

DWR Communication Project: Designing an Audience - Message Frame - Tools Approach

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Desired End State

To develop a set of communication tools (i.e., a tool box) so that appropriate message(s) may be designed and delivered within the guidance of a “message frame,” through judiciously selected and focused channels, to target one or more of four, specifically predefined audiences. The end result would hopefully be an initial awareness, attainment of an acceptable cognition level; provocation of an interest or inquiry; an enhanced comprehension of the organization, its vision/ mission, strategic goals and specific objectives desired; leading to preferred experimentation or application, inclusive of the continued practice of a positive behavioral response over time.

Deliverables

This will be best presented for application through the construction of a “communication” matrix whereby staff may assess how to most effectively reach a specific, targeted audience by selecting one or more available tools that has been predetermined as best suited to deliver the type of message best tailored to garner value orientation resonance for transmittal via an array of disparate channels proven to have audience connectivity.

Three facets of framing a message are thought to influence its persuasive effect: 1) how the problem is framed (positively or negatively), 2) how the target is framed (current or future generations), and 3) how the behavior is framed (taking less or doing more). Channels may be *physical* as in voices or bodies, *technical* like a telephone, or *social* such as schools or the media. Channels in turn may be mediated, interpersonal, interactive, or organizational. (See Communication Matrix, page 2.)

Anticipated Uses

Actual message development will be tailored to leverage 1) optimal knowledge transfer potential, 2) comprehension enhancement capacity, as well as the 3) opportunity to effect a desired behavioral impact within the target audience. The most favorable conditions for ensuring that citizens and customers develop a strong identification with an organization and, therefore, a stronger image of the organization, includes the following peripheral returns on our investment (ROIs): 1) close proximity (i.e., access to, and/or self-identification with), 2) license and/or alternative revenues generated, and 3) a long-term customer association. These ultimately can be treated as surrogate indicators of progress toward success in the achievement of the Constituency Goal of the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources’ Strategic Plan: 2007-2011.

Monitoring and Assessment

Individuals are to be encouraged to progress through five communication development stages. These consist of becoming: 1) initially aware, 2) knowledgeable, 3) interested (i.e., to inspire or provoke learning), 4) willing to risk through experimentation or trial, and finally lead to 5) a continual practice (i.e., behavioral adoption and integration). Successful implementation is to be assessed at each progressive stage based on feedback evaluation discerned from our four target primary audiences: 1) Utilitarians, 2) Mutualists, 3) Pluralists, and 4) Distanced [as per the WAFWA Wildlife Values in the West Survey – Regional Report (2005)¹ and Utah Report (2006)²].

Limitations and Assumptions

Not all, nor may most individuals within an audience progress beyond whichever stage that they reside within initially. Many may not advance at all from their entry point in this progression (in fact, some may even regress either temporarily, or permanently).

Result

Typically, a substantive number of individuals will move sequentially from one stage through the next, growing in awareness, knowledge, interest, and trial, culminating in the adoption of behavioral practices as a part of a self-actualized conservation stewardship persona regarding the use, conservation, and management of wildlife resources.

¹ Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, Human Dimensions Committee. 2005. Wildlife Values in the West – Regional Report. Contract via Human Dimensions of Natural Resources Unit, Warner College of Natural Resources, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO.

URL: http://welcome.warnercnr.colostate.edu/images/docs/hdnr/Wildlife_Values_in_the_West_Final_Regional_Report_9-05.pdf

² Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Wildlife Planning Management Unit; 2006. Wildlife Values in the West – Utah Report. Contract via Human Dimensions of Natural Resources Unit, Warner College of Natural Resources, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO. URL: http://welcome.warnercnr.colostate.edu/images/docs/hdnr/Utah_Final_Report_4_06.pdf

Communication Matrix

Target¹ <i>(With whom are we connecting?)</i>	Message Types <i>(What are we communicating?)</i>	Message Frame <i>(How are we saying it?)</i>	Channels* <i>(Using what tool?)</i>	Outcome Measures <i>(Applying which yardstick?)</i>
Utilitarians**	1) Optimal knowledge transfer potential	a) Positive vs. Negative	i. Physical	1) Initial awareness level
Mutualists***	2) Comprehension enhancement capacity	b) Current vs. Future	ii. Technical	2) Provoke interest &/or inquiry
Pluralists****	3) Opportunity to affect a desired behavioral impact	c) Doing More vs. Taking Less	iii. Social	3) Acceptable knowledge level
Distanced*****				4) Foster trial/experimentation
				5) Continual practice (i.e., adoption).

¹The targets identified may have any of the Message Types, Message Frames, Channel and Measures applied – there is no linear (row) relationship implied.

* Channels may be: mediated, interpersonal, interactive, or organizational in nature.

Wildlife Value Orientations

Wildlife value orientations in the western U.S. can be characterized along several distinct dimensions including mutualism-utilitarian and attraction-concern for safety. Of these, the mutualism-utilitarian dimension has a dominating effect on thought about wildlife because it forms the basis for evaluating actions or issues that involve treatment of wildlife.

Using mutualism and utilitarian wildlife value orientations responses, we identified four “wildlife value orientation types” among members of the public.

****Utilitarians** hold a philosophy that wildlife are for human use and are strongly positive toward hunting and fishing.

*****Mutualists** are those who consider wildlife as part of an extended family and believe in an ideal world where people and wildlife live side-by-side without fear.

******Pluralists** are those who have both utilitarian *and* mutualism value orientations. For these individuals, the wildlife value orientation that becomes salient is very dependent on the specific situation a person is in.

*******Distanced** are those individuals who do not have either a utilitarian or a mutualism value orientation. They tend to score lower on the wildlife belief dimension measuring attraction toward wildlife and higher on the belief dimension measuring concern for safety when around wildlife.

When compared with the other two groups, Utilitarians and Pluralists are older, more likely to hunt, more likely to have lived in a state for a longer period of time, and more likely to be male.

States vary greatly in the composition of these wildlife value orientation types. See the proportionate distribution of Utahns across these types below; in addition, Utah’s ranking is given, as are similar/different states. Across all 19 states surveyed, citizens had average classifications of: Utilitarian - 34% (14% less than Utah), Mutualist - 33% (13% more than Utah), Pluralist - 20% (1% less than Utah), and Distanced - 13% (2% more than Utah).

Utah’s Wildlife Value Orientation Types - Rankings among 19 western states

****Utilitarian: 48%** **5th highest state** (Montana was closest while Hawaii was the least Utilitarian at 25% and Alaska was the most (50%);

*****Mutualist: 20%** **7th lowest state** (Oklahoma was closest while Alaska was the least Mutualist at 15% and Hawaii was the most (41%);

******Pluralist: 21%** **4th lowest state** (Oregon was the closest while California was the least Pluralist at 15% and Wyoming was the most (31%),

*******Distanced: 11%** **6th highest state** (Nevada was the closest while South Dakota was the Least Distanced at 6% and California was the most (19%).

Although Utah is not that much off the average percentages of Pluralists and Distanced value orientation types represented across all western states, it is markedly different in its 13-14% shift of percentages from Mutualists to Utilitarians than the respective averages for Western states.