Communicating Environmental Issues To Make a Difference

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Key points

Scientific and expert policy communities make decisions on an analytical basis. Political and business decisions requiring public support are decided differently.

What works for communication in science will not work in everyday life. Expert solutions to complex problems cannot in practice be communicated to public audiences through analytical understanding.

To win support from voters, customers, businesses or politicians, your clever ideas need to make sense when processed by ‘intuitive’ thinking. To do this you need to apply tools such as heuristics, motivational values and framing. These are routinely used in sales, marketing and advertising but often ignored by scientists and other professionals. ‘Issues’ lie in the specialist not public domain.
Issues > Campaign construction & people
To get change you mostly need to:

- Convince politicians
- Convince businesses
- Voters
- Customers
- People
Two big tasks:

• Planning your journey

• Taking people with you
Don’t campaign on the issue & do it in steps

• Planning your journey

• Taking people with you

• How do they decide?
How we decide

**System 1**
- Easy way
- Intuitive
- Emotional
- Unconscious
- Reflexive

**System 2**
- Hard way
- Analytical
- Conscious
- Reflective

95%+ decisions

Behaviours

rationalisation

rare
System 1 tools

System 1
- Easy way
- Intuitive
- Emotional
- Unconscious
- Reflexive

95%+ decisions

Behaviours

rationalisation

VALUES
HEURISTICS

FRAMING
**Prospectors** – outer directed: need for success, esteem of others then self esteem. Acquire and display symbols of success.

**Settlers** - need for security driven: safety, security, identity belonging. Keep things small, local, avoid risk.

**Pioneers** – inner directed. Need to connect actions with values, explore ideas, experiment. Networking, interests, ethics, innovation.
Natural England’s Marine Campaign

MPAs
Sense of place

Protect it
What place?

Protect what?
First create a sense of place – “there is an undersea landscape” ... “our region has one”
Then later we can show threats: problems and solutions (*not now*)
When shown marine concepts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept group</th>
<th>Settler</th>
<th>Prospector</th>
<th>Pioneer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Topography</td>
<td>An exciting idea</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuals and communities</td>
<td>A compelling idea</td>
<td>A neutral idea</td>
<td>An interesting idea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Beauty Spots</td>
<td>A potentially worrying idea</td>
<td>A fascinating idea</td>
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</table>

Rule of thumb: Prospectors are hardest to please

Client and ‘green base’ mostly Pioneer
Seabed topography is immediately engaging, exciting, a result – something to appreciate

Dramatic
Inspires awe
Easy for public to assimilate
Quick thrill

Make undersea features + creatures real, ‘ownable’
Plucky survivor communities - of interest to Settlers and Pioneers

Like our own neighbourhood
Underdogs struggling to survive
A good cause to champion
Beauty spots – mixed reaction

Pioneers loved the mystery

Others found it scary or not credible
Values of the Coastal Futures Conference are massively skewed to Pioneer (over 2x over-rep’); Prospectors 6x under-represented, Settlers 16x.

Pioneer group-think values assumptions dominate most ‘green’ NGO public comm’s leading to failures, and failure to learn lessons from failures. Need to engage on values. Same underlies ‘Brexit’.

More at [www.campaignstrategy.org](http://www.campaignstrategy.org) (see Three Worlds blog) & [www.cultdyn.co.uk](http://www.cultdyn.co.uk) CDSM
Heuristics – work more often than not

• Liking
• Effort
• Social proof
• Consistency
• Exchange

Lots more
Babies

Children

Researchers left 240 wallets on the streets of Edinburgh 42 per cent of the wallets were posted back in total. (No money but clear id/address)
Values + heuristics
- make it nature
for-the-children
and more agree

Use of the ‘environment for our children’ frame rather than the ‘environmental concern’ frame has a positive effect on all MGs but it is very small for Pioneers, and much larger for Prospectors and Settlers.
Framing - unconscious categories

“What first we see – then we understand”

Walter Lippman

Plastic as litter or plastic as pollution?
‘framing’ – George Lakoff

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_CWBjyIERY
a frame determines

what is good/bad

relationships

and more besides

Context

relevant reasons

Roles

how to decide

www.campaignstrategy.org
Where the ‘litter’ framing strategy came from: Crying Indian Campaign by ‘Keep America Beautiful’, 1970 video

“People start pollution. People can stop it”.

A Beautiful If Evil Strategy

As the planet fills up with plastic and the EU ponders its
Framing: Litter or Pollution?

“This is not, the fault of the government. It is the fault of the people who knowingly and thoughtlessly throw it down.”

http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=1847
Bad: Drop
Good: Pick up

Responsibility: Personal
Problem  Solution
Bad          Good
Let it out   Keep it in

Responsibility: producer
People start pollution. People can stop it.

Strategy puts responsibility on the public, not the packaging or plastics industry.
Success of ‘Litter’ framing
Pollution continues to grow.

Phase out and elimination of plastic.

Policies phase out plastic.

Pollution stops.

Recover residues.

Avoid.

Substitute.

Recirculation with huge losses to environment.

http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=2170
Public domain
Mainly unconscious communication:
daily life, advertising, politics, popular media
(System 1)

Analytical domain
Mainly conscious communication,
science, law, disciplines, policy communities
(System 2)

http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=1746
We usually go this way. Just seems like common sense....
People arguing!

Slow: think

Research needed

Ethical dilemma

Cost benefit

Unknown unknowns

Analysis City

Collective decision making

New data

Cost benefit

Calculation Avenue

Framing

Heuristics

Values

Feels right

A one of those

We usually go this way

Untested assumption! – go back

Just seems like common sense....

After due consideration of all the facts what we think is...
<table>
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<th>Values Mode</th>
<th>VM</th>
<th>UK %</th>
<th>CMS</th>
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(2019 Coastal Futures Conference (CMS) Values Modes %s)