

Source Credibility & Communication Strategy Development

Overview

- Defining Source Credibility
- Why it is so important to our Strategic Communication Strategy
- Defining Communication Strategy Development
- How does the Presence/Absence of Source Credibility impact the intended effects of a Communication Strategy?

Source Credibility – What is it?

- *Concept developed by Aristotle in his classic text on effective communication, "The Rhetoric"*
- *Source Credibility theory portends that people, groups and/or institutions are more likely to persuade and influence others when those people, groups and/or institutions are perceived as credible sources of information*
- *Embodies perceived ethos of an individual, group and/or institution*
- *...and it is grounded in Truth!*

Source Credibility – What is it?

- ❖ Generally perceptions determine the source credibility of an individual, group and/or institution
- ❖ Conventional wisdom dictates that the higher the source credibility the higher the probability an individual, group and/or institution has to successfully persuade and/or influence
- ❖ Perceived trustworthiness, expertise and goodwill are generally considered the most important component of high source credibility
- ❖ The effects of high source credibility tend to diminish with the passage of time and are dependent upon the perceived validity of the message and/or persuasive communication attempt
- ❖ The success or failure of a persuasion/influence operation is dependent upon the perceived credibility of the source by the receptor

Source Credibility – What is it?

- ❖ High source credibility is critical to the development and implementation of successful communication strategies to shape the information environment in which military operations take place
- ❖ Virtually every action, message and decision associated with a military operation shapes the opinions of indigenous populations as well as domestic and coalition audiences though the effect may differ for different populations/audiences
- ❖ Message transparency and consistency is crucial to sustaining source credibility and the role it plays in shaping the information environment
- ❖ The traditional kinetic focus of US military operations often jeopardizes communication-based shaping efforts because kinetic actions can often limit and/or serve to deteriorate source credibility

Source Credibility – What is it?

- ❖ Information fratricide, or the failure to synchronize and deconflict messages puts a great burden on US shaping initiatives
- ❖ Truth is the foundation of source credibility and therefore fundamental to shaping the information environment
- ❖ **Deeds must agree with the messages** conveyed during any information environment shaping operation – the unintended consequence of potential cognitive dissonance among various populations/audiences may result from a disparity between what is said and what is done...this, in turn has the potential to marginalize source credibility
- ❖ **BOTTOM LINE: "Ya gotta walk the walk and talk the talk!"**

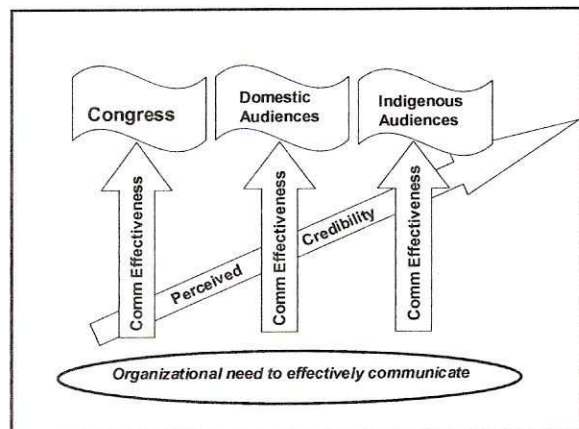
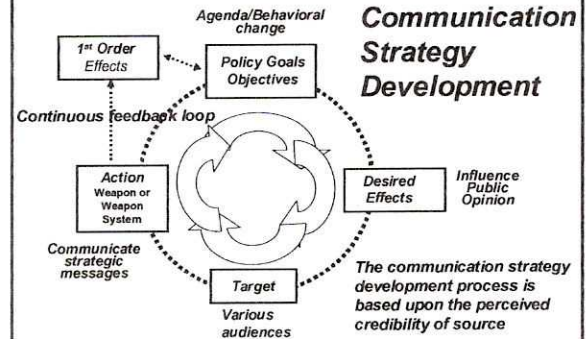
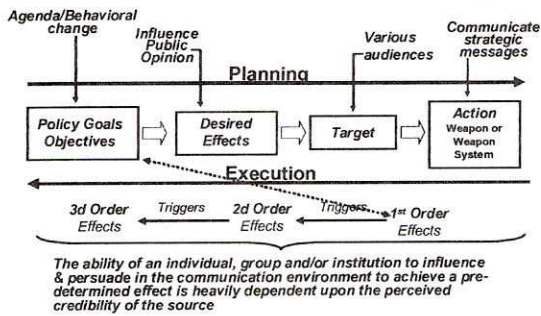
Communication Strategy Development

- For successful communication to occur, there must be:
- One or more objectives and/or desired effects — These objectives will vary depending on the target audience
- A credible source of information
- A credible message for each target audience — the message is persuasive and intended to influence some behavior/perception/opinion
- Message development should take into consideration operational security & the cultural norms of the “targeted” audience

Communication Strategy Development

- Transmission channel — The channel is both the medium that you use to transmit your information and the understanding that you expect to achieve in those who receive the message
- A receiver — The receiver is the destination of your message. The receiver interprets the message according to his or her own perspective, knowledge, and logic. A good message takes this into account
- Feedback — Communication is not a one-way process: we send a message to someone and that person reacts to the message received. It is important to test the effect of the message and the communication tool before finalizing it. Then you can make adjustments based on the receiver’s feedback.

Deliberative Planning: Effects-Based Approach



(source: USAF Air University course 6236)