

Media and Messaging Presentation, Message Discipline, Telling Stories

In order to effect the kind of change that we long for we need to engage, and on some level mobilize, large numbers of people. To do this we need to tell a story that speaks to people's values; a story that reframes the conflicts we face; a story that tells a different future than the one projected by the power holders; a story that people can sympathize with and imagine themselves in. And it is not enough just to tell a story; we need to amplify it. This requires navigating through the filters of the corporate-owned media – the less-than-ideal channels through which many people get their information.

TOTAL TIME

3 hours

WORKSHOP GOALS

- ☉ Develop story-based messaging that can reframe an issue or conflict.
- ☉ Learn to communicate your message effectively through the channels of the mainstream media.
- ☉ Learn to give an effective interview.

HOW TO PREPARE

- Set up the room and arrange the chairs in a circle
- Write up the Agenda and Goals on large sheets of newsprint.
- Make enough copies of the handouts (they are at the end of this section, page 220).
- Write up on big paper beforehand: definition of sound bite, Message Discipline sheet, definition of bridging, Interview ABC sheet (from the Parallel Line: Interview Practice) and All Part of the Story (from The Battle of the Story exercise)
- Copy the images of Rosa Parks and the Democracy vs. WTO banner on large paper.
- Bring lots of markers, masking tape, and extra newsprint.
- Prep with your co-facilitator: review the agenda, divide up sections, and get to know each other's training style and strengths.
- Check in with the organizer of the training to find out more about the group's experience level and the makeup of the group, and to confirm logistical arrangements.



Media and Messaging (continued)

WORKSHOP DESIGN

Time	Exercise & Description
10 minutes	<p>Welcome & Intros Create a welcoming space; set a tone and energy for the workshop that invites sharing and participation</p>
10	<p>Sentence Completion Exercise Ground people in their personal learning goals for the workshop, as well as in what they already know, from the outset</p>
20	<p>Brainstorms: About the Media Build a collective understanding about the media, the reasons for engaging the media, and the concerns that should inform this work</p>
20	<p>Parallel Lines: Interview Practice Get people practicing; get their mental gears turning. Create an experiential reference point for the rest of the workshop. Introduce key concepts in message discipline (using sound bites, repetition, bridging and "ABC").</p>
20	<p>Giving Effective Interviews Draw out the group's shared wisdom about what contributes to the effectiveness of an interview. And reinforce lessons about message discipline (using sound bites, repetition, bridging, and ABC).</p>
20	<p>Story-Based Messaging Introduce story-based messaging strategy.</p>
45	<p>Battle of the Story Apply story-based strategy to counter-recruitment work.</p>
25	<p>Interview Practice Provide a space for the immediate application of the workshop's lessons with feedback.</p>
10	<p>Evaluation To get feedback on the training, and provide a closing for the training.</p>



Welcome & Intros

TIME 10 MINUTES

GOALS

Create a welcoming space; set a tone and energy for the workshop that invites sharing and participation.

Establish your credibility as a trainer, and let the group know who you are. Let people know what to expect from the training by reviewing agenda and goals.

RUNNING THE EXERCISE



Welcome the group into the space. Introduce yourself to the group, giving information about the group you're with, your history with counter-recruitment work, and any other personal information you want to share.



Please introduce yourselves briefly, and say one thing you hope to learn from this training.



Pay attention to what people say they want to get out of the training. It can help you see how experienced the group is with this work, and help you to tailor the training and debrief the exercises to meet people's interest.



Write the agenda and goals (listed below) up on two large pieces of newsprint and hang them somewhere visible. When writing up the agenda, there is no need to write the name or description of each exercise. Just give a broad overview.

Goals

- Learn how to develop story-based messaging that can reframe an issue or conflict.
- Learn how to communicate your message effectively through the channels of the mainstream media.
- Learn how to give an effective interview.

Agenda

- Engaging the Media
- Effective Interviews
- Story-based Strategies
- Interview Practice
- Evaluation





Review the goals first, and then the agenda.



To be clear, there are some important components of media work that are beyond the scope of this training. They are not included in this workshop because of time constraints and because many of the components cannot be easily incorporated into an experiential learning workshop. Just to name a few:

- Writing and sending out a news release or advisory
- Developing media lists
- Pitching a story to reporters
- Organizing a news conference
- Compiling a press packet
- Creating a media plan and timetable for an event or campaign
- Monitoring news coverage



While apprenticeship is ideal for learning all of these, you can also find enough resources online to get you started. The Spin Project offers excellent free online tutorials. (www.spinproject.org - Click on *resources*, then *tutorials*.)

Does anybody have any questions? Does everyone feel comfortable with the agenda and goals? Can we move ahead with the training?



Sentence Completion Exercise

TIME 10 MINUTES

GOALS

- Ground people in their personal learning goals for the workshop, as well as in what they already know, from the outset.
- Get everyone talking. People who are more reserved or shy are more likely to speak up in the group if first given an opportunity to "find their words" by bouncing ideas off one person.

RUNNING THE EXERCISE



Have the group break into pairs, encouraging them to find someone they don't know as well. Ask each pair to choose someone to go first (*Partner 1*).



I will give you the first part of a sentence. *Partner 1* will repeat it and then complete the sentence with his or her own words. S/he will then complete the sentence again with a different ending, and again and again until I say to stop. (For example: *I like ice cream because... I like ice cream because it's yummy. I like ice cream because it cools me down on a hot summer day. I like ice cream because it's sweet and sticky and messy, etc.*)



Read each of the below sentence beginnings twice in a row to make sure everyone is clear. *Partner 1* has 60-90 seconds for each of the below sentences.



(Sentence 1) *Partner 1*, your first sentence is, "I want to get my message out through the media because..."



Watch the pairs from a distance to make sure they understand and are following the instructions correctly. (If people are stuck you can rephrase the question, "Why would someone want to talk to the media? ...So then, 'I want to get my message out through the media because...'"") Cut the exercise off after no more than 2 minutes, or sooner if a lot of folks appear to be running out of things to say.



(Sentence 2) Still *Partner 1*, your second sentence is, "One fear or concern I have about engaging the media is..."

(Sentence 3) Your final sentence is, "Something I might do to overcome this challenge is..."





After *Partner 1* has done all three, then the pairs switch and *Partner 2* does the same thing. Repeat the above three sentence beginnings, one at a time, to *Partner 2*.

When both partners have taken their turn, ask everyone to thank their partner, and then have everyone come back into a circle. There is no need to debrief this exercise as people's reasons for engaging the media, as well as their concerns, will be drawn out for the whole group in the next exercise.

Where This Tool Comes From

Written by Matthew Smucker, smartMeme.com and www.beyondthechoir.org with appreciation to Training for Change where he learned sentence completion (www.TrainingForChange.org)



Brainstorms about the Media

TIME 20 MINUTES

GOALS

- Build a collective understanding about the media, the reasons for engaging the media, and the concerns that should inform this work.
- Create a mandate for media work within the group.

RUNNING THE EXERCISE



Present the below questions as brainstorms. Write people's ideas on newsprint. Allow up to two minutes for the first two brainstorms. The third brainstorm—an "ambivalence chart"—is the focal point of this section.



We're going to do a few brainstorms now. I'll ask a question and you all can throw out answers.

First brainstorm: What is the media? (types of media: radio, TV, print, web, community, alternative, corporate, etc.)

Second brainstorm: Who owns the media?

Third brainstorm: What are the positives and negatives about talking to the mainstream media?



This brainstorm will be different from the others in that you will use an "ambivalence chart" to draw out the complex and sometimes contradicting thoughts and feelings people have about engaging the mainstream media. **Allow more time for this brainstorm, as it should be the focal point of this section.**

Write "Talking to Mainstream Media" at the top of a big sheet of paper; draw a line down the center of the page with a plus on the left and a minus on the right; and invite participants to share positives and negatives.








Ask participants to "say more" when they are overly brief, when you're not clear on what they're getting at, or if you think that others in the group may not follow what's being said.



In addition to general concerns people have about engaging the mainstream media, there is also a set of concerns particular to media work around counter-recruitment. In many contexts it is critical to begin organizing under the radar in order to build a support base. Contacting the media could be counter-productive during this stage of organizing. Look for these concerns during this brainstorm. If toward the end of the brainstorm these concerns haven't already come up, ask leading questions like, "What about timing? ...Are there any times in a campaign when engaging the media might be counter-productive? ...When? ...Why?"



Now and throughout the workshop, look for tensions, disagreements and controversies within the group. Rather than try to sweep these under the rug, or to try to solve the disagreement with your opinion, look for ways of drawing out (or inviting) the different opinions and feelings in the room – particularly those of individuals who may hold a marginal perspective within the context of the group. Without placing judgment, duly note all perspectives (often on newsprint) to create a workshop culture where people feel heard and respected.

-  So is it worth it to engage the mainstream media? (They distort our message, they're owned by huge corporations, etc.) Are the positives compelling enough to make this work worth enduring the negatives?
-  If the answer to the above question is yes—and hopefully it will be!—this amounts to your mandate to continue the workshop. It may be a qualified yes ("Yes, it is worth it to engage the mainstream media when the context and timing is right."). There is often a great deal of ambivalence in groups around engaging the mainstream media. Coverage is routinely slanted against challenger perspectives, and news outlets are owned by big corporations. Sometimes if these concerns and contradictions are not named at the beginning, workshop participants may carry a counter-productive degree of skepticism into the rest of the workshop. (If the answer to the question is no, then you'll want to re-evaluate whether your group is ready for this workshop!)
-  Another brainstorm: What *types* of questions do the media ask?
-  If participants start asking specific questions, help them to categorize the questions. For example, if someone offers as a question, "Does your mother know you're doing this?" you might suggest this is a personal and/or a hostile question. Some of the types of questions that should come up: friendly, hostile, open-ended, tactical, logistical, marginalizing, issue-oriented, policy, personal, etc. Toward the end of the brainstorm ask the group about any significant categories (from above list) that they may have missed.
-  What types of questions do we prefer the media to ask?
-  Circle types from the previous brainstorm—namely issue-oriented and open-ended—as they come up. Ask why, and allow for disagreement in the group.
-  In the next section, we'll get into what to do when reporters ask questions that we think are distractions from the real issue.

Where This Tool Comes From

Written by Matthew Smucker, smartMeme.com and
www.beyondthechoir.org



Parallel Lines: Interview Practice

TIME 20 MINUTES

GOALS

Get people practicing; get their mental gears turning. Create an experiential reference point for the rest of the workshop.
Introduce key concepts in message discipline (using sound bites, repetition, bridging and "ABC").

MATERIALS

Write up on big paper beforehand: definition of sound bite, Message Discipline sheet, definition of bridging, Interview ABC sheet (all below in boxes)

RUNNING THE EXERCISE



Have the group form into two lines, facing each other.



Shake hands with the person across from you – preferably the person across from you is someone you don't know super well. Does everyone have a partner?

Okay. This side [pointing to one side], you're reporters. You can be whatever kind of reporter you want to be—friendly, hostile, corporate, alternative, whatever. Reporters, you're interviewing the person across from you, who is a counter-recruitment activist. This side [pointing to other side], you're CR activists. Invent a scenario in which you are being interviewed by the reporter across from you. Maybe you're at an action. Maybe you've called up a local reporter and successfully pitched them to do a story. The details of how it is that you're being interviewed are up to your imagination. The point is, you're here, on the spot, on the record. Does everyone understand what you're doing?

Everyone take a second to put yourself in your role... Okay, everyone ready? Go to it.



Allow 1-2 minutes before cutting off the interview. Cut it off while there is still energy, even though many folks may still feel like they are right in the middle of the interview.



Activists, how did that feel? ...Did anyone feel intimidated? ...How prepared did folks feel? ...Did anyone have a hostile reporter? ...How did that feel? ...Are most reporters hostile? ...What kinds of questions did your interviewers ask? ...How did you answer? ...Was anyone asked an issue-oriented question? ...How was that?



Reporters, what struck you? ...Any strong quotes or sound bites that you want to share? ...Did anything strike you about your interviewee's presentation, beyond their actual words?



Allow adequate time for observations and discussion. Invite people to go deeper into their thoughts by asking open-ended questions that elicit further information. (For example, if someone answers that, yes, they felt intimidated, follow-up by asking, "How was it feeling intimidated?" If someone answers that they felt prepared, ask "What was it that you did before the interview that made you feel prepared?" If someone shares what they think was a strong quote, ask them to explain what they liked about the quote.) Ask *what* and *how* questions, but avoid *why*, as it sometimes makes people feel defensive.



Always look for ways of encouraging and affirming people's input and participation.



We're going to switch it up now. This side [pointing] is reporters, and this side is activists. Ready? Go.



Repeat debrief, probably taking less time than before.



The remainder of the agenda for this exercise can go where it appears, after the role-play and debrief, or you may want to look for segue opportunities to introduce and discuss these points (*sound bites*, *message discipline*, *bridging* and "ABC") throughout the debriefs. The charts and definitions below should be written up beforehand on newsprint. Reveal the sheets, one at a time, where indicated below.



Can someone tell us what a *sound bite* is? ...How long is a sound bite? [Reveal sound bite sheet]...Will someone read this definition please?

A *sound bite* is a short, often striking, quotable statement suited for television or radio news programs. The average television sound bite is 7-9 seconds.



Can someone give an example of a sound bite? ...Anyone else want to offer an example?



Some ideas of counter-recruitment sound bites that you may wish to offer:

- Recruiters prey upon poverty.
- Recruiters target communities of color.



- Recruiters disproportionately visit the most neglected schools, in the poorest areas, where young people have the fewest opportunities.
- Today's military recruitment system amounts to a poverty draft. How many senators' sons are enlisted?

🗣️ Production editors like sound bites. By arranging our words into **concise, catchy, freestanding sound bites**, we are much more likely to get our core messages through the filters of the corporate media.

In most news stories you will only get one single quote (if you get even that!). Therefore you shouldn't say anything to a reporter that you wouldn't feel good about if it were used as your one and only quote. In interviews, we need to think and talk in sound bites!

Any questions about sound bites?

What might *message discipline* mean? [Reveal message discipline sheet]...Will someone read this please?

Message Discipline

Develop two to three core messages.

Practice concise, catchy, freestanding sound bites that communicate your messages..

Repeat Repeat Repeat! Don't give reporters quotes you don't want to see printed! Don't be afraid to give the same answer to multiple questions, awkward as it may seem. Feel *entitled* to say your piece.

"Build a bridge" from the questions you are asked to the messages you want to communicate.

🗣️ What does it mean to "build a bridge" from the questions you are asked to the messages you want to communicate? Can someone explain *bridging*? [Reveal bridging sheet]...Will someone read this please?

Bridging is transitioning quickly to the message you want to communicate, from a given question or subject.

🗣️ This leads to the "interview ABC"". [Reveal ABC sheet] Will someone read this (see below)?

🗣️ You don't want to appear to be avoiding a topic, so it's important sometimes to acknowledge the question. Bridging away from the question is basically saying that you dispute the relevance or the frame of the question, and that you would rather talk about the real issue, which is X (your message).


ABC and bridging are not evading, but directing the reporter's attention to the issue. If your issue is counter-recruitment, that is the reason for your action or event. That is the *why*. And the *why*—the *issues*—are what responsible journalists should be focusing on.


Even when a reporter does ask an issue-oriented question, you may still wish to dispute the *frame* implicit in a given question. We'll talk more about framing later in the workshop.


I'm going to ask some distraction questions now. Think about how to bridge from the question to your message. It doesn't have to be fancy.

Interview ABC

Acknowledge the question
Bridge away from the question
Communicate your message

 Ask the group a distraction question. (Ideas of distraction questions: What about stopping terrorism? Are you against the military? Are you going to break the law? Do you even know anyone who is enlisted?)

 Does anyone have a bridge to share with us?

 Ask for other responses. Thank everyone who volunteers. Move on to other distraction questions if time permits.

Where This Tool Comes From

Written by Matthew Smucker, smartMeme.com and
www.beyondthechoir.org with thanks to Celia Alario, PR for
People and the Planet

Giving Effective Interviews









TIME 20 MINUTES

GOALS

Draw out the group's shared wisdom about what contributes to the effectiveness of an interview.

Reinforce lessons about message discipline (using sound bites, repetition, bridging and ABC) from the previous exercise.

RUNNING THE EXERCISE

-  Divide participants into small groups. Ask for a volunteer in each group to take notes. (If short on time, stay in a big group and have people throw things out popcorn style while you—or a volunteer—jot ideas on newsprint.)
-  Brainstorm in your group about what can increase—and what can detract from—our effectiveness in giving interviews. Discuss and note what things can *maximize* effectiveness in giving interviews, and what things can *minimize* effectiveness. Don't limit your observations to the actual words spoken in an interview.
-  Eavesdrop on the small groups. Interject questions only if you think a group may be stuck or focusing too narrowly for too long. Questions could include the following:
 -  What about appearance? Is that important?
 -  Is there anything you can do *before* an interview to maximize your effectiveness?
 -  What about some of the things we've gone over already?
 -  Do you think someone needs to be a policy expert on the subject to give an effective interview? ...What might you do to effectively handle (the rare occurrence of) a complex policy question?
-  Bring the small groups back together after ten minutes. Draw a line down the center of a big piece of paper and write "max" in the upper left, and "min" in the upper right. Go around hearing from each group, first on what can maximize effectiveness, and second what can minimize effectiveness. Jot answers in the respective categories. Ask people to say more ("Can you say more about that?"), or to give examples, when they give brief answers. Toward the end fill in what the group misses by asking, "What about (such and such)?" *Pass out handout "How to Give Effective Interviews."*

Where This Tool Comes From

Written by Matthew Smucker, smartMeme.com with credits to Celia Alario, PR for People and the Planet, for the questions



Story-based Messaging

TIME 20 MINUTES

GOAL

Introduce story-based messaging strategy.

MATERIALS

Print out or PowerPoint of two images: WTO banner, Rosa Parks

Write up on big paper beforehand: "All Part of the Story" (below in box)

RUNNING THE EXERCISE



You will set up a "spectrogram" where participants can stand at various places along a line to indicate agreement or disagreement with a statement.



Okay, everyone get up on your feet. I'm going to say something, and I want you all to arrange yourself in the room in relation to how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement. If you agree with the statement, stand toward that end of the room [point to one wall], and if you disagree, stand toward that end of the room [point to opposite wall]. Again, you may stand at any point along this line. Does everyone understand the instructions?

Here's the statement: *If people had the right information, they would take action or want change.* Again: *If people had the right information, they would take action or want change.*



Allow people to arrange themselves in the room. Ask people at different places in the room to explain why they are standing where they are (one side, the other, and the middle). It's okay if everyone is clustered together.

After hearing from several folks and allowing some discussion, ask for a volunteer to read the following:




Sometimes it's not what people don't know as much as what they *do know* that prevents them from taking action or wanting change. People carry stories with them everywhere – narratives through which they process, categorize and filter information. People often ignore, tune-out, de-emphasize, resist and repress information that challenges the assumptions of their narratives.


So, while it may or may not be true that people would take action or want change if only they had the right information, the reality is that many people's filters are so strong that they are unable to even hear certain information. For example, if you quote statistics about Iraqi casualties to someone attached to the meta-narrative of U.S. benevolence, s/he will likely find a way to quickly discount you.




The way to get past people's narrative defenses is to embed your message into a compelling story that appeals directly to people's core values. We need story-based messaging strategies!


Adapted from "Beyond the Choir," by Matthew Smucker, www.beyondthechoir.org

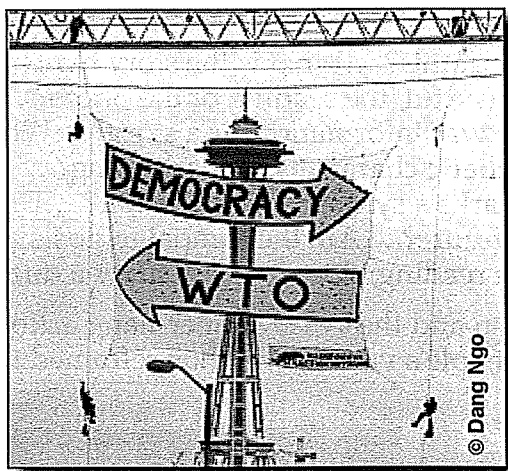
 Ask the reader to repeat the last paragraph.

 What does this mean to folks? ...What do we mean by "filters" and "narrative defenses?" ...What do we mean by "story-based messaging strategies?"

 Ask for a volunteer to read the following:

Established in 1995, the World Trade Organization (WTO) is a powerful new global commerce agency, which transformed the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) into an enforceable global commerce code. The WTO is one of the main mechanisms of corporate globalization. Under the WTO's system of corporate-managed trade, economic efficiency, reflected in short-run corporate profits, dominates other values. Decisions affecting the economy are to be confined to the private sector, while social and environmental costs are borne by the public. (from Public Citizen's website www.citizen.org).

 Show the following photo (PowerPoint or printout):



- ☞ Can someone tell us about this? ...What is the story here? ...Which presentation is more powerful, the reading or the photo? ...Why? ...Would you say that the reading was information, or a story? ...What about the photo? ...Which appeals more to people's values?

- ☞ Ask for a volunteer to read the following:

Blacks have to sit in the back of the bus. If a black person is seated and a white person enters the bus and lacks a seat, then the black person must give their seat to the white person.

- ☞ Show the following photo (PowerPoint or printout):



- ☞ Can someone tell us about this? ...What is the story here? ...Which presentation is more powerful, the reading or the photo? ...Why? ...Would you say that the reading was information, or a story? ...What about the photo? ...Are there any **sympathetic characters** in the reading? ...What about in the photo? ...Why is Rosa Parks a sympathetic character? ...Does the photo **foreshadow** a different future? ...Are the campaign goals embedded in the story? ...What about the reading; does it foreshadow a different future?

In both Rosa Parks' action and the WTO banner-hang action, activists told a story that appealed to people's values, and thus reframed the issue and conflict.

The point here is that information alone doesn't challenge people's assumptions. For a media strategy to be effective, activists have to tell a potent story that appeals to people's values.

While our words are important, are they the only components of a story? ...What, beyond our words, goes into a story?



Get a few responses before revealing the "All Part of the Story" sheet and asking for a volunteer to read it.



If we're not conscious of the different ways we tell a story, we run a greater risk of sending mixed messages or telling a confusing story.

Can anyone think of a time when the words were right, but the person's tone or appearance was distracting? ...Or a time when the words were right, but the person saying them wasn't a sympathetic character? ...What do the words "This War is Unjust" communicate when said by a U.S. soldier compared to when the same words are said by someone who appears counter-cultural? ...Has anyone ever been part of an action where the action logic was clear to the participants, but might have been confusing or even off-putting to a broader audience?

All Part of the Story:

- Words, quotes, sound bites
- Messenger: Who are our spokespersons? Are they *sympathetic characters*?
- Appearance, tone, confidence, emotion, style
- Drama, conflict, action: Is there an *action logic*? (i.e., Does the action, unaccompanied by words, carry the story?)
- Props, backdrops, etc.
- Context: What recent events may impact people's interpretations?

Our actual words are just one of many *containers* that carry our stories.

Where This Tool Comes From

From smartMeme.com, this version written by Matthew Smucker (www.beyondthechoir.org)



Battle of the Story

TIME 45 MINUTES

GOALS

Apply story-based strategy to counter-recruitment work.

MATERIALS

Copies of Battle of the Story worksheet (one for every participant)

RUNNING THE EXERCISE



Pass out the *smartMeme* "Battle of the Story" handout along with pens, as you have people count off into groups of 4-8. Have people get into their small groups. Then get all the groups' attention in order to give instructions.

Ask a volunteer to read aloud the instructions on the "Battle of the Story" worksheet.




In your groups you're going to fill this out for the story of military recruitment and counter-recruitment. You'll go down the "Power Holders/Status Quo" column and fill in their story concerning this issue. We're not looking here for what you think about their story – we're looking for the story itself, as told by the power holders. (This may require a brief trip into their minds!) How are the power holders framing the conflict? Who are their sympathetic characters, the messengers that tell their story? How do they engage values and encourage people to take their side? What are the underlying assumptions that allow people to believe their story (for example the story of U.S. benevolence)? And finally, what are the points of intervention, the vulnerabilities in their narrative?

After you've gone the whole way through the power holders' stories, then you'll go through the second column: the change agents' stories. How are *we* framing the conflict? Who are our sympathetic characters? How are we engaging values? What assumptions might allow people to believe our stories? And, if you get to it, what are the vulnerabilities in our narrative?

After about 18 minutes I'll do a time-check to say that you should be moving on to the second column (change agents) if you haven't already done so. After another 18 or so minutes your groups will report-back to the whole group.


If you don't fully understand, hopefully someone in your small group does! I'll be going around to the groups, if you have any questions.



-  Watch to make sure that all the groups understand the instructions. If people are stuck at the beginning you might ask questions like, "What is the Pentagon saying that is relevant to the issue of military recruitment and/or counter-recruitment?" What is their story – the story they want everyone to believe?"

Keep track of time and check in with the groups about time if it seems necessary.

Usually the groups have a far easier time telling the Power Holders' story than the Change Agents' story. See if this is true for the small groups in your workshop.

-  Gather people back into a large group. Ask each group to present their completed (or nearly completed) worksheet. Ask elicitive questions, and ask groups to give each other feedback. Invite discussion.

Where This Tool Comes From

From smartMeme.com, this version written by Matthew Smucker (www.beyondthechoir.org)

Interview Practice

TIME 25 MINUTES

GOALS

Provide a space for the immediate application of the workshop's lessons.
Create an opportunity for participants to receive constructive feedback from each other.

RUNNING THE EXERCISE



Divide people into groups of three.



Choose someone in your group who will be interviewed first. ...Does every group have someone ready to be interviewed? Okay, now choose someone to be a reporter. ...Does every group know who your reporter is? The third person, you'll be an observer.

Your interview will go four minutes, followed by two minutes of feedback from the observer and reporter. Then we'll switch roles. Everyone will play all three roles: activist/interviewee, reporter/interviewer and observer. I'll tell you when to end the interview and start giving feedback, and then when to switch. Does everyone understand the instructions?

Keep in mind the things we've gone over in this workshop:

- *presentation*: setting the pace and tone, being conscious of appearance, emotion, body language, etc.
- *message discipline*: using sound bites, repetition, bridging and ABC
- *story-telling*: engaging values, framing the narrative, foreshadowing





And, hey, relax. Take a deep breath. Becoming media-savvy takes lots of practice and lots of mistakes. We're all here to learn from our mistakes. We're not here to compete for who can make the fewest mistakes. This workshop is actually designated mistake time. What better time to make mistakes than when you're surrounded by such wonderful, intelligent, supportive people? So don't be afraid or apologetic about messing up. And also, don't be afraid to give honest constructive feedback when you see ways that others might improve. And certainly don't be shy about telling folks what they're doing well. Okay, everyone ready? Go to it.




Call time after four minutes, asking the observer and reporter to give the interviewee two minutes of feedback. (If time allows, consider extending the allotment for both the interviews and the feedback.)



-  You can give feedback based on how folks did in terms of presentation, message discipline, story-telling, and anything else that strikes you.

-  When the time for feedback is up, have people quickly switch roles and go to it again.
Repeat the process so that each person has played all three roles.
Gather folks back into a big circle. Ask questions and allow for discussion as time permits. You don't need to take notes on newsprint for this debrief.

-  How was that for folks? ...What did you notice? ...What else? ...Any other things you noticed? ...Did you notice a difference between the interviews you gave at the beginning of the workshop in the parallel lines and the interviews you gave now? ...Where do folks see the most room for improvement?

Evaluation

TIME 10 MINUTES

GOAL

To get feedback on the training, so it can be improved for next time.

RUNNING THE EXERCISE

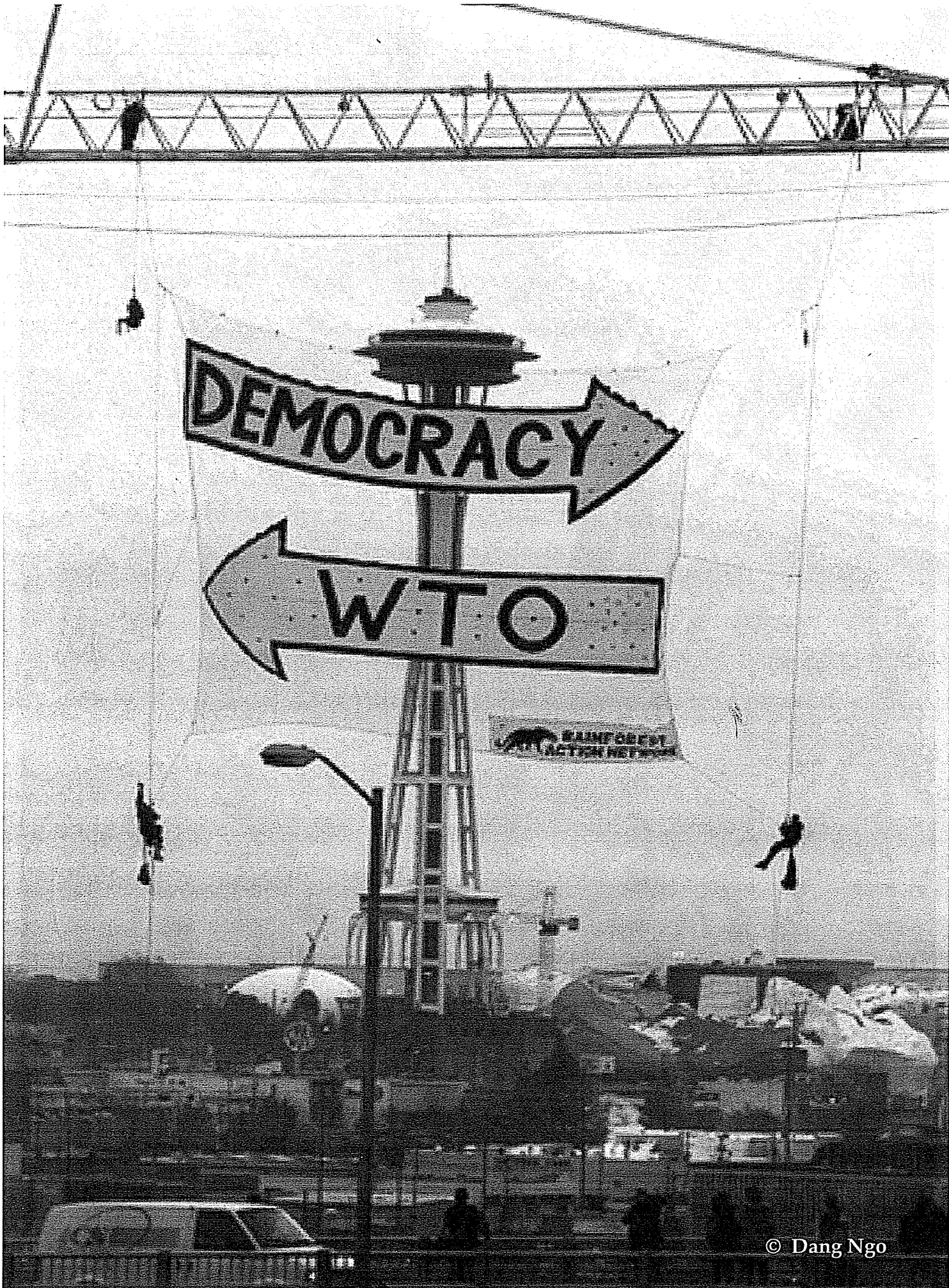


Draw a t-shaped chart with + and – symbols as headers of the two columns. Ask the group to give feedback on the training, listing positive aspects (what they found most useful) and parts that they would change or improve.



This next exercise is a really important one for me. Your feedback will help me improve this training for the next group. Take a little time to list aspects of the training that you appreciated, and parts that you might change or improve.







How to Give Effective Interviews

HANDOUT

- practice practice practice!
- practice in front of a mirror
- practice with a friend, and get feedback
- prepare concise sound bites
- develop messaging within context of campaign and political climate
- get outside opinions about clarity of message
- consider what others will be saying (allies and opposition)
- don't repeat the opposition's frame
- stay on message!
- ask the reporter questions (What's the angle? Who else are they talking to? How familiar are they with the issue? Is it live? When will it air or appear?)
- provide background materials
- build up self-confidence
- be conscious of appearance
- be aware of tone and body language
- practice the art of bridging
- set the pace and tone of the interview
- keep a phone number of someone you can refer a reporter to for further information (for rare event of policy-oriented questions!)
- remember and ground yourself in the passion that motivates you!

Adapted by Matthew Smucker, www.smartMeme.com and
www.beyondthechoir.org from Celia Alario, PR for People and
the Planet



Battle of the Story Worksheet

HANDOUT

This exercise is intended to help grassroots activists create more compelling narratives to communicate their campaigns. The Battle of the Story is the framework through which we can analyze the current "idea climate" around an issue. The worksheet asks you to apply three different elements of story telling to both the power holder's story and then our story as grassroots activists. Once you have articulated these elements, use the logic of the story to identify the assumptions that allow each of the stories to operate. The final row of the chart – the points of intervention - is the place to identify weaknesses in each story and rhetorical strategies for challenging each story's assumptions. This could take the form of challenging the story's framing, contrasting alternate visions of the future, articulating hopes, dispelling fears, exposing hidden agendas, etc. At the completion of this exercise you should be able to revisit each story in terms of frames and core messages that can be developed into a strategy to **Win the Battle of the Story!**

Story	Powerholders/Status quo	Change Agents
<p>CONFLICT</p> <p>How is the problem being framed? Who is the conflict between? Who are the good guys and the bad guys?</p>		
<p>SYMPATHETIC CHARACTERS</p> <p>Who are the victims? Who are the messengers that tell the story?</p>		
<p>SHOW DON'T TELL</p> <p>How does the story use images or anecdotes to convince without being preachy? How does the story engage our values and encourage us to choose sides?</p>		
<p>ASSUMPTIONS</p> <p>What are the unstated assumptions? What does someone have to believe to accept the story?</p>		
<p>POINTS OF INTERVENTION</p> <p>How can we challenge the other story's assumptions? What are the other story's vulnerabilities? Limits? Contradictions? Lies?</p>		

From SmartMeme, www.smartMeme.com

