CREATING CULTURAL COMMON SENSE

THINKING ABOUT NARRATIVE

By the Topos Partnership for GIST
November 2015
DEFINING OUR TERMS

Narrative
Story
Message
Beliefs
Values
Etc.
DEFINING OUR TERMS: MASTER NARRATIVE

PROGRESSIVE
Interdependence
We’re in it together
Embrace diversity
And so on. . .

CONSERVATIVE
Independence
Individual achievement
Melting pot, American culture
And so on. . .
DEFINING OUR TERMS

ISSUE NARRATIVE

Consistent with the core elements of the progressive narrative, but tailored to advance the issue. Often has unique explanatory elements, framing choices, stories, etc.
LEAD, DON’T FOLLOW

“I have opinions of my own, strong opinions, but I don’t always agree with them.” George H.W. Bush

Use narrative to lead people to support progressive causes, not to repeat back to them what they already believe.
SUCCESS MEANS MORE THAN "AGREEMENT."
Success means a new perspective
SUCCESS MEANS IDEAS THAT CAN ENTER THE CULTURE.
WE HAVE TO LIVE WITHIN OUR MEANS

FRAME CONSEQUENCES

- Cut state budgets
- Avoid deficits
- State employees have to cut back too
- There’s no money
- Revenue increase not an option
EXAMPLE:
MONEY IN POLITICS
CURRENT CULTURAL COMMON SENSE: MONEY AS “CORRUPTION”

**POLITICIANS ARE BEING BOUGHT.**

- Clear and powerful
- Constrained to “money”
- Focuses on politicians, not “buyers”
- Defines politicians as problem (not solution)
- Leads to hopelessness, cynicism
POTENTIAL COMMON SENSE: MONEY AS BARRIER

NEED PEOPLE LIKE ME IN GOVERNMENT

- Relevant to my experience/world
- Clear, concrete, easy-to-think
- Non-partisan
- Leads to solutions thinking

Objective: Remove obstacles that keep people like me out of government
VIDEO HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/MFKOVP79NFK
SETS UP A RANGE OF POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

UMBRELLA APPROACH

Public financing of elections
Spending limits
Transparency
Gerrymandering
Limits on donations
Constitutional amendment
Free airtime
And so on
ENGAGED AND HOPEFUL

Optimistic about government
Resonates with ideal of democracy
Reform seems practical and doable
About getting the BEST representation, even after Election Day

Campaign finance reform is important for every region as it ensures that the best candidate wins, not the one with the largest bankroll. (24-year old liberal man, NJ)

It’s so sad seeing potentially great politicians -- Obama, Bill de Blasio -- having to travel the country for cash when they could be doing great things. Our country suffers as a result. (58-year old liberal man, NY)
HOW TO GET ON “BARRIER” TERRAIN

CORE NARRATIVE: THE ESSENTIAL IDEAS TO CONVEY

Running for office requires personal wealth or support from wealthy people, which prevents regular people from representing their communities.

This limits our choices to those who amass huge sums of money.

To restore a more representative government, and elect the best representatives, we need to address the barriers that prevent ordinary people from running for office.
FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Go to our website:
www.topospartnership.com

Or email us:
team@topospartnership.com

@ TeamTopos

ToposPartnership