



On Think Tanks School: Communication strategies





Katy Murray
Lead consultant
@ktrmurray



Tom Hashemi
Director
@tomhashemi



In the chat

**What would be lost if
think tanks disappeared
tomorrow?**



Three sections:



-
1. Where we stand today.
 2. How to build a communications strategy.
 3. How to take a campaign approach to communications.

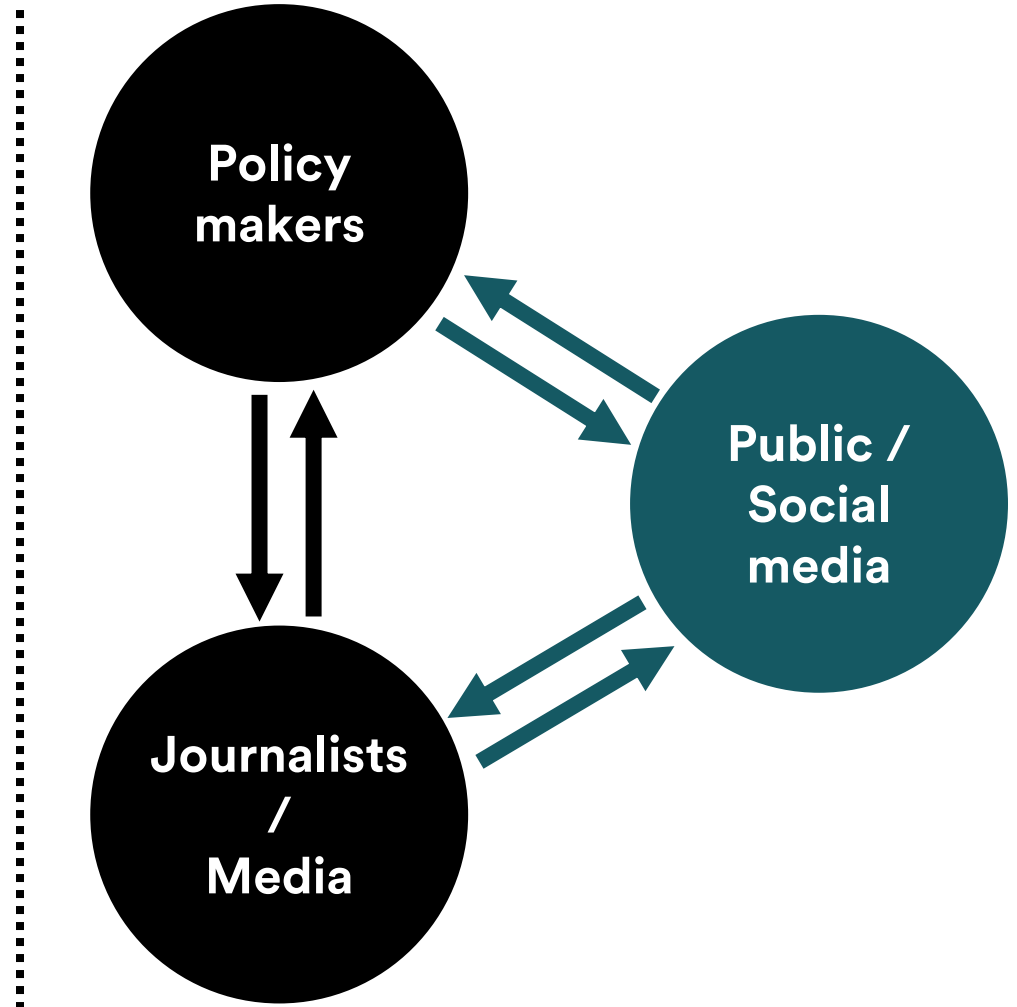
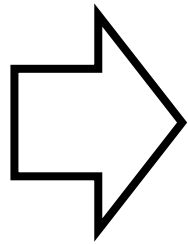




**Where we find
stand today**

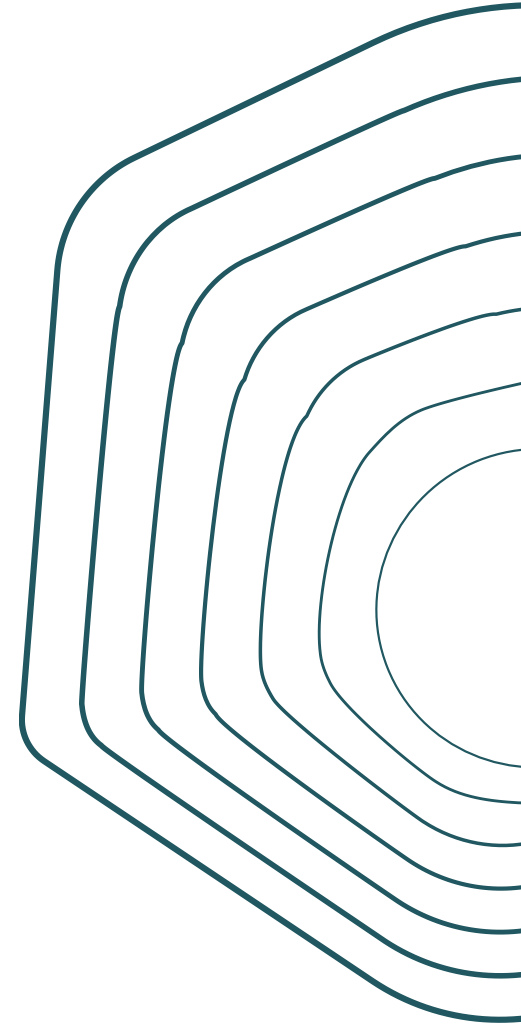
cast
from
clay

Think Tanks



1. COMMENTARY & OPINION
as valid as NEWS

2. HUMAN EXPERIENCE &
EMOTION as valid as FACT



“ *The politics of blue-collar people are **based on emotion** – on that seismic feeling that they have been under-represented.*

“ *[President Trump] probably even knows **he is not saying the truth**. What you need to understand about his base: **they don't care**.*



Anthony Scaramucci

*Former White House
Communications Director*



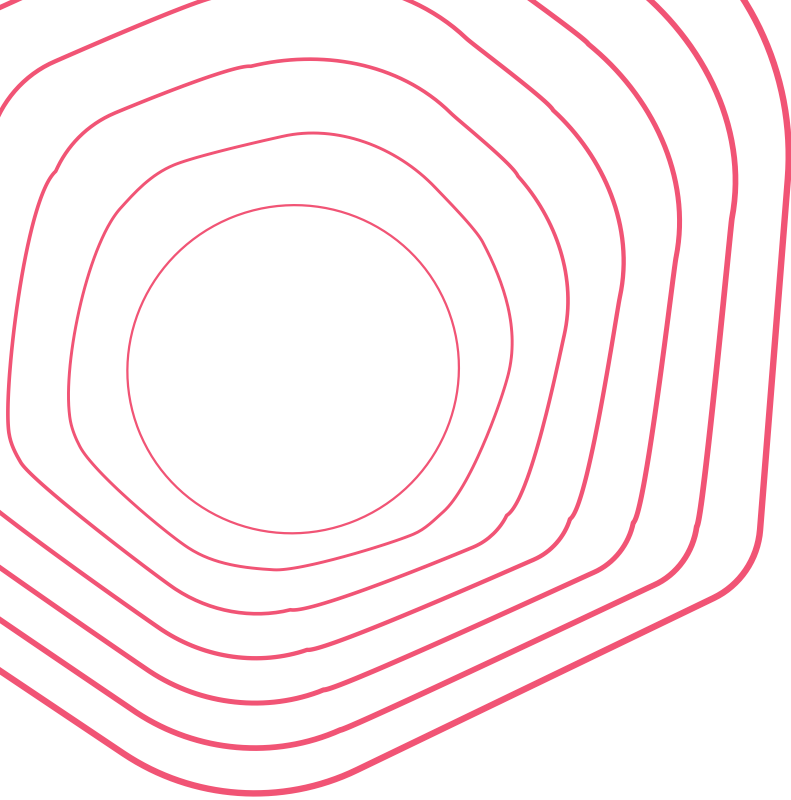
The best story wins.

“ *Most readers don't approach the news as a clinical exercise in absorbing facts, but experience it viscerally as an ongoing drama, with distinct storylines, heroes, and villains.* ”



Steve Bannon

*Former White House Chief Strategist
& Executive Chair of Breitbart News*

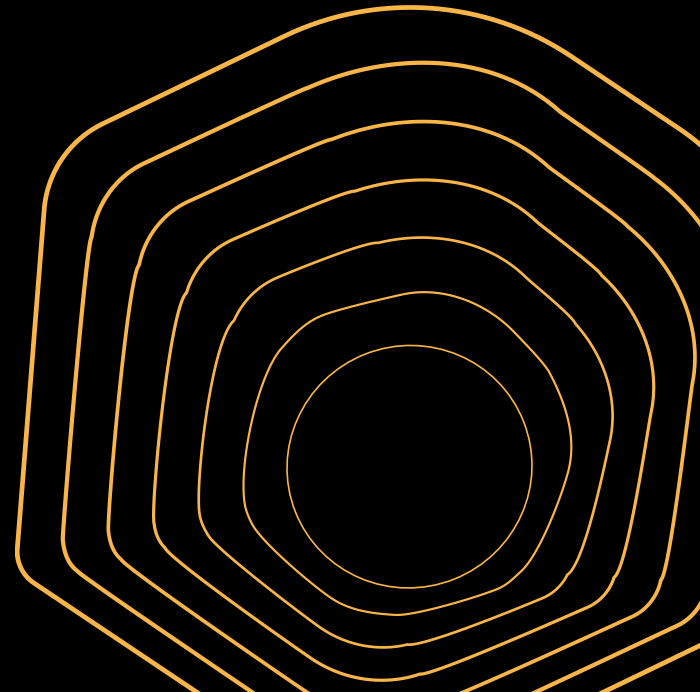


Policy makers do not want facts.

They want arguments.

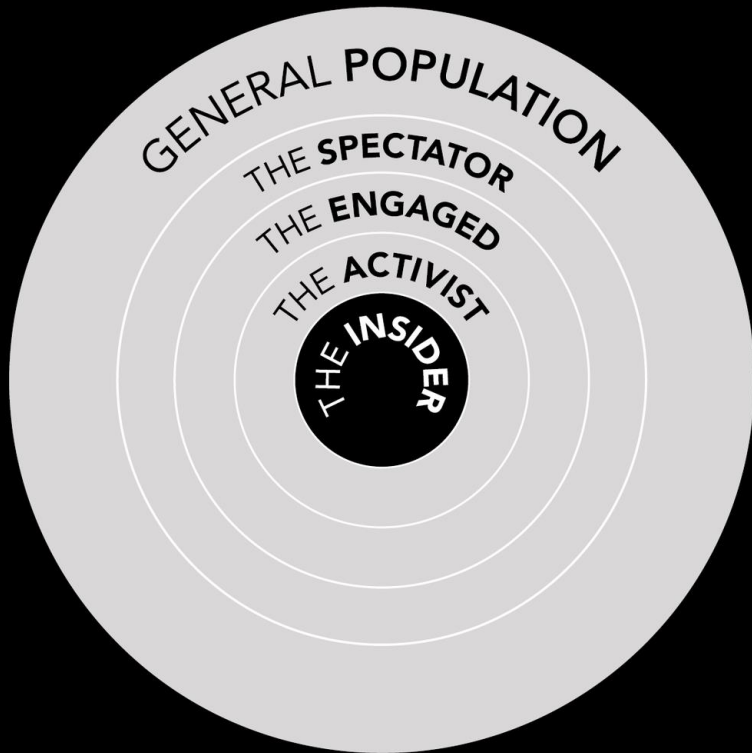


The new policy conversation

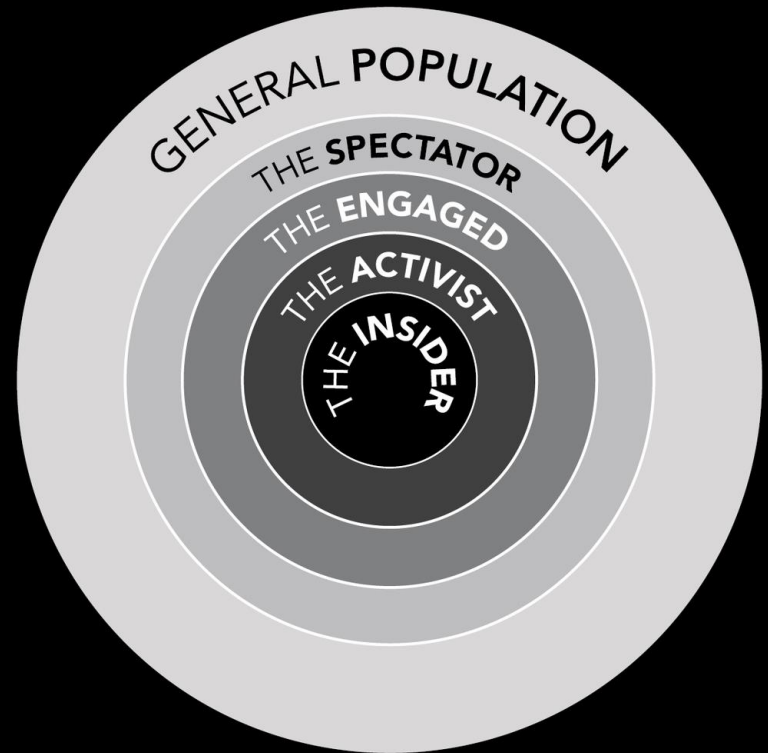


Influencing policy today

Old-fashioned audience



21st century audience



Light touch

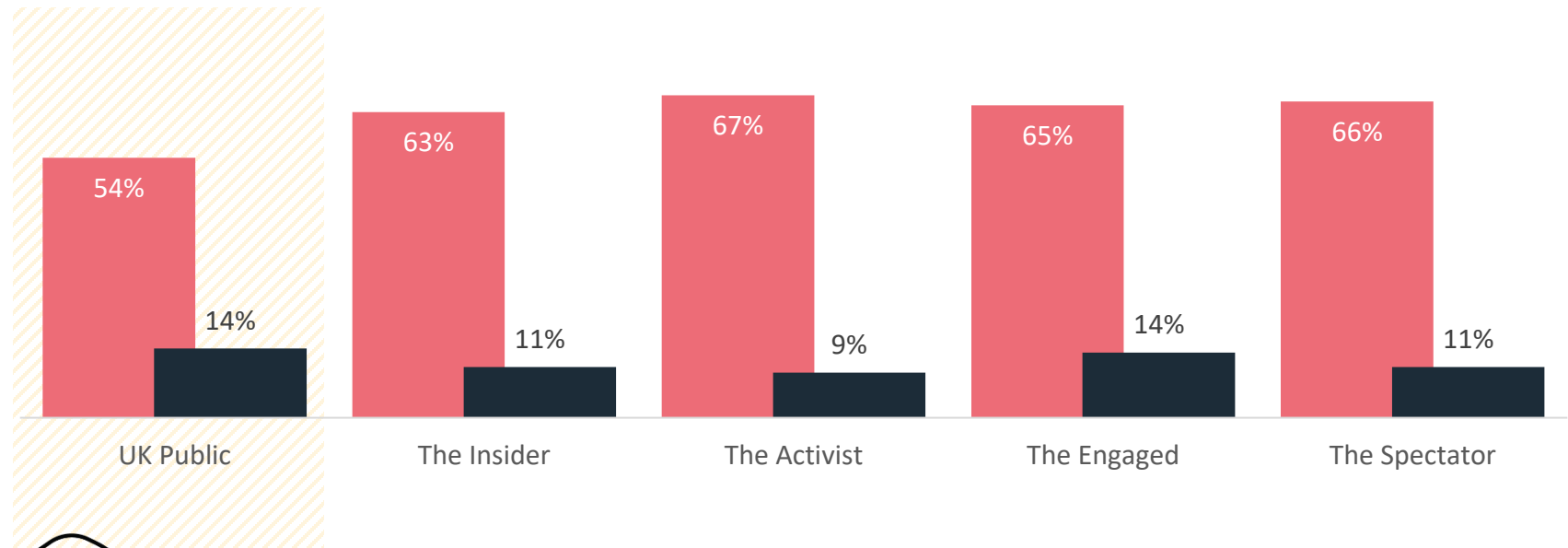


Heavy focus

Those interested in politics want policy experts to help them understand the issues of the day.

“I want policy experts to help me understand current affairs issues”

Agree Disagree

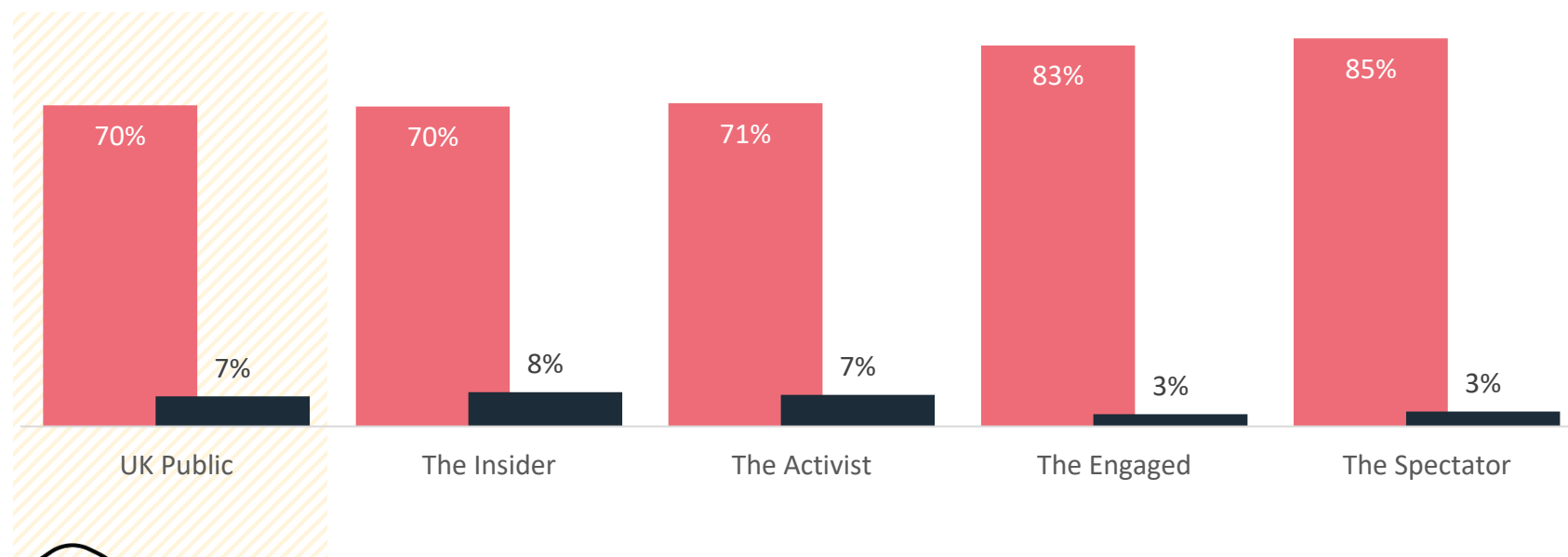


Base: All UK (n=2,000)

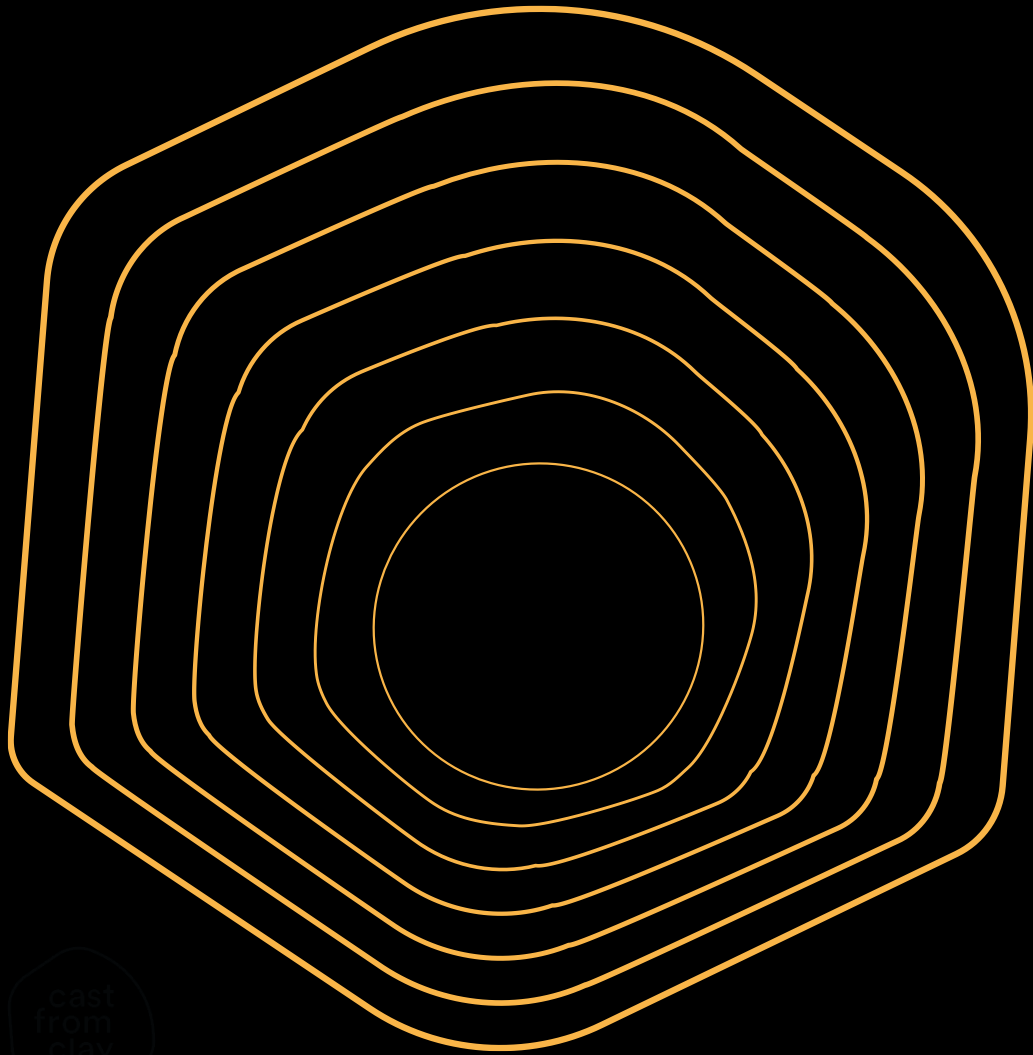
More so, the public want policy experts to challenge fake news

“I want the relevant policy experts to challenge news stories that are inaccurate or not true”

Agree Disagree



Base: All UK (n=2,000)



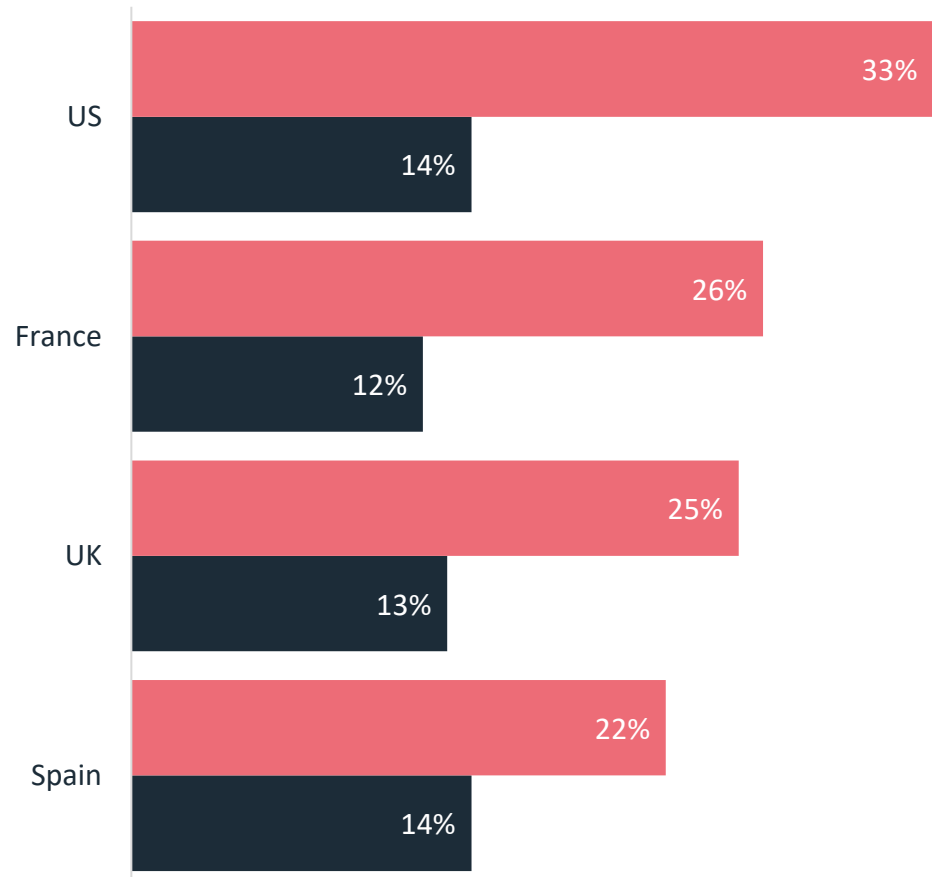
**Take people
as they are.**

Our perceptions are easily misled. For example, we think immigration is much higher than it is.

Difference between real and perceived levels of immigration*

 Guess  Reality

* Data from “Perils of Perception”
by Bobby Duffy



“Even after people were shown that the numbers were much lower than they had guessed, they *insisted* that their estimate was accurate.”

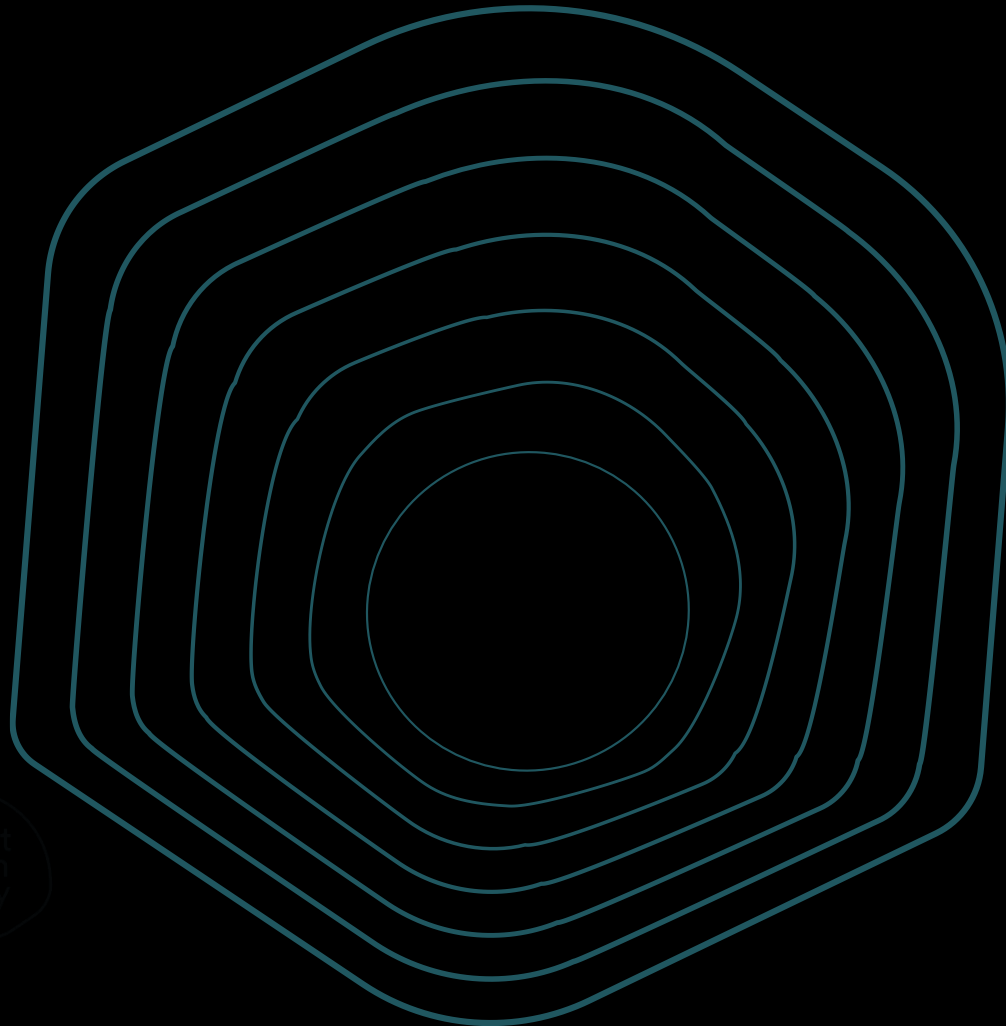
“the top two answers given were that the government’s figures were wrong, because they don’t include illegal immigration – or ‘I just don’t believe you.’”

Bobby Duffy
The Perils of Perception



“One of the fundamental findings of cognitive science is that people think in terms of frames and metaphors...
When the facts don't fit the frames, the frames are kept and the facts ignored.”

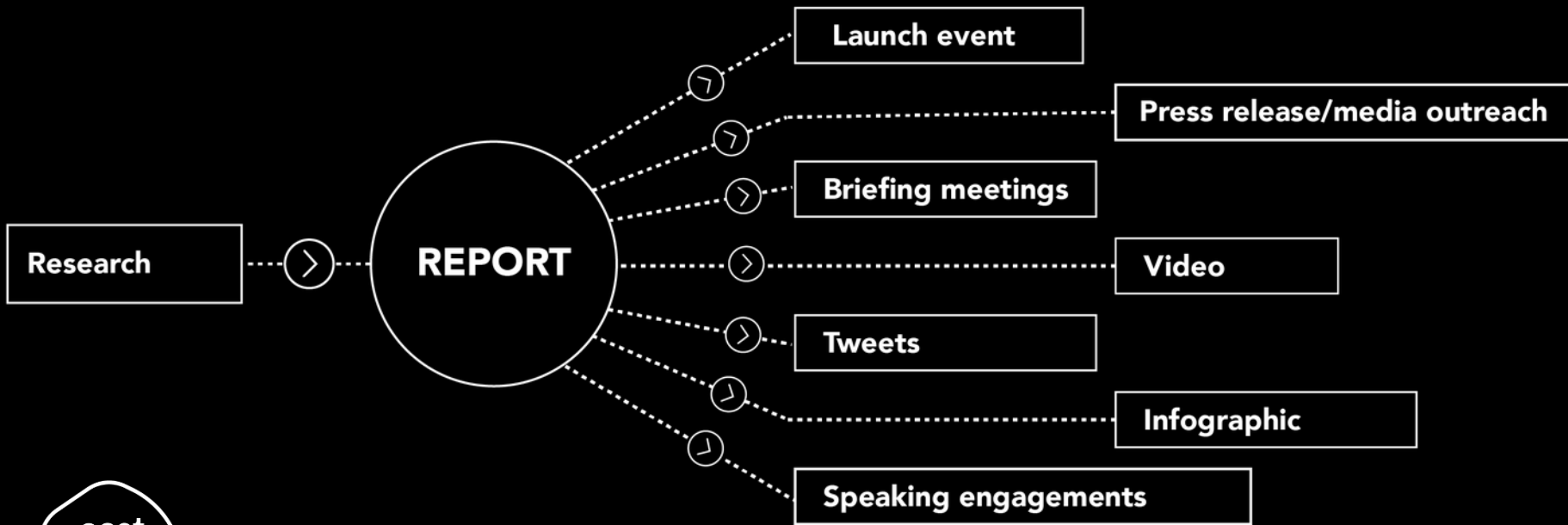
George Lakoff
Don't think of an elephant!



**Evolve the
comms model**

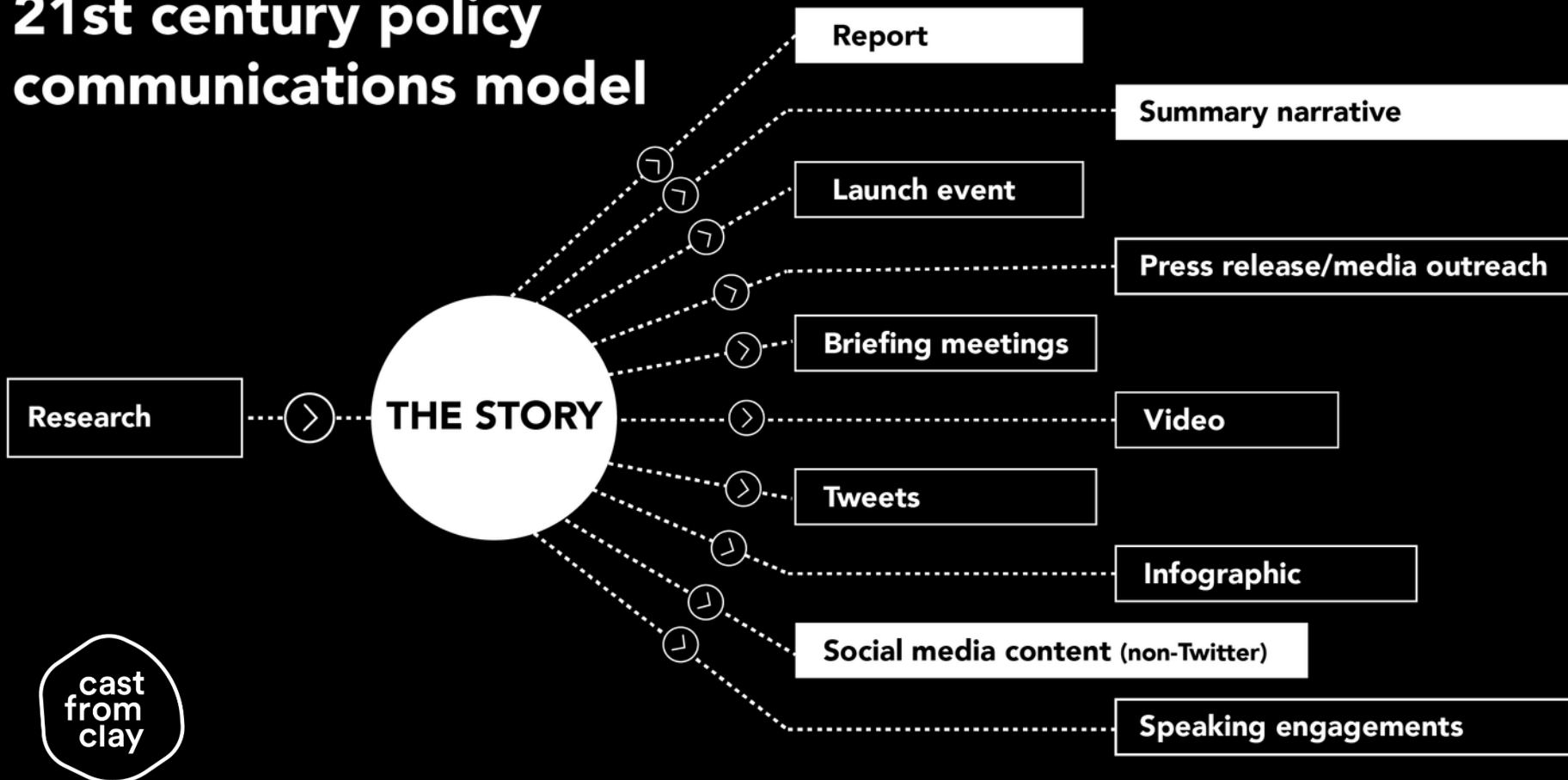
And yet...

Old-fashioned policy communications model



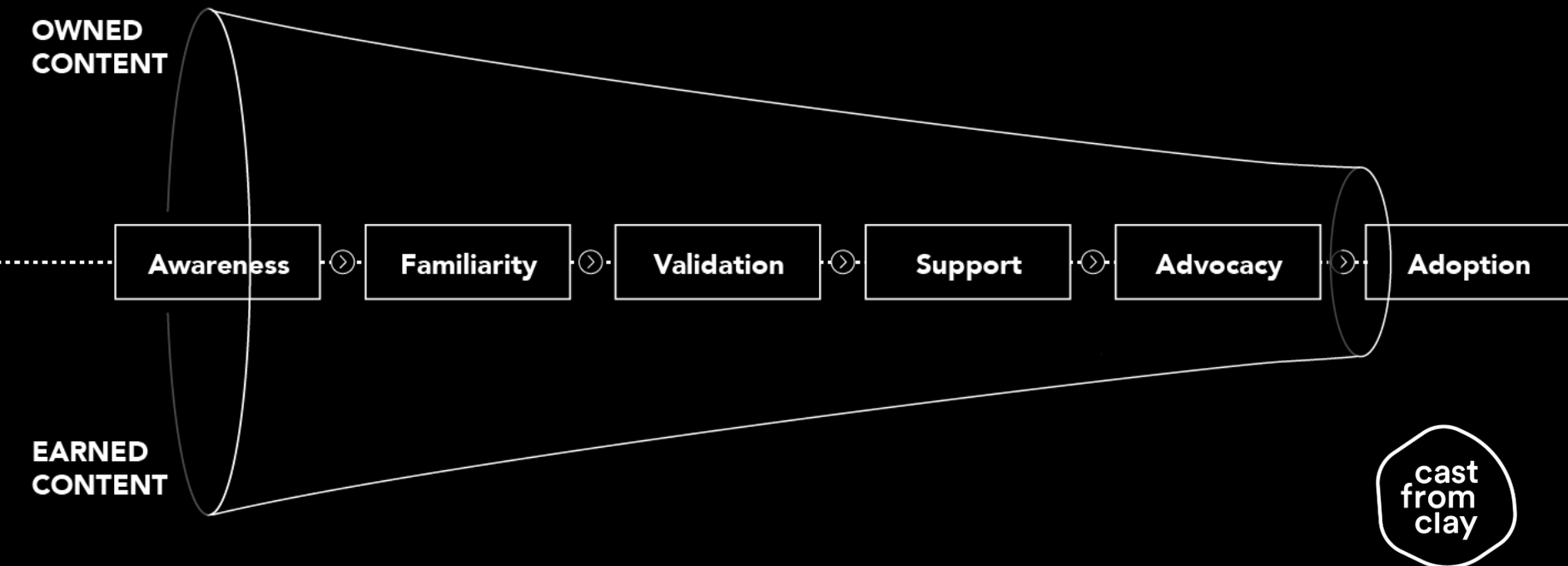
Put the story – not the report – at the heart of your communications effort.

21st century policy communications model



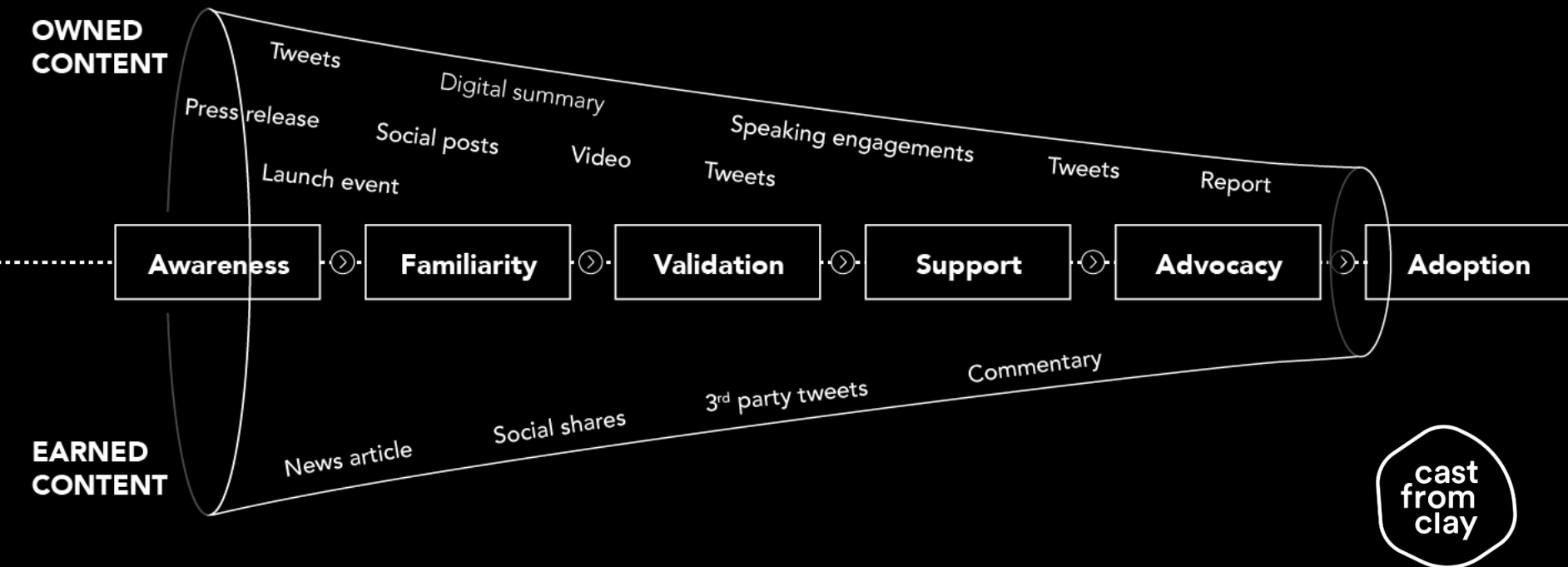
Consider the full policy maker journey – from awareness to adoption.

The Policy Adoption Funnel



Map the content you need to guide policy makers along that journey.

The Policy Adoption Funnel





How to build a communications strategy

Tom Hashemi

This session:



-
- 1. Frame how you think about strategy.**
 - 2. Give you a process you can adapt to your specific use case.**



**Strategy is the prioritised
deployment of limited resources
against agreed objectives.**

**The power of strategy
is in the permission
it provides to say “no”.**



In the chat

**When was the last time
you said no to
something at work?
How did it feel?**



“Let’s pitch for this funder.”
“Does it align with our strategy?”
“It doesn’t.”

“That software is cool. Let’s license it.”
“Does it align with our strategy?”
“It doesn’t.”

“Can we hire this firm to do that?”
“Does it align with our strategy?”
“It doesn’t.”

“I want to hire someone for this role?”
“Does it align with our strategy?”
“It doesn’t.”

“I want to use organisational time,
budget, or any other resource to do this
thing.”

“Does it align with our strategy?”
“It doesn’t.”

“... no.”



Clear strategic vision



Ruthless clarity of thought and focus



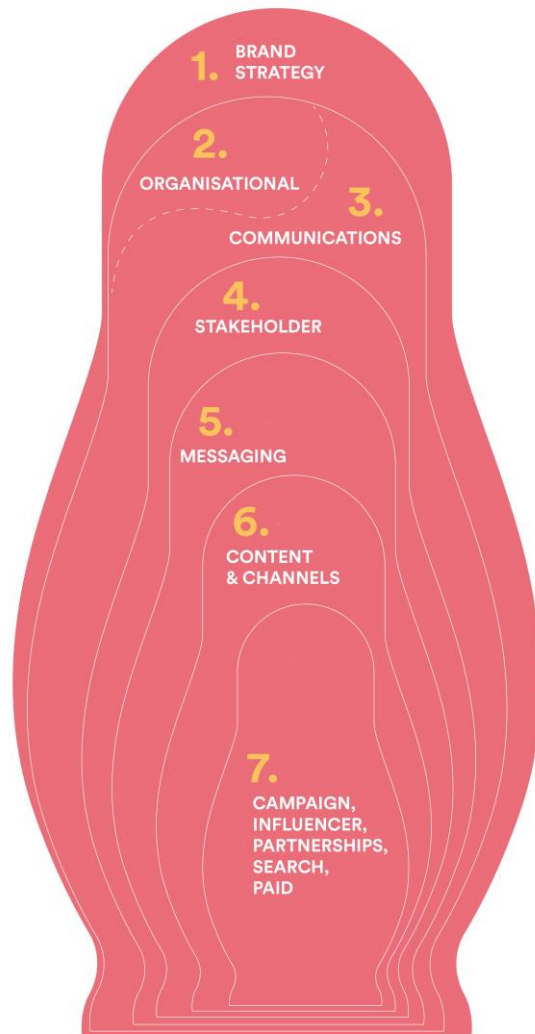
Efficient allocation of resources



Increased likelihood of impact

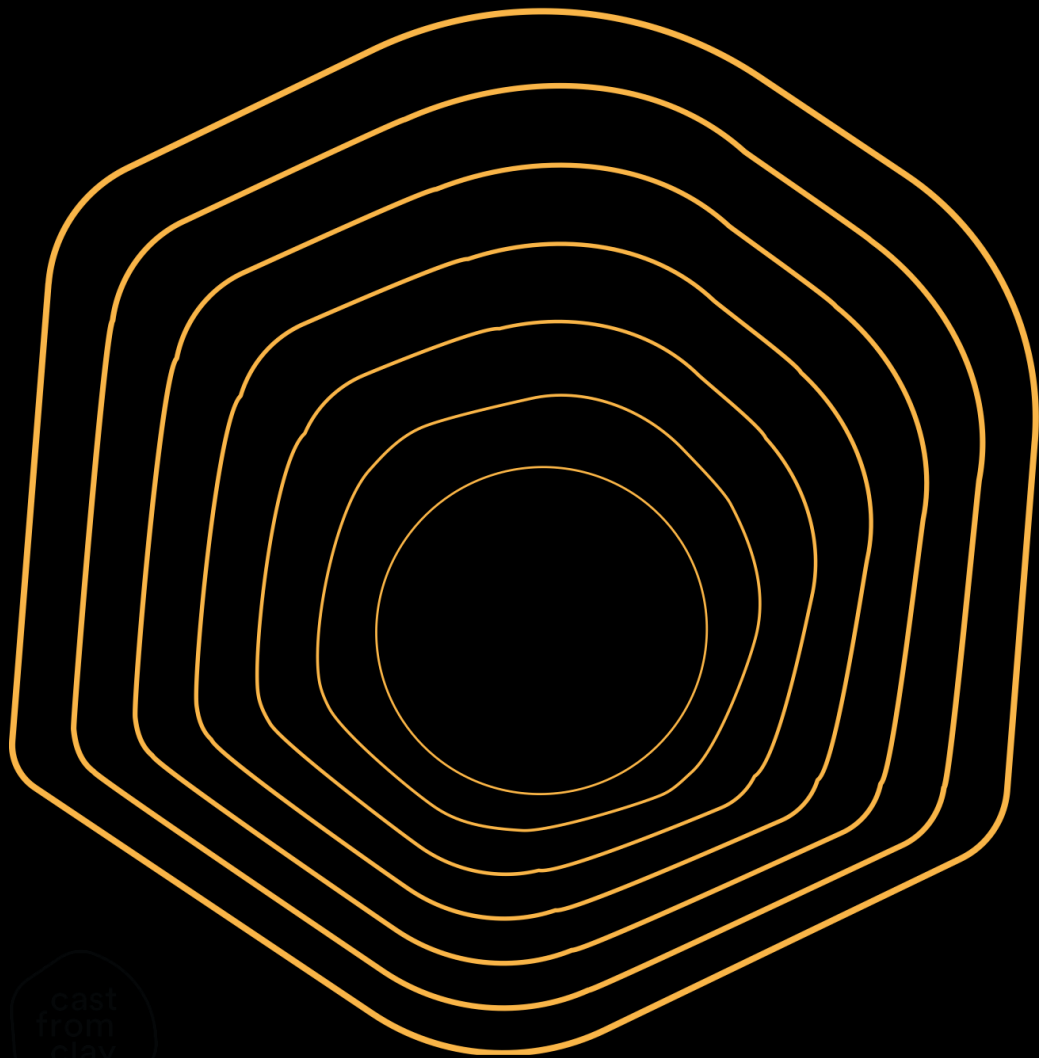


The Russian Doll approach to strategy



1. Brand strategy
 - what is your goal: mission, vision, purpose
2. Organisational strategy
 - how do you set up and run your organisation in support of your mission?
3. Communications strategy
 - how does comms help you achieve your mission?
4. Stakeholder strategy
 - what audiences do you need to engage through your comms and what do they care about?
5. Messaging strategy
 - what are your messages, for which audiences?
6. Content & channel strategy
 - what kind of content will convey those messages, and how will you reach your audiences?
7. Campaign strategy, influencer strategy, partnership strategy, search strategy, paid strategy
 - how will you “hit” them?





How do we do it



Gameplan



Objective: Create a situation where you can say “no.”

Goals:

- 1. Generate an understanding of:**
 - What you’re doing, why, and how.**
 - How you’ll assess your success.**
- 2. Ensure that these understandings are subscribed to.**



Before you start

1. **What resource do you have available to execute the strategy?**
2. **Why are you doing this piece of work – why now?**
3. **“In 5 years you’re looking back at this project and you think, ‘that was epic’ – what made you think that?”**
4. **What is your audience prioritisation?**
5. **Who is doing this work, and what are their pros and cons?**
6. **Should it be light touch (allows for flexibility) or highly detailed (increased organisational alignment)?**



Process

1

Landscape
research

2

Primary
research

3

Internal
engagement

4

Strategy
development



1

Landscape research

cast
from
clay

Goal:

Generate a contextual understanding of the landscape you operate in.

What:

Compare 3-5 organisations, plus you, on 5-10 things (positioning, messaging, channels, etc).

Focus on:

1. Why are competitors doing what they are doing?
2. What can you learn from what others are doing?
3. What are they doing that you should avoid repeating?
4. What are the opportunities/ where is the white space?
5. What questions remain unanswered?

2

Primary research



Goal:

Understand how you are perceived by your key audiences vs your peers.

What:

Series of in-depth interviews (5 per audience), internally and externally.

Focus on:

1. What are the conflicts/ mismatches between external and internal?
2. What do your audiences want from you? How do they frame the conversation?
3. What is missing? What are the problems?
4. What are the opportunities / where is the white space?
5. What questions remain unanswered?

3

Internal engagement

Goal:

Generate internal political support; ensure your thinking accounts for needs across the organisation.

What:

2-3-hour workshop (or several), maybe an internal survey.

Focus on:

- 1. Resolving conflicts and tensions identified in the preceding research.**
- 2. Sense checking initial ideas for the strategy.**
- 3. Listening.**



4

Strategy development

Sit in a dark room for a few days until you see the light.

1. Put your out of office on.
2. Get out of your normal work environment.
3. Get headspace.

Two things to consider:

- A set of “strategy pillars” that frame the communications strategy. Example:
 1. Framing the Debate
 2. Deepening Relationships
 3. Focus on Accessible Content
 4. Evaluate Constantly
- The strategy should be achievable and ambitious; a blend of easy wins that can be done now, with ideas for the longer-term that will need investment to realise.



4

Strategy development

What you should include:

- 1. Main strategic goals, recommendations on specific tactical executions to achieve each.**
- 2. Each recommendation to have:**
 - **Timeline**
 - **Required resource**
 - **Delivery responsibility (head of comms, project manager etc)**
 - **External vendor procurement needs/ recommendations**
- 3. Measurement and evaluation framework (define it before you start doing anything)**





How to take a campaign approach to communications

Katy Murray

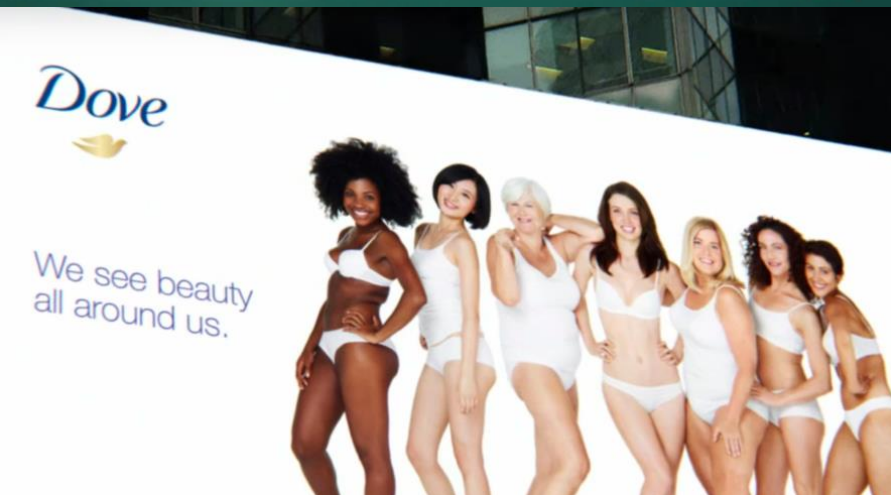
In the chat

**What's a campaign,
infomercial or advert
that has stuck with
you?**



Every cigarette we smoke makes
fatty deposits stick in our arteries.

We'll help you give up before you clog up completely. bhf.org.uk



Campaigns are **not** just for
charities, corporates or
political parties

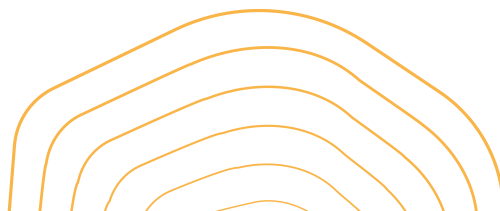
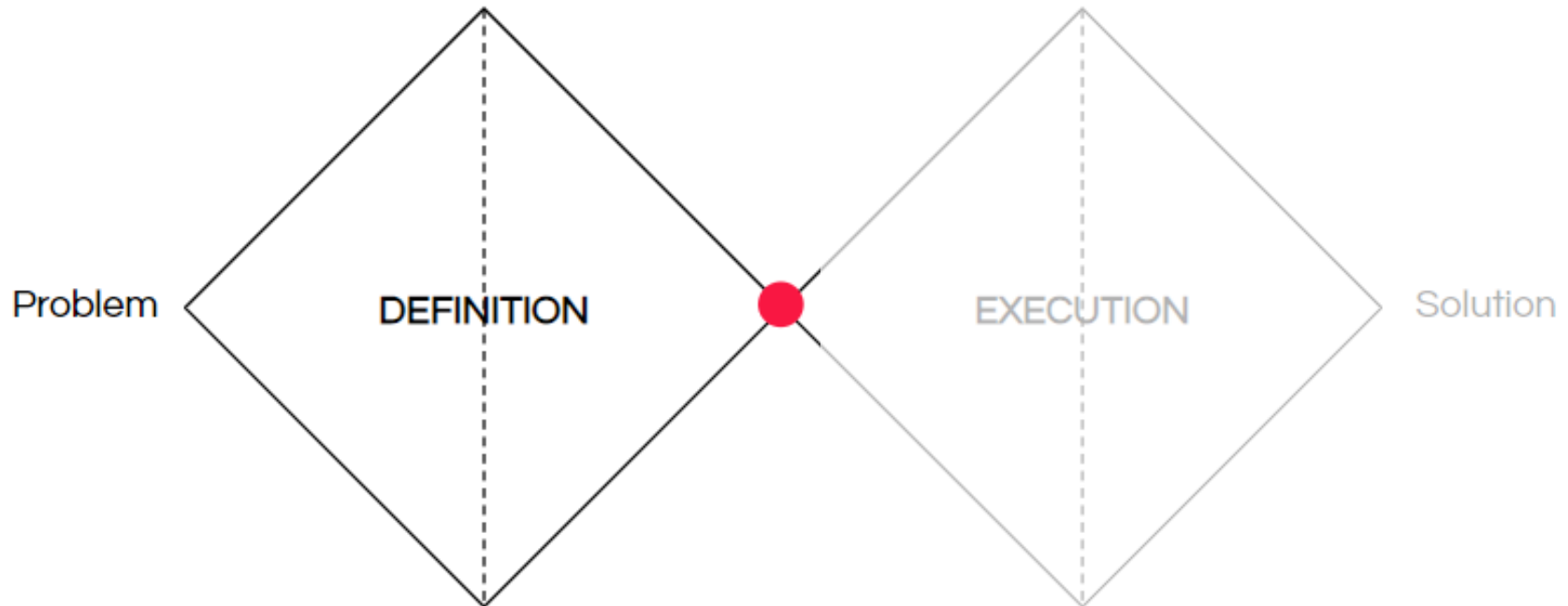
Stunts and slogans are the
tools, **not the end goal**



Our focus here: strategic first

Doing the **right** thing

Doing things **right**



What is a campaign approach?



“A planned sequence of communications that makes use of all appropriate channels to achieve defined outcomes in a specific timeframe by influencing the decisionmakers who will allow success.”

- *Campaign It!* Alan Barnard, Chris Parker

Why a campaign approach?



“...because there is a definite outcome to be achieved that is too important to leave to chance.”

- *Campaign It!* Alan Barnard, Chris Parker



Every cigarette we smoke makes
fatty deposits stick in our arteries.

We'll help you give up before you clog up completely. bhf.org.uk



Change behaviors
around smoking

Reduce deaths by
heart disease

Dove



We see beauty
all around us.



Build good-will and
trust

Increase profits

YES WE CAN



Inspire hope

Win votes







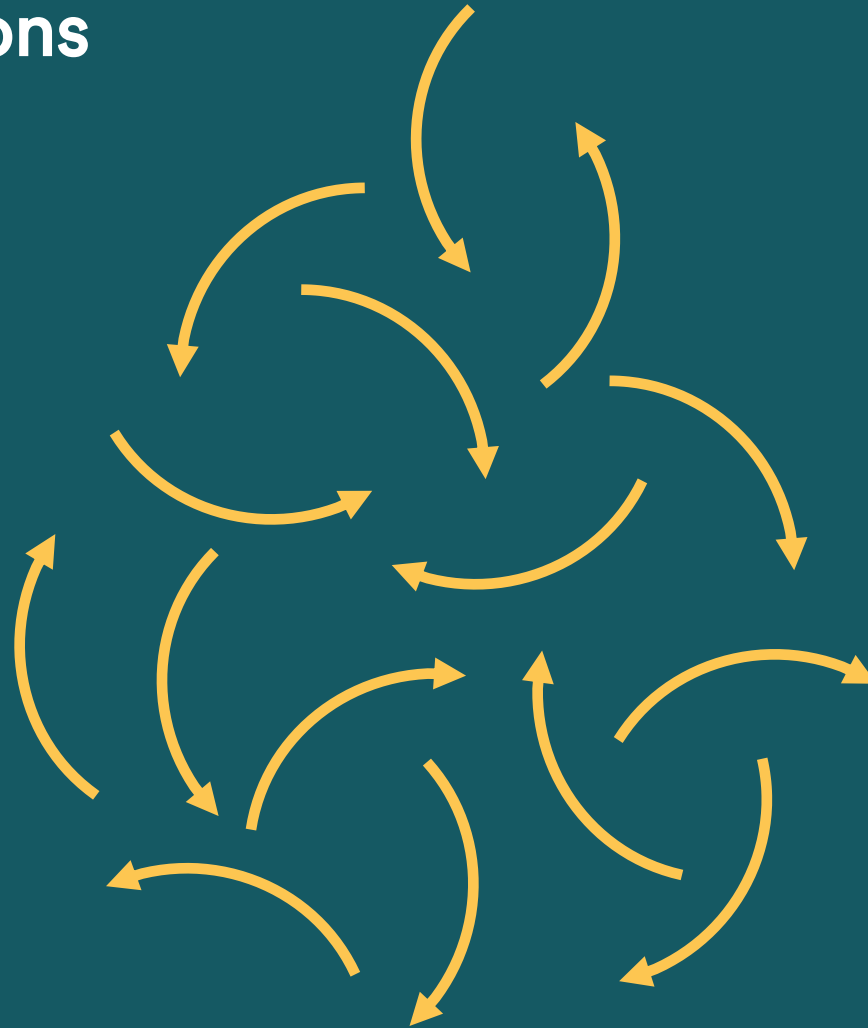




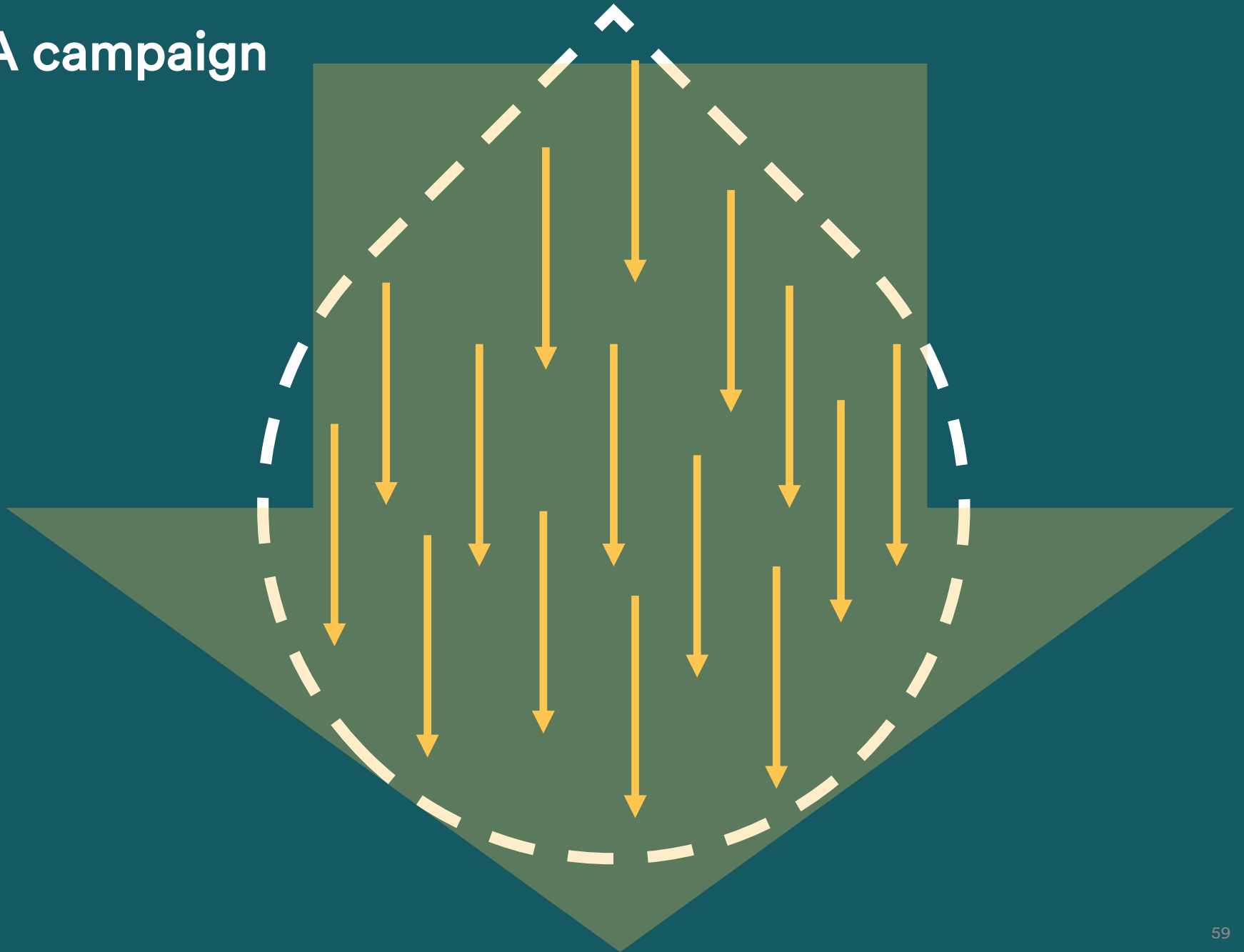




Day-to-day communications



A campaign



Campaigns versus comms

	Campaign	Communications
STRATEGY	Targeted objective Tight focus, single theme Specific call to action	General objectives Broader focus, multiple themes No call to action, or one-off
PLANNING	Typically time-limited Build-up of intensity/momentum Third-party activation & amplification	Ongoing Even & consistent Reliance on owned channels
EXECUTION	Owned name/tagline/hashtag Campaign-specific visuals	No owned name/tagline/hashtag Brand visual identity



Where to start



WHAT

a planned sequence of communications

HOW

that makes use of all appropriate channels

WHY

to achieve defined outcomes

WHEN

in a specific timeframe

WHO

by influencing the decisionmakers
who will allow success

Approach your campaign like making a sandwich


What are we going to do?

How are we going to reach them?

When is the opportune time to reach them?

Who do we need to reach to achieve this goal?

Why are we doing this?



You can't make a sandwich until
you've laid your bottom slice

Case study: IPPR

Donate

About Research

Fairness and powered pl

Publication Report Environment Environmental

Can we afford a green recovery to tackle the climate crisis?



IPPR

CLUE: We can't afford not to. Swipe right →

Caroline Lucas



IPPR

GREEN JOBS
GREEN JOBS
GREEN JOBS
GREEN JOBS
GREEN JOBS
GREEN JOBS
GREEN JOBS
GREEN JOBS

5
BIG WINS
IF WE INVEST IN A
GREEN RECOVERY

IPPR

NET ZERO
NORTH SEA

A MANAGED TRANSITION
FOR OIL AND GAS IN
SCOTLAND AND THE
UK AFTER COVID-19

Where will the
JOBS
of the future
come from?

IPPR

Everyone's talking about a
GREEN
RECOVERY
but what is it?

IPPR

Is the ban on petrol and diesel vehicles from 2030 a good idea?

Swipe right →

for our analysis with
IPPR expert Luke Humphry,
head of the Environmental
Justice Commission



IPPR

What are...
CONSUMPTION
EMISSIONS?
And why does it matter?



IPPR

WHY THE
CLIMATE
& NATURE
CRISES
ARE DEEPLY
UNFAIR

IPPR

IPPR

A better life for all with no one left behind

faster

Climate and nature policies

fairer

further

Justice to Address climate change and restore nature

Justice to introduce net emissions zero

What is the
IPPR
ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE
COMMISSION?

IPPR

Twitter Facebook Instagram LinkedIn Search Menu

Executive Review

people- nsition

Bottom slice: why?



Advocate for a **fair** transition to net zero

Advance progressive policies*



*My paraphrasing

Fodder and finish: who, when, how, what?



Targeting politicians,
policymakers and public...

In the run up to COP26...

On channels from
Instagram to traditional
media...

With calls for a fair,
green recovery.

Download summary for policymakers -
PDF (4.00 MB)



IPPR
The Progressive Policy Think Tank
IPPR North IPPR Scotland

Watch & Listen Media Events Get Involved Progressive Review

Topics Major programmes Publications Blog Experts

Skills for a **green recovery**: A call to action for the UK construction industry

The UK's 10-point plan to achieve net zero climate emissions by 2050 is a shared responsibility. Central to the plan is the construction industry, which will be responsible for designing, building and maintaining the infrastructure that will play a pivotal role in decarbonising our built environment.



BBC Newsnight @BBCNewsnight · Jul 14
"The decarbonisation plan that was being announced today is a step forward... but what's required is a **giant leap**".

@CambridgeZero's @EmilyShuckburgh says "climate change is here and now and it's only going to get worse"

#Newsnight | @maitlis

READ MORE: bbc.in/3wC1O7a



IPPR @IPPR

Everyone should be able to access what they need and enjoy nature without needing to own a car

But currently many people in the South Wales Valleys are dependent on cars for work and travel. Citizens' jury member, Katie, explains why this needs to change bit.ly/IPPRn0



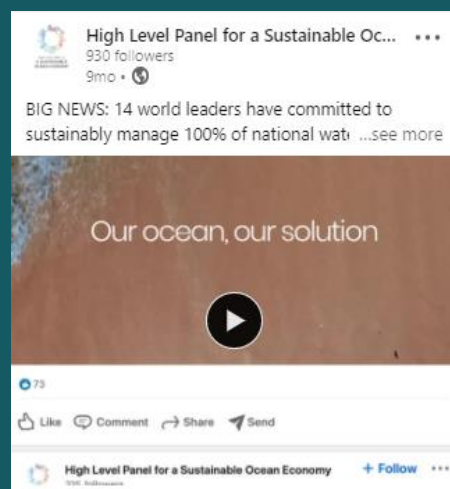
Give It 100% campaign

Target insiders and activists globally

Around a high-profile announcement

Through social channels and global events

With a clear ask, human messaging supported by science, shared by partners



How to apply it: Planning

Why?	Who?	When?	How?	What?
<p>If this campaign were to be considered a success, what would have changed?</p> <p>Awareness? Attitudes? Behaviors?</p>	<p>Who do we need 'permission' from to achieve our goals?</p> <p>What do our audiences think/feel about this issue, and where do we need them to be?</p> <p>Who do they trust? Are there groups we can influence to influence them in turn?</p>	<p>Will a certain timing help us apply pressure, or incentives?</p> <p>How far can we realistically take our audiences with one campaign?</p> <p>What follow-up activity do we need to plan after?</p>	<p>Which channels are they on already?</p> <p>What is your story? Which messages will resonate with them?</p> <p>Do we need a campaign name, visual identity, slogan or hashtag to tie all our comms together?</p>	<p>What can we say about this topic that no one else is?</p> <p>Is there an ask, action or declaration that our audiences and partners can rally around?</p> <p>How can we illustrate our messaging in a creative format?</p>

How to apply it: Doing

Why?	Who?	When?	How?	What?
Define your objective(s)	Map your key stakeholders, their power and influence, any leverage points	Start from your climax date and work backwards	Draft your campaign narrative, then define your top-level message – and then supporting messages	Develop key messages into creative concepts
Identify the one idea, message or action you would like your audience to take away from the campaign	Survey or interview target audiences for attitudes on an issue	Create a roadmap, setting out how your narrative will unfold and any set dates along the way	Identify which messages and content are right for which channels & audiences	Refine creative concepts into creative executions: eye-catching images, memorable phrases, engaging events
	Gather your allies and partners, start engaging them – and leverage their reach and influence	Refine and update your plan as things change – keep being flexible!	Develop a grid of daily/weekly activity, and roll-out the narrative accordingly	

Get in touch

E: katy.murray@castfromclay.co.uk

T: [@ktrmurray](#)





Cast From Clay is the trading name of
25-28 Limited, a company registered
in England under number 10385315