analytics to get to know your audience and their interests and motivations better.

- Schedule repeat showings—build relationships with reporters, cross-pollinate content through social media, and don't forget about using your website to push out information.

Messaging

Messaging is telling your story in a strategic, thoughtful way that resonates with your target audience, motivating them to hopefully act on it. Every good message contains these three elements: core values, a threat, and a solution.

Values

People are more likely to believe and act on messages that tap into their core values. Decades of human values research shows over and over again that people rank these things as most important to them:

- Health and safety
- Prosperity
- Family
- Legacy
- Freedom



Judge Your Message

Once you have a draft message, check it against this list. Be an objective judge and ask yourself:

- Are the core values clear?
- Is the threat convincing?
- Is the solution simple and “common sense”?
- Is the language “plain English”?
- Are the spokespeople credible?
- Is the language compelling, without being shrill?
- Is the message simple enough for a 13-year-old to easily and quickly understand?
- Is the message about results, not process?

Messengers

Here are some tips for what you want to look for in an ideal spokesperson. They should be:

- Genuine
- No axe to grind
- Their story supports your message
- They talk about the issues through their values
- They look the part

Message Discipline

Bridging—this allows you to go back to what you really wanted to say. Try a phrase like:

“and that’s why it’s so important to...”

“That’s a really common misconception. Actually...”



Flagging—this basically calls the reporter’s attention to your most important point. You can try a few phrases like: “So the most important point to come away with is...”

“If there’s one thing to remember out of this whole story, it’s...”

“The one thing that will undoubtedly make the biggest difference in solving this problem is...”

Resources:

Talking the Walk: A Communications Guide for Racial Justice, Hunter Cutting and Makani Themba-Nixon, AK Press, 2006.

Don’t Think of an Elephant!: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate—The Essential Guide for Progressives, George Lakoff, Chelsea Green, 2004.

The Nature of Human Values, Milton Rokeach, Free Press, 1973.

“Building Strategic Alliances,” Resource Media, 2010. <http://resource-media.org/feed/webinar-building-strategic-alliances-1>

“Communications Planning Workbook,” Resource Media, 2010. <http://resource-media.org/files/may-feed-communications-workbook>

