



BONO
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Being Right is Not Enough: Effective Political Communication

2017 Florida League of Cities Annual Conference

August 18, 2017

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Speakers

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Agenda

Communicating an Effective Message

Working with the Media

Working in a Political Environment



Communicating an Effective Message

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Focus on What You Can Control,
Not What you Can't

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A Key to Success: Being Able to Communicate Effectively

The two words 'information' and 'communication' are often used interchangeably, but they signify quite different things. **Information** is **giving out**; **communication** is **getting through**.

Sydney J. Harris

Framing the Message

Frame

The value-based structures that
shape the way we see the world.

George Lakoff

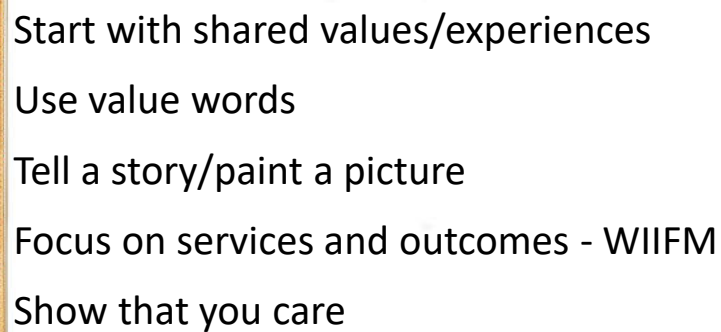
Framing the Message

What is the frame for government? What words come to mind when people think of government?

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Creating a Positive Frame





- Start with shared values/experiences
- Use value words
- Tell a story/paint a picture
- Focus on services and outcomes - WIIFM
- Show that you care


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Now that we are in a positive frame of mind . . .






Define the Message



What does this action mean for the people in our city?

What questions would they ask?

What are the three most important ideas they need to grasp?



Prepare the Message

Write down the key message ideas

- No more than 3!

Make them understandable to the public

- And positively framed!

Practice communicating your ideas



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Communicating the Message

Stick to the key ideas

Use the language you developed

Observe/listen to see if you are getting through

- If not, try adapting your language to suit your current audience

Know when to stop talking

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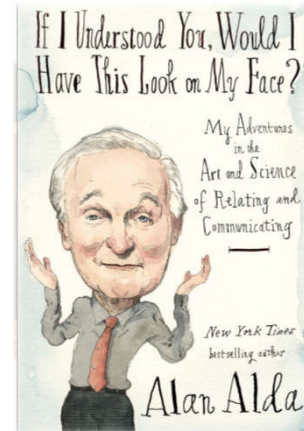
Effective Communication from Alan Alda

Don't sacrifice understanding for accuracy

Observe or imagine what a person is thinking or feeling

Talk about the people doing the work, not the things

Focus on the other and *really* listen



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Working With the Media

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The Media as Audiences



Don't expect them to tell our story

Getting ahead of the story allows us to help frame it

Being accessible, respectful and cooperative earns trust

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Budget News

Despite \$3 Million Increase in Taxes and Fees, City Staff to Present \$4.5 Million Budget Deficit for FY2018

Sarasota City, consider tax increases next year

oward property tax
ls rising
OST F all...

County property owners will pay higher taxes

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Talk About Taxes

The Mayor “said his city took a tough approach, holding the tax rate steady for the last 8 years, including during the downturn. The decision not to increase the rate when values were dropping cost the city \$130 million but delivered ‘significant financial relief’ to taxpayers at the time.”



Getting Your Message Out

Be responsive

- “I’ll call you right back.”
 - Frame, define, prepare, reply

Take the initiative

- Reach out with news before the media reaches out to you
- Create your own communication channels
 - Always in compliance with the Sunshine Laws



Working in a Political Environment

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When Under Attack

Defending yourself often makes things worse

Defending others (appropriately) can make things better

No matter how personal the attack, don't respond in kind

- Quit Taking It Personally

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Key Messages



Policy disagreements

- Not personal ones



Differences of opinion

- Not smart/stupid
- Not noble/evil



“We” are striving to do what is best for the people

- Not “I”

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