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NEWSWORTHINESS & SECONDARY EFFECTS KNOW THE OPPONENT'S FRAME

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What's in the picture?

Framing Template

While it's true that framing is an art that can take years to master, no organization can afford to ignore it, and anyone can begin to create a solid frame right now. To help remove the guesswork from framing and start you on your way to framing mastery, we have put together the following framing template.

Along with a colleague or friend, answer the questions below (this exercise is much more useful when more than one brain is involved). Be creative and “think outside the box.” For fresh ideas, discuss the questions with people unfamiliar with your issue. Later, you can edit these ideas down to a sharp strategic frame. For a deeper explanation, be sure to consult the accompanying [Framing Tutorial](#).

Now fill in the blanks and watch your frame come alive.

Warmup

To get the ideas flowing, it's good to stretch your understanding of your issue. To practice thinking broadly and communicating concisely, answer each of the following big questions. Take as much space as you need to write your answers.

What is your issue really about...

In personal terms to you?

In policy terms?

In terms of local history?

In terms of your political environment?

In broad national or international historical terms?

In personal terms to your target audience?

In children's storybook terms?



Goal

This template can be used for long-term or short-term purposes. If you want to build a frame for long-term work on an issue, think of a goal for the next 5 to 20 years. If you want to build a frame for a shorter-term campaign, envision a goal for the next few years.

Describe the goal and its time frame in three sentences:

Audience and Action

Whom must your communications directly address in order to advance your issue or win the policy you desire? For example, if you need to move the mayor on an issue, but you don't have direct access to her office, your audience would be a group of people who can influence her, such as a key constituency of voters or donors. Deciding who your target audiences are is the most important communications decision you will make. See the Framing Tutorial and the Strategic Communications Planning Tutorial for a deeper discussion of target audience.

Generally, it's easiest to create a frame for a single target audience. In one sentence, describe this frame's target audience in as much demographic and social detail as possible. In the next sentence, describe what specific action(s) you want that audience to take.

Values

What values will your frame use to engage target audiences? (See a list of commonly held values in the Framing Tutorial.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Characters

If your campaign were a movie, book, or a play, who would the characters be? List each of the following types of characters.

Heroes, heroines, or innocents in distress:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Villains:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Neutral Characters (you can convert these to heroes or villains later based on strategic needs:

- 1.
- 2.

Narrators/spokespeople/people with powerful stories that illustrate the frame (hint: these can be the same as your heroes.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What institutions or systems are “characters” in the story? Are they good or bad? Can you show that they can be clearly held accountable?

<i>Name</i>	<i>Good or Bad?</i>	<i>Clear Accountability?</i>
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

In five sentences or less, describe the identity of your organization as a character in the story:

The Story

What happened? Summarize the story that sets up your frame by describing five critical episodes in two sentences each.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

What classic stories does your issue or campaign correspond to? Think in terms of classic stories that cue the listener to take a side, like Cinderella or David and Goliath:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Briefly describe the metaphors you will invoke or imply to tell your story and represent your perspective:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How Does it Feel?

What feelings do you want the frame to evoke in target audiences? Describe them in one word, in order of importance:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Got Visuals? Or: This is Your Brain on Frames

What pictures and images communicate this frame? Be creative and even outrageous! List five images, such as a logo, a still photo, a staged moment such as a demonstration, or a work of art:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Powerful Data

What data support your frame? Put your data in terms of “human” or “social” math. List three “humanized” statistics:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Make it Newsworthy

The more hooks you can build into your frame, the more likely you’ll succeed in amplifying it through media. Choose five hooks from the list of classic hooks detailed in the accompanying tutorial. Explain in four sentences or fewer how you will leverage these hooks to make your issue newsworthy to editors and other media gatekeepers.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- 4.
- 5.

Know Your Enemy

Above, you detailed the frame that is strategically powerful and feels authentic to you. But that probably differs in many ways from how your campaign or issue is currently framed in your target audience's mind. What elements of the current frame do you want to dissolve, and which will you reinforce? Use the above template to consider the following frames, which may have subtle or enormous differences:

1. The dominant frame in your target audience's mind:

2. Your opponent's frame (if there is an opponent):

The Big Picture: Secondary Effects of Your Frame

How will the frame affect your work and the work of your allies beyond your immediate campaign?

Briefly describe how the frame brings you toward your long-term goals:

5 years:

20 years:

How might this frame help or harm your political allies in the next...

1 year?

Help -

Harm -

5 years?

Help -

Harm -

20 years?

Help -

Harm -

Rasmuson Foundation is a private family foundation located in Anchorage Alaska that works as a catalyst to promote a better life for Alaskans

! Founded in 1955, the Foundation invests approximately \$26 million annually in both individuals and well-managed nonprofit organizations dedicated to improving the quality of life for Alaskans primarily in the areas of arts and culture, community development, health, and human services

! Our grantees are passionate about their work. Given today's crowded media environment, their ability to effectively advocate on behalf of their constituents and tell their story is of critical importance to their success. The Foundation supported the development of this toolkit to provide a comprehensive and accessible resource for its

grantees both to build internal capacity and to work more effectively on a day-to-day basis with strategic communications

In today's crowded media environment, organizations working to build a fair just and equitable society can scarcely be heard. Organizations hoping to shape debates and shift public policy must embrace strategic communications to achieve their goals. The SRN Project strengthens nonprofit social justice organizations, small and large, to communicate effectively for themselves.

THE SPIN PROJECT

The SRN Project provides accessible and affordable strategic communications consulting, training, coaching, networking opportunities and concrete tools such as this online communications toolkit. Our skills and expertise are blended with our commitment to strengthening social justice organizations and helping them engage in communications to achieve their goals.

We develop communications skills, infrastructure and leadership strengthening organizations to achieve their social justice goals.