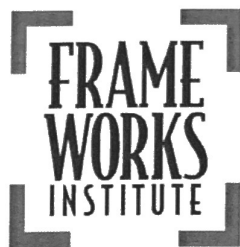




# Communications "Jobs" of 12 Frame Elements

Framing is the process of making choices about how to communicate. Strategic framing is making these decisions with a clear goal in mind and with the intention of cueing a specific response in the interests of social change. In Strategic Frame Analysis, the various 'choice points' are considered 'frame elements.' It can be helpful to framers to think of each of these frame elements as serving a specific purpose or doing a communications 'job' in discourse. With the purpose of the tool in mind, framers can feel more confident in their choices, and use the frame elements with greater intentionality and fluency.

<b>Context</b>	<b>Explanatory Chains</b>	<b>Explanatory Examples</b>
Establishes the nature of the problem as either a public "issue" that concerns us all, or a private "trouble" affecting only those individuals experiencing the problem. Strategic framers "widen the lens" on the context, choosing a panorama over a portrait, and appealing to systems rather than sympathy.	Make clear, concise, and explicit connections between underlying problems and visible outcomes. Support consideration of the problem and appropriate solutions by allowing average citizens to quickly grasp the essential insights that experts take for granted.	By showing process, anchoring explanation, and assisting with recall and transmission, examples displace unproductive assumptions and make solutions visible to the public.
<b>Explanatory Metaphors</b>	<b>Messengers</b>	<b>Narrative</b>
Explain how an abstract, unfamiliar, or misunderstood system or process works by making a carefully developed comparison to a concrete, familiar domain. Support consideration of the problem and appropriate solutions by allowing average citizens to quickly grasp the background and connections that experts take for granted.	Support consideration of the communication by selecting a speaker/writer whose identity or perspective is viewed as objective, trustworthy, and reliable.	Overrides default expectations and engages interest by anticipating questions and providing a coherent story that sticks together.
<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Order</b>	<b>Solutions</b>
Support the language-based framing choices with quantitative data that advance and strengthen the overall communication strategy. "Social math" translates data to more comprehensible and compelling terms by making a comparison to a familiar domain on a relatable scale.	Deciding on sequence of message elements strategically; considering research when choosing what goes earlier or later in a communication.	Support engagement in the issue by establishing that problems have solutions; direct consideration of collective, public responses to social problems.
<b>Tone</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>Visuals</b>
Supports consideration of the message by establishing it as explanatory and reasonable. A reasonable tone (as opposed to a rhetorical or partisan tone) also signals that this is a message for 'everyone,' not just those who already agree with the point of view being expressed	Establish why the issue matters and what's at stake. Strategic framers look to tested, collective Values that reliably orient the communication toward consideration of the public nature of the problem	Support the language-based framing choices with images that are consistent with the overall framing strategy. Most often, Visuals do the work of illustrating Context and Tone - strategic framers therefore literally widen the frame of a shot, and choose images that are explanatory and informative rather than hyper-emotional.

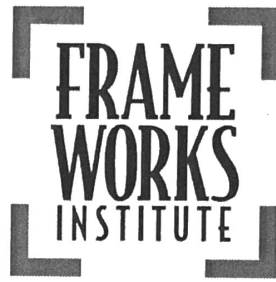


## Framing With Values

Communications on complex social issues can be more effective when they appeal to Values—stable, general ideals that orient and motivate attitudes, behaviors, and policy preferences. Values act as a starting point on a topic, guiding the reasoning and opinions that come after. When they are included in communication, they can help the public better appreciate why the issue matters and what is at stake. Values have significant frame effects, shifting public thinking in measurable ways. For this reason, it's important to rely on research to identify a value frame that has been shown to reliably direct thinking in the direction you wish to go.

### Checklist for framing effectively with Values:

- ✓ *Use Values early to set up what's at stake and why it matters.* It is important to frontload conversations with Values to activate a collective, civic orientation before getting into explanations or introducing possible Solutions. Otherwise, the public may not see how they have a role in considering the options for change, or may think they are already doing their part through their personal lifestyle choices. When communicators neglect to explicitly identify the high-level value of their issue, it leaves a lot to chance and misses an opportunity to strengthen and broaden the appeal of the communication.
- ✓ *Use Values when you feel the urge to "get people to care."* Many of the framing choices that communicators use to establish that their issue matters are ultimately counterproductive. Data floods don't work. Hyper-emotional appeals do more harm than good. When you are trying to establish that something matters, get in the habit of doing this communicative work with Values.
- ✓ *Rely only on research-recommended Values.* Values appeals are powerful: they widen the audience of people who will attend to a message and can move the needle on support for your issue. Don't just make a guess about which Value will work, and don't assume that your own deeply held values will be effective for communication. Use empirically tested Values, recommended for the specific issue area that is the topic of communication, whenever possible. Double check to make sure that a rogue Value hasn't snuck in alongside tested Values—this can dilute the frame effects of the tested Value.
- ✓ *Give the Values "room to breathe."* Values are not "magic words"—they are ideals that the communication is invoking in order to establish a productive frame for considering an issue. To allow the Value to do its work, it is important to develop the idea. The effect of merely "name-dropping" the Value by using a single associated word is likely to be less powerful than elaborating on the idea for a full sentence or two.
- ✓ *Prime a civic mindset with Values.* It is easy to slip into individualism, expressing Values in ways that point to benefits or problems for individual people or their immediate families. Be sure to express Values in collective, civic terms that focus on the community level or society level.
- ✓ *Maintain a reasonable, explanatory Tone: think civics class, not street protest.* An explanatory stance differs from a persuasive stance; strategic framing is teaching, not preaching. Using Values to frame an issue means establishing a civic dialogue and asserting a collective stake in a public problem. It is not about reminding people of their morals or manners.



## Framing with Numbers

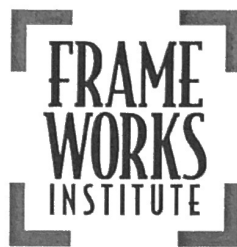
Numbers, like all information, are processed through existing cultural models in the swamp of public understanding. Because Numbers are part of a frame, strategic framers select (and reject) data strategically, thinking carefully about how the public is likely to interpret the communication and

Once Numbers have been carefully curated and chosen to be included in a communication, the technique of *Social Math* can help make the data "sticky." Social math supports the language-based framing choices with numbers that advance and strengthen the overall communication strategy. This frame element translates data to more comprehensible and compelling terms by offering comparisons to familiar domains on a relatable scale. When done well, social math broadens public understanding of an issue and leads your audience to think constructively about solutions.

The following checklist will help you construct Social Math analogies to enhance your communications.

### Checklist for Framing with Social Math

- ✓ *Select relevant data for reframing.* Not all data is appropriate for inclusion in your communications, and Numbers should be used sparingly, as accompaniments rather than as a main dish. When you select a piece of data to highlight with the Social Math technique, it should further understanding of the scope and scale of the problem or the efficacy of solutions. Select relevant, illuminating data that enables the public to (1) understand the meaning of a scientific concept or trend related to your issue or (2) understand how policy or active citizenship might make a meaningful difference for community solutions.
- ✓ *Create a relationship between a familiar and an unfamiliar object.* Carefully choose a concrete comparison with which the public will have familiarity. You have to assume when planning your communication that the audience knows little about the topic. Give your audience a familiar way to understand the data so that they'll remember and repeat it.
- ✓ *Watch out for data traps and swampy comparisons.* Double check that the data selected and the comparisons do not cue up traps or unproductive parts of the swamp. For example, good use of Social Math avoids framing with *Crisis*, and stays away from swampy comparisons that may cue unproductive thinking.
- ✓ *Choose a comparison that supports other frame elements.* When done well, social math reinforces and illustrates the other frame elements in your repertoire. Can you choose an analogy that pulls in a domain that has a strong "collective responsibility" flavor to it? Can you choose a comparison that extends the themes of Values such as Interdependence or Innovation?

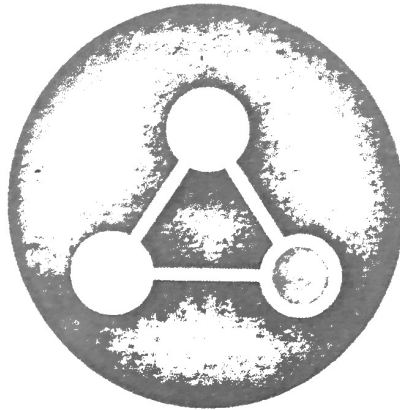


## Framing with Solutions

Effectively framing the point that there are 'solutions beyond problems' is an important strategy in strategic communications. Including discussion of Solutions helps to redirect the public away from the thinking that problems are too big, scary, or depressing for anything to be done and activates the more productive thinking that we can rise to challenges. Choosing to emphasize collective Solutions is also an important strategy in advocating for change, as this information is less frequently presented to the public.

### Checklist for framing with Solutions:

- ✓ *Prime a civic mindset with Values before introducing the frame element of Solutions.* It is important to frontload our conversations with Values such as *[relevant value]* and *[relevant value]* to activate a collective, civic orientation before introducing potential avenues of action. Otherwise, the public may not see how they have a role in considering the options for change, or may think they are already doing their part through their personal lifestyle choices.
- ✓ *Move from Values and explanation to Solutions as early as possible in the communication.* When Solutions are offered too late in the communication messaging, or not offered at all, the communication can send the message that the problem is intractable, and thus invoke hopelessness or apathy. Use bridging phrases and Values to establish discourse on Solutions sooner rather than later.
- ✓ *Frame Solutions as a collective, community endeavor that is relevant to the local region.* Offer community and regional level solutions that serve as models for what people can do collectively. Use inclusive language such as "we" and "in our community." Emphasize not just that "Americans are problem-solvers," but "Chicagoans/Floridians/New Englanders are problem solvers."
- ✓ *Watch out for Traps, and mind the swamp.* Consider the thinking that would be activated by the way you present the Solution. Does it lean too heavily toward consumerist thinking by emphasizing only individual-level actions? Might it bring out cost-benefit thinking? Does it emphasize technological innovation to the point that it might leave the impression that 'science will save us'? Review your Solutions in light of the cultural models and their cognitive implications.
- ✓ *Maintain a reasonable, explanatory Tone: you are informing citizens about available options.* An explanatory stance differs from a persuasive stance; strategic framing is teaching, not preaching. Elaborate on solutions – provide enough detail to so that the audience sees how the solutions relate to the animals/ecosystem you are referring to. Keep things pragmatic and practical, rather than idealistic. This is an issue that is solvable and approachable at a local, regional, and national level.
- ✓ *Have concrete, local examples at the ready.* People can most easily identify with success stories that offer familiar situations or local connections, so having local examples ready to offer the public can help make Solutions more immediate and resonant.
- ✓ *Tell 'solutions stories.'* It is not enough to simply name promising programs or list characteristics of effective interventions. The public needs help in understanding exactly how any proposed solution would alter the situation, with what outcomes. In short, people need to see how things work; how we get from a particular phenomenon to a specific outcome and what this means. Elaborate on solutions – provide enough detail to so that the audience sees how the solutions relate to the developmental science that is your base.



Value

## Interdependence

Why does it matter? What's at stake?



### The story you're telling:

It matters because we are all connected and must rely on each other, so we all have a stake in ensuring the wellbeing of others.



Strategically redirects thinking away from patterns such as:

- Individualism • Family Bubble • Separate Fates

## Interdependence



### Concepts and ideas included in this frame element:

- Our fates are shared: what affects one part of our community affects us all.
- We are all in it together. We all have a stake in promoting the wellbeing of as many people as possible.
- In an interdependent system, each part is necessary and makes a contribution. All of us have essential social, civic, and economic roles in our communities, which support the common good.
- By addressing this issue, we ensure that all members of our community are able to participate and contribute, which benefits us all.
- When we fail to ensure the wellbeing of our fellow citizens, we are all negatively affected.
- We are all better off when we use our resources to work for the greatest common good.