

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT and STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION¹

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“Communication is the art of being understood.”

Peter Ustinov

- To put the concept in a simple and practical way, let me define communication is the art of talking to each other instead of talking about one another. Leaders of change, especially those in the environmental sector, must be effective communicators. They must have the ability of getting a message across to and drawing the best out of people.
- The ability to deliver an effective communication would be strengthened by the leader’s understanding on the 7-C Principles of Communication:
 - ✓ Credibility
 - ✓ Content
 - ✓ Context
 - ✓ Clarity
 - ✓ Continuity and consistency
 - ✓ Channels
 - ✓ Capability of audience
- Out of those principles, understanding about the capability of audience is a focal point to the success of communication. Leaders need to work and improve their communication skills in all forms to enhance their effectiveness. Listening skill becomes very crucial to make sure that the concept of “talking to each other” is taking place.
- However, in order to make sure that leaders have been conducting effective communication approach, leaders need to have a clear understanding on their communication strategy.
- In dealing with environmental issues, communication strategy will need at least:
 - ✓ The issues to be developed
 - ✓ The actors and stakeholders to be involved
 - ✓ The communication objectives to be achieved
 - ✓ The message to be delivered
 - ✓ The communication channels or media outlets to be explored
- There are four levels of communication objectives:
 - ✓ To create awareness
 - ✓ To create interest
 - ✓ To create desire
 - ✓ To create action

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- To identify stakeholders, leaders need to believe that the issues of biodiversity as well as sustainable development are the results of balanced relationships among four dimensions: economy, socio-cultural, politics, and ecology. Pondering to what have been going on around me, I do realize that understanding the pattern and structure of any issue is a must. Without clear understanding on those two, any responses towards environmental issues are merely reactive responses. As we do understand, we cannot jeopardize our future by implementing this type of reactive responses.
- Public/community involvement is a very important aspect in communicating environmental issues. Since perception, understanding, and responses on certain issue can be vary among public or community as stakeholders, it is wise to indentify and categorize stakeholders based on their involvement to the issues:
 - ✓ those whose permission need to be asked,
 - ✓ those who directly affected by the issue,
 - ✓ those who indirectly affected by the issue, and
 - ✓ those who can influence the process or the outcome.
- By categorizing (targeting) stakeholders, leaders will have better chance to know with whom the organization is dealing with, to conduct analysis based on the better information (demography, psychography, attitudinal and cognitive stage, etc), and to set up priorities according to available resources.
- Stakeholders' characteristics can be identified based on these five categories:
 - ✓ **Interest:** Are the stakeholders interested in the issue I want to communicate about?
 - ✓ **Knowledge:** How much do they know?
 - ✓ **Attitude:** How do they feel about the issue?
 - ✓ **Information Behavior:** How does the group look for information?
 - ✓ **End Values:** What are the beliefs, norms and values of the group?
- Categorizing stakeholders into target groups provides leaders with a better tool in developing stakeholders' matrix that enable leaders to develop communication strategically. Understanding perceptions and responses of each stakeholders/target groups towards environmental issues will increase the effectiveness of its strategic messages.
- Stakeholders' matrix is also enable leaders to make a sound decision on the selection of media outlets need to be maximized to reach communication objectives. The proliferation of media outlets creates confusions among stakeholders. Some practices in conducting measurements of strategic communication effectiveness fail to analyze the relationships between the communication objectives, the accuracy of media coverage on messages being developed (*basic facts, mis-statements, incomplete information, omissions*), and the effectiveness of media outlets to achieve its communication objectives.
- The IUCN-CEC believes that to gain effective communication strategy and stakeholder engagement, leaders need to focus on three factors (3 points to remember):
 1. **Know your audience**
 - ✓ General public is different from decision makers in government or business
 - ✓ Define your objectives: knowledge – attitudes – behavior
 - ✓ Develop your communication in dialogue with your audience – understand their barriers and motivations to change
 - ✓ Realize that people take decisions based on emotion rather than on rational decisions
 - ✓ Behavior change is based on personal experiences and social groups

2. **Use plain language messages**
 - ✓ Like the video 'Love. Not Loss.' suggests, showcase success, what we *have* not what we've lost
 - ✓ What one thing must they remember about you and your issue?
 - ✓ Have a clear, specific call to action: "*Can you help me plant some trees?*"
 - ✓ Use messages that are memorable, keep them short, simple and snappy
 - ✓ Create word of mouth – give people the tools to pass the message on
3. **Be strategic**
 - ✓ Set an example for others to follow and let others tell the story
 - ✓ Always integrate communication right from the start of your projects
 - ✓ Be creative – explore different channels that suit your objective and audience best
 - ✓ Hire the right external expertise, find relevant people to partner with
 - ✓ Always (pre)test and evaluate
- Futerra Sustainability Communications (www.futerra.co.uk) strategically splits today's messages on biodiversity into four clear varieties: Loss, Love, Need and Action.
 - ✓ **Loss:** Messages based on extinction. 'Biodiversity' and 'extinction' are almost automatically communicated together. From the Red List to the plight of the rainforest, the 'biodiversity loss' message is everywhere. It is rare that any plant, animal or ecosystem is mentioned by campaigners, policy makers or the media without an 'under threat' disclaimer.
 - ✓ **Love:** Messages based on awe and wonder. From nature documentaries to posters of dolphins on teenagers' walls, our abiding fascination, wonder and deep connection with nature is powerful. The Love message is used by advertisers, therapists, artists and campaigners alike, because awe for nature captures our imagination, and our attention.
 - ✓ **Need:** Messages based on economics. A more recent message is the tangible economic value of biodiversity. From indispensable ecosystem services like soil nutrition or tourism revenue, to the trillions of dollars that biodiversity 'gifts' agriculture, pharmaceuticals and other industries every year. Our society and economy needs biodiversity
 - ✓ **Action:** Messages asking for action. Biodiversity conservation requires people to do things. Action messages ask people to do something, whether it's to plant a tree, build a bee hive, sign a petition or donate money to a conservation charity.
- To close this short presentation, let us take some time to ponder on Henry David Thoreau's statement,

"Do not worry if you have built your castles in the air. They are where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."
- Through this workshop, I hope we can share our experiences to strengthen each other in advancing CEPA (Communication, Education, and Public Awareness) for communicating biodiversity in our communities. The future of this planet is in our hands.
- Thank you².

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Flip chart template for each small group

	What works?	What would work better if I did it differently?
Know Your Audience 5 bullets		
Use Plain Language Messages 5 bullets		
Be Strategic 5 bullets		



CEPA Resources

'Love. Not Loss.' (video)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvldwOEzreM>

Branding Biodiversity, Futerra

http://www.futerra.co.uk/downloads/Branding_Biodiversity.pdf

CEPA Specialty Group, IUCN CEC (with links to the CEPA Toolkit in English, French and Spanish)

http://www.iucn.org/about/union/commissions/cec/cec_specialty_groups/cec_cep_specialty_group/

CEPA toolkit – CBD, IUCN CEC

<http://www.cbd.int/cepa/toolkit/2008/cepa/index.htm>

Guide to Participatory Action Planning – Ramsar, IUCN CEC

http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/outreach_actionplanning_guide.pdf#9

IUCN Commission on Education and Communication

<http://www.iucn.org/cec/>

Sell the Sizzle, the new climate message, Futerra

<http://www.futerra.co.uk/downloads/Sellthesizzle.pdf>

The Art of Positive Change (blog on CEPA and behavior change)

<http://cepatoolkit.blogspot.com/>

You learn something new every day (blog on learning and facilitation)

<http://welearnsomething.blogspot.com/>