

Communicate for Action in Public Policy Making



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This Workshop's Approach...

Action requires actors or do-ers.

Actors in a policy process need:

Know-how: Understanding of what to do, contextual and situational awareness

Skills: Familiarity with how to do, facility with necessary communication types and appropriate techniques, tactics, and tools

Actor roles in democratic institutional public policymaking:

Responsible: Government (elected or appointed officials with authority to act in the jurisdiction)

Influential: Organizations (advocates, trade groups, unions, PACS, coalitions)

Industries (providers of goods and services)

Consumers (users of goods and services)

Grassroots (people with interest or concern)

Experts (specialists, researchers, analysts, advisors)

This Workshop's Approach...

Functional Know-How

Policy = Principle to guide action implemented in procedure

Communicate = Strategically represent reality from a viewpoint

“ We talk of policy problems in words. How words are used to represent things...is the essence of problem definition in politics.”

Deborah Stone, *Policy Paradox: The Art of Political Decision Making*, 2002

Effectively = Usefully

“ In policy work, if you can't write it or say it, you can't do it.”

Libby Graves, 2000

Communicate for Action

#1 Policy making begins with perception of a wrong.
To influence the process, you must define that wrong as a policy problem.

#2 Definitions of the problem will differ.

#3 Problem definitions are stories.

Problem Definitions are Stories

- » Narrative structure
- » A beginning, a middle, and an end
- » Involve change or transformation
- » Heroes and villains and innocent victims
- » Pit the forces of evil against the forces of good

What appears as conflict over details is really disagreement about the fundamental story.

Milk Labeling in Pennsylvania

At Issue:

Should labels say whether growth hormones were used in milk production?



Pennsylvania's Action:

Banned 'misleading' milk labels that say 'No Hormones' or 'Hormone Free' or 'No rBST' or 'no rBGH' or 'free of artificial hormones.'

Milk Labeling in Pennsylvania

Who Are The Actors



- » Officials (PA-DA)
- » Providers (Monsanto, milk processors, dairy farmers)
- » Organizations (Farm Bureau, PASA)
- » Experts (dairy scientists, policy analysts)



The Stories: Officials

- » Some labels say 'no growth hormone or rBST or rBGH used'
- » Some labels say nothing about this
- » Consumer reads labels and is confused
- » PA Dept. of Agriculture intervenes to standardize labeling
- » Consumers can make informed choices



The Stories: Providers

- » Monsanto: Growth hormone enhances production
- » Milk processors: We want to label milk for growth hormone use in production
- » Dairy farmer A: I use growth hormones. Labels should not say. Consumers do not need to know.
- » Dairy farmer B: I do not use growth hormones. Labels should say. Consumers need to know.



The Stories: Experts

- » Artificial growth hormones do or do not present risk for people or cows
-

The Stories: Advocates

- » Labeling is not the only issue or the real problem
- » Labeling is communication
- » Labeling is advertising

Milk Labeling in Pennsylvania

What Is The Policy Principle



Control
VS.
Freedom





Freedom of Speech: Freedom of Choice

“Governor Rendell says consumers can have greater confidence in milk labels. Labels can say milk was produced without RBST or growth hormones, as long as they are uniform.”

(Press release, Pennsylvania Governor’s Press Office, January 17, 2008)



Permitted Language:

Permitted language on labels of milk produced in Pennsylvania

» “Produced without the use of rBST. No significant difference has been shown between milk derived from rBST-treated and non-rBST treated cows.”

– or –

» “Our farmers pledge not to use rBST. No significant difference has been shown between milk derived from rBST-treated and non-rBST treated cows.”

The Policy Communication Situation

- » Same conditions
- » Many interests
- » Many problems
- » Many definitions of each problem
- » Definition predicts solution



The Lesson?

- » Know your story
- » Define the problem your way
- » Tell the truth as you see it



The Food Safety Problem: Then and Now

“Agroterrorism: The Threat to America’s Foodbasket”

Hearing by the Governmental Affairs Committee, House of Representatives (2003)



What's Happening Now?

Food Safety Rulemaking

Submit public comments on proposed rules to implement the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

Farm Bill

Contact your Congress person to say what you want or don't want in a new farm bill

Clean Energy Policy

Contact President Obama to say what you want or don't want in a clean energy plan

Fracking in Pennsylvania

Contact your state representatives to say you do or don't want to allow surveyor right of entry to your property (Senate Bill 116)

For Comment or Contact

Responsible Actor

» FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA)

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/FoodSafety/FSMA/default.htm>

Select the website menu item: 'Dockets Open for Comment'

» Regulations.gov

<http://regulations.gov>

Submit your comments on proposed regulations and related documents published by the U.S. Federal government. You can also use this site to search and review original regulatory documents as well as comments submitted by others

Federal & State Representatives

» US Senate <http://www.senate.gov>

» US House of Representatives <http://www.house.gov>

» Pennsylvania General Assembly <http://www.legis.pa.us>

For Advocacy

Organizations

- » National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC)
<http://sustainableagriculture.net>
- » Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture
<http://pasafarming.org>
Email: PASAMarcellus@yahoogroups.com
- » National Farmers Union
<http://capwiz.com/nfu/home>
- » American Farm Bureau Federation
<http://fb.org>

Application:

What's **your** problem? What's **your** story?

Task: Communicate your definition of the problem and the solution

Prepare

» Refer to handouts of instruction

- General Method for Communicating in a Policy Process
- Present Testimony and Answer Questions
- Make Public Comment in Rulemaking
- Public Comment Worksheet

» Refer to handouts of example

- A Message to Public Officials on Food Safety
- Food Safety on the Farm: Policy Brief

Do

» Use worksheet to draft your problem definition and solution

Wrap Up

When **you** communicate for action,
what are **your** DOs and DON'Ts?