



# A New Approach to Government Communications

Tony Douglas,  
Director  
EMC



# Storytelling

- People are not convinced by facts, media ‘grabs’, statistics or even messages.
- To effectively communicate with people you need to tell a story.
- This is what we call a ‘framing narrative.’



# Framing Narrative in Public Affairs

A framing narrative for public affairs discussion in Australia needs to pose and answer 4 questions:

- What is the problem?
- Who is Affected?
- How are they Affected?
- What is the Solution?



# Common Mistakes in Government Communications

- Being too frightened to admit a problem for fear of being held responsible for that problem.
- Therefore announcing a solution to a problem that the community either didn't know existed or was not sufficiently understood.
- The result is that the public believe that the Government is wasting money or don't support the solution.



# Common Mistakes in Government Communications

- Not defining the audience(s) for your communications – often there is a broader audience not just a stakeholder management process dressed up as communications.
- Not understanding the information needs of your audience(s) – assuming knowledge.
- Not understanding their interest or connection to your program or policy – failure to understand differing perspectives.



# Common Mistakes in Government Communications

- Thinking that a launch or a Ministerial announcement via press release has done the job.
- Thinking that the journalist is the audience and not the conduit to the audience.
- Failing to establish a multi-channel communications execution plan that provides the capability to deliver unmediated communications to target audience(s).



# Common Mistakes in Government Communications

- Do not move to the creative approach until ideas and language have been tested in research.
- In other words do not let the advertising agencies hoodwink you and do not run a process where they pitch creative and win the work on the basis of untested creative.



# The Method – How to Avoid These Mistakes



IPAA 2014  
INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE  
PERTH CONVENTION  
AND EXHIBITION CENTRE  
29 & 30 OCTOBER



- First define & research your audience(s) to understand their awareness, connection and information needs.
- Make sure the research delivers communications outcomes – make sure communications professionals craft messages and creative for testing in the research.





# Starting Point – A Communications Audit



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- If you are unsure as to whether your organisation has a communications strategy, the communications capability and a communications culture do an audit that includes research of key target audiences to get their opinion.
- A communications culture sees communications as part of the decision-making process not an announcement at the end of the process.



# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS MODEL

GOALS

TARGET AUDIENCE(S)

FRAMING NARRATIVE

- what is the problem?
- what is the solution?
- who benefits/loses?
- in what way do they benefit/lose?

KEY ISSUES & MESSAGES

FREE MEDIA

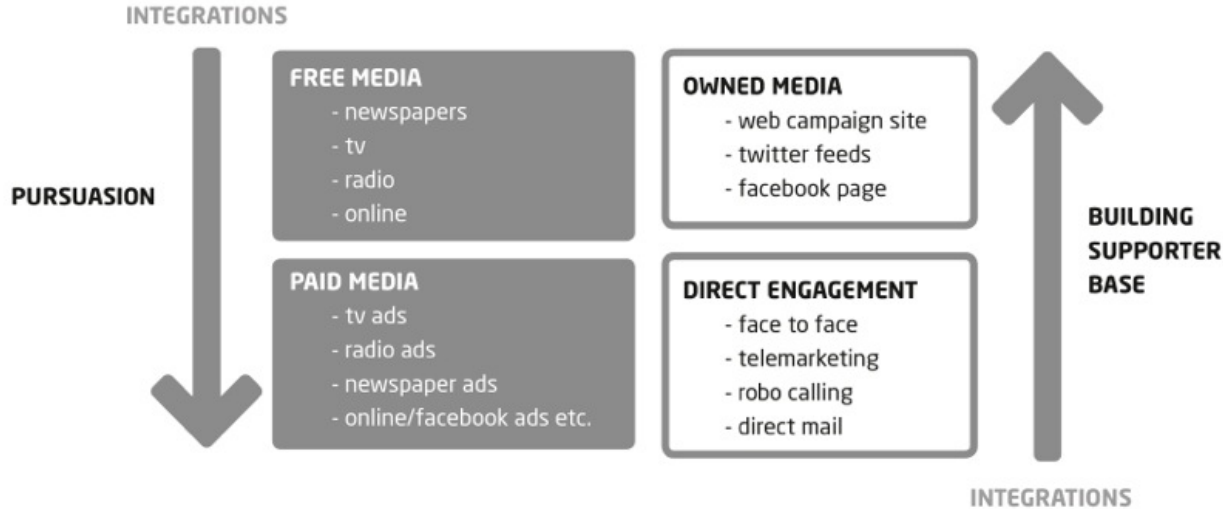
PAID MEDIA

OWNED MEDIA

DIRECT ENGAGEMENT



## EXECUTION PLAN





# STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

**HYPOTHESIS**



**MARKET RESEARCH TESTING**



**STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT**



# THE STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS CHAIN

**RAISE  
AWARENESS**



**SHIFT  
ATTITUDES**



**CHANGE  
BEHAVIOUR**