Dos and Don'ts for Issue Communications

DO:

- Begin your communication with a collective **vision** or value statement. You should first, and always, answer for your audience: Why does this matter?

- Next, pivot to an explanation that answers the following: What is the problem, how is it solved, and who can help solve it?

- Make sure the **solutions** you articulate sound achievable. Even if the problem requires many solutions, always offer a solution or step forward.

- When **attributing responsibility** for helping solve the problem, appeal to people's civic sensibilities – show how they might engage on a community or political level, not just a personal level

- If you have a print piece, make sure your **visuals** tell the same story that the text tells

- Ensure that the **tone** of the communication is reasonable, not argumentative or divisive

- Check to make sure that no **jargon** is lurking around (including acronyms and abbreviations)

- Use **data/numbers** in moderation, and always interpret data for your audience!

- Make sure that the **messengers** you choose will be viewed as credible but unbiased

DON'T

- Engage in **crisis** framing – such as saying the system is in crisis, is a disaster, is broken beyond repair. That will disengage people immediately, as any solutions will seem beyond reach.

- Make the mistake of creating **different messages** for every group you speak with. The key is in having big ideas, a shared big picture narrative, that is then adapted slightly if you're speaking with business leaders v faith leaders, etc

- Use a highly vivid **story of an individual person** – such as a program or service recipient -as a communications device. People reason within the frame you give them – they will not connect the dots from a specific case/individual to the need for policy that will solve the problem for whole populations.

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