



THE SCIENCE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND ITS UTILITY IN NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

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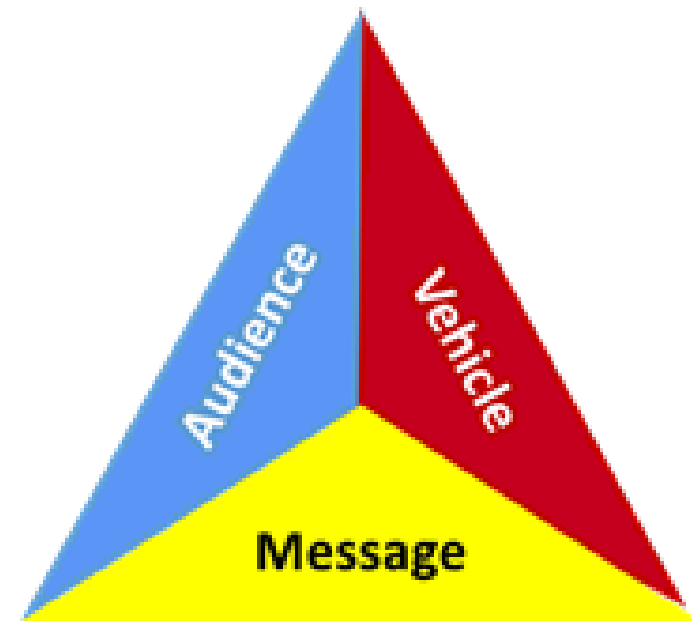
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Abstract

The field of **Strategic Communication** involves a focused effort to identify, develop, and present multiple types of communication media on a given subject. A Strategic Communication program recognizes the limitations of the most common communication models (primarily “one size fits all” and “presenting everything and letting the audience decide what is important”) and specifically focuses on building a communication framework that is composed of three interlinked pillars (**Message, Audience, Vehicle**).



In addition to serving as an organizational framework, the physical structure of a Strategic Communication plan also can serve as a way to show an audience where they, the message, and vehicle fit into the larger picture (i.e., “you are here”).

This presentation will explore the process of designing a Strategic Communication plan and examine some examples of its utility in natural resources management, ecosystem restoration, adaptive management and structured decision making. Ideally, a strategic communication matrix can be utilized to identify and access the materials of interest for any given activity (i.e., avoids the need to recreate materials or use the wrong materials for the wrong audience). Challenges in implementation will also be explored.

Message

Identifying the right content (the **message**) for a given audience and vehicle

- Message changes based on the audience
- Message can be different if different vehicles

Audience

Identifying the right target group (the **audience**) for a given message and vehicle

- Audience includes clients, stakeholders, and other practitioners
- Not all audiences respond the same to a given message or vehicle

Vehicle

Identifying the right types of media (the **vehicle**) for a given message and audience

- Important to explore choices in vehicle based on the message and the audience
- Explore more than one vehicle as option

What Strategic Communication is NOT

- Utilizing a laundry list of social media outlets
- A briefing strategy in and of itself
- Put together in a vacuum (i.e., practitioners and communicators have to work together)
- A replacement for active stakeholder engagement

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this poster are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

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Examples in the Literature

Natural Resources Management

Case presented for a strategic communication plan for a natural resources conservation policy by the East African Community.¹

Message: Raise public awareness and knowledge about the importance of natural resources conservation and management innovations

Audience: Multiple stakeholders

Vehicle: Electronic media, popular media, print media, multimedia formats

Habitat Conservation/Ecosystem Restoration

The Appalachian Mountains Joint Venture Strategic Communication Plan.²

Message: To promote, coordinate, and deliver bird habitat conservation in order to restore and sustain viable populations of native birds and their habitats

Audience: Those whose actions will influence achievement of a goal, largely partner groups

Vehicle: Many different types categorized under educational, informational, promotional, organizational, political, and scientific

Adaptive Management

The Mexican National Commission of Natural Protected Areas strategic approach to communication.³

Message: Issues related to the political and economical values of protected areas, clear perspective on conservation in relation to development, cultural and natural values of protected areas, relationship between rural and urban areas

Audience: Local inhabitants and resource users, policy makers, urban citizens

Vehicle: Poster series, electronic bulletin, interpretive hiking trails and protective areas, website, radio networks

Structured Decision Making

Using structured decision making to come up with a strategic communication plan for Early Childhood Development programs in Uganda.⁴

Message: Meaningful and persuasive messages that could influence the adoption of new child care behaviors, focusing on the client's needs and targeting their beliefs and opinions

Audience: Parents and caregivers as the primary audience, grandparents, health workers, and teachers as the secondary audience, and policy makers as the tertiary audience

Vehicle: Mass media, print, community-based channels, and interpersonal communication

References

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Why Strategic Communication Matters to USEPA?

Great work done invisibly cannot have an impact.

EPA researchers are advancing the understanding of the nested relationship of three pillars of sustainability — environment, society, and economy — in ways that help local communities and other partners make informed decisions and take action to protect public health and become both more sustainable and more resilient.

USEPA Example of Strategic Communication ⁵

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	Communication vehicles		Talking points			
2	10 min phone chat		Emphasis on stakeholder input			
3	15 sec elevator pitch		Building on existing EPA tools to support the local			
4	1 page project summary		Target is measurable sustainability outcomes that promote human and			
5	Talking points		Looking across communities by building a network			
6	Slide decks					
7		Audience				
8	Message	Team	RESES comm.	GMeCCS comm.	Regional partners	SHC Program
9	What is GMeCCS?	Scientific effort to work with stakeholders to derive links between Decisions-changes in FEGS-and changes in measures of sustainability.	Stakeholder engagement to identify fundamental objectives, and derive a functional measure of sustainability.	Stakeholder engagement to identify fundamental objectives, and integrate outcomes into a measure of sustainability.	Stakeholder engagement to identify fundamental objectives and derive a functional measure of sustainability.	A scientific study to link decisions to quantitative tools to measures of sustainability in representative communities using science-driven stakeholder engagement practices.
10	What do we wish to accomplish?	1) Improve the state of the science, 2) Develop a Decision-Tool-Measure framework, 3) Develop a stakeholder engagement strategy, 4) Address transferability of tools between communities	Work with stakeholders to identify measures of sustainability that will be used to evaluate environmental health decisions.	Work with stakeholders to identify quantitative tools and measures of sustainability that will be used to evaluate decisions.	Work with stakeholders to identify measures of sustainability that will be used to evaluate decisions.	Provide updated, accurate, and user friendly guidance on sustainability to end-user groups at the community level.
11	How will we accomplish it?	see Menu of "how" activities	see Menu of "how" activities	see Menu of "how" activities	see Menu of "how" activities	see Menu of "how" activities

Challenges

- Takes time and effort
- Requires understanding of concepts
- Buy-in needed
- Follow-ups required
- Needs to be designed at beginning of process not at end

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