Strategic Communication and Influence: An Unofficial Primer

Dr Paul Lieber
Resident Senior Fellow, JSOU (Contractor)
The views expressed in this presentation are entirely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views, policy or position of the United States Government, Department of Defense, United States Special Operations Command, or Joint Special Operations University.
Strategic Communication is the systematic, deliberate organization of a message ecosystem designed for particular effect. It requires:

- Sequencing
- Complimentary conduits
- Known primary (and secondary) audiences
- Active selection of particular frames
- Ongoing assessment
Strategic Communication always features:

- Tangible objectives
- Coordinated communication
- Designated POCs
- SMEs on hand
- Documented guidelines (a ‘plan’)
- Familiarity with legal requirements
Strategic Communication: Partners

Strategic communication strategy should feed to/from:

• Public Affairs
• Protocol
• Key Leader Engagements
• Intelligence Collection
• On-the-Ground interaction
• Partner Strategic Communication
• Training and Education
Strategic Communication Isn’t:

- Measures of Performance
- Counter-messaging
- Marketing
- Data collection (in isolation)
- Meetings for meetings sake
Influence: Defined

A scientifically grounded messaging campaign designed to garner favorable attitudes and opinions amongst a primary audience. It requires:

• Justification
• Audience segmentation
• Measures of effectiveness
• External validity
• Theoretical backing
Influence campaigns always feature:

- Tangible objectives
- A known end date
- Interventions only as needed
- SMEs/linguists on hand
- Documented guidelines (a ‘plan’)
- Familiarity with legal requirements (Title X)
Influence *Isn’t*: 

- Universal
- Ongoing
- A behavioral driver
- Substituted for in-person
- Driven by the adversary
Ideological Challenges

• Definition and authority struggles
• ‘Strategic communication’ as a taboo term
• Absence of social science friendly in leadership positions
• ‘Hearts and minds’ replaced shaping
• Over-reliance on solutions
• Divergent paradigms amongst the interagency
Logistical Challenges

• Plans that admire the problem via ‘counter’
• Incompatibility with peer competitor paradigms
• AI/Machine Learning short on context
• Lack of data standardization/integration
• Anti-scientific organizational structures
• COCOM mindset
Things to do NOW.

• Actively assess how data is used and why
• Re-introduce strategic communication function
• Re-marry survey to influence
• Adopt internal tiger teams led by social science friendly leaders
• Create IA strategic communication/influence cells centered on problem vs. adversary
• Insert functions into training/education
Thank You.

Correspondence:

paul.lieber.ctr@socom.mil

(813) 826-0490