

The Basic Steps of Advocacy and Persuasion

Clearly identify the issue for yourself

1. Define your issue in ways that are as specific, clear and simple as possible
 - What is the basic issue?
 - Why is it important, in your perspective?
 - What is your goal (e.g. what do you want done about your issue)?

Identify your target audience and what moves them

1. Identify the specific group or groups you need to target in order to make change
 - Why are they the best group to target (Are they decision makers or “change agents”? Do they influence others who make decisions?)
2. Once you know who to reach, figure out how to reach them by assessing their belief system and finding common ground
 - What are they interested in?
 - What issues are most compelling to them?
 - How do they feel about your issue?
 - Is there something about your issue that also fits with their interests (or, what is the connection between your issue and their interests)?
 - Answers to these questions can help you frame your messages in ways that are more likely to catch their attention and interest.
3. Things to keep in mind about your target audience:
 - What interests you about your issue may not interest them. But there is usually some type of connection that can be made between your issue and their interests that helps to “hook” them
 - Identifying you audience’s key values will help you persuade them initially and give you some idea where you effort may be vulnerable to your opponent’s messages
 - It’s easier to motivate someone around something they already believe rather than to convince them of something new

“Good persuasion doesn’t tell people something new;
it reminds them of something they already know.”
(Now hear this: The 9 laws of successful advocacy communications)

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Identify your allies and opponents

1. Allies and champions

- Who supports your issue and why?
- How have they advocated for the issue and with whom?
- What can be learned from their successes and failures?
- How might be they useful?

2. Opponents

- Who opposes your issue and why?
- How do they frame your issue?
- What is the underlying issue(s) behind their opposition?
- How have they advocated for their position and with whom?
- What type of challenges might they bring up in your advocacy efforts
- This is critical information to gather to help strategize any challenges you might face. If possible, it's best to proactively "diffuse" their position prior to a challenge. If this isn't possible or they bring in a new twist, it helps you to be better prepared to defend your position without getting blindsided.

Define your issue in ways that connects with your target audience's belief system and values

1. Describe the issue in a way that connects with your target audience's belief system
 - Why should this issue be important to them?
 - Why should they care?
 - If they act on this issue, how will it benefit them?

Develop the specific message you want to communicate

1. Describe the issue clearly and simply
 - Tell them why they should care by connecting your issue with their interests
 - Tell them what you want them to do
 - Identify personal stories or anecdotes to make connect your target audience to the issue
 - Use statistics and research but with caution (keep it simple and short; connect statistics to what they know; if they want more detail or explanation, they usually ask for it)

Using a Message Triangle

1. Your goal statement (what you want people to do) goes in the center
2. The points of the triangle are the 3 main points that support your goal – these points should:
 - support your issue
 - connect with your target audience's belief system
 - be logical and flow from one to the other

Develop responses to challenges or opposition

1. Brainstorm potential challenges
2. Identify responses that diffuse the challenge and link back to the target audience's belief system and values
3. Develop simple, concise messages for response

Plan the delivery of your message

1. Issues to consider:
 - Who is the best spokesperson(s)?
 - What and when is the best time or times to advocate?
 - What medium or mediums are the best to reach your target audience?
 - How will you follow-up?

Practice your message so that you're comfortable

Advocate and persuade!

Some do's and don'ts...

- Take time... to think it through, plan and prepare
- Do your homework – be logical, research your issue thoroughly, know your facts (nothing undermines your credibility more than faulty information)
- Find allies and champions
- Know your opposition as thoroughly as you know your issue
- Keep it simple
- Be clear
- Know your audience and link your issue to their interests
- Understand how decisions get made
- Be flexible and willing to compromise (sometimes it's better to get something rather than nothing)
- Keep to the issue, not the personalities
- Avoid being rude and be respectful of others views, including the opposition
- Try using a little humor
- Be persistent!

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