

Strategic Communication and Influence: An Unofficial Primer

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Strategic Communication: Defined

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: Defined (cont'd)

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: Defined (cont'd)

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

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Thank You.

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