

### Frame the World for Those Who Matter

Nonprofits could receive more support if they followed the lead of conservatives, who know how to frame issues to their advantage, according to George Lakoff, in *Don't Think of an Elephant* (Chelsea Green Publishing, [chelseagreen.com](http://chelseagreen.com)).


For one thing, nonprofits must learn to frame their need for funding in terms of strategic initiatives – plans in which change in one issue spills over into many others. For example, a large investment in alternative energy has an enormous yield across many areas, including jobs, health, clean air, clean water, habitat, global warming, and third world development.

Instead of thinking strategically in this way, nonprofits tend to think issue by issue. They generally don't consider what minimal change they can make that will affect many issues. Thus, they forfeit a considerable amount of money, because funders are eager to reward systems thinking rather than a one-issue perspective.

Progressive nonprofits can also learn a great deal about language from conservative groups, who are masters of framing. With a few words, like “tax relief,” they create a whole frame of reference – the idea that taxation is a burden, and we need relief from it.

In response, progressives will launch into a paragraph-long discussion of their views. But, without a frame for their argument, they leave listeners behind. Rather than arguing about the frames created by conservatives – which only perpetuates those frames – they need to frame issues in original ways for their stakeholders.


Here are a few things you can do to reframe the world to benefit your organization:

- **Acknowledge the genius** of those who have framed the debate with terms like “pro-life,” “partial birth abortion,” and “death panels.” Take a page from their book, and seek out short, compelling phrases that will advance your arguments just as vividly.
- **Create your own frames** rather than arguing within the other person's frame. Remember that if you tell someone not to think of an elephant, that's all they'll be able to think of. If you ask people not to believe what your opponents say, you're doing the same thing. Just as when President Nixon said, “I am not a crook,” you actually reinforce the message you're trying to refute. The key is to use a new, original frame for your own message rather than reacting to someone else's language.
- **Make an emotional connection** with people. Emotions, not facts, have the power to move people. Relate to people where they live, in their feelings and their hearts.
- **Understand** that the truth alone isn't enough. You must build a frame around the truth in a way that resonates with people. We think and reason using frames and metaphors.
- **Speak from your moral perspective** at all times. Be clear about your core beliefs, and use the language of values. 

### Let Diversity Expand Your Circle of Givers


As our country becomes more diverse, it makes sense to recognize how philanthropy differs among cultures. To find new donors in unexplored groups, you must first research different cultures and styles of communication. When you speak to a prospective donor from another culture, for example:

- **Stay clear of jargon and idioms.** Instead of “Let me run this by you,” say “Here is my idea.” Rather than, “There is no magic bullet,” try, “There is no easy solution.”
- **Be cautious about using first names.** Not all cultures are comfortable with such familiarity.
- **Match the rate, pitch, and volume** of your speech to the person with whom you're talking. Be careful that you're not speaking too fast or too loud.
- **Avoid gestures.** Something as innocent as the “OK” sign can mean something entirely different and may be insulting to those of other cultures.

These are a few of the insights in Lilya Wagner's *Diversity and Philanthropy* (published by ABC-CLIO, [abc-clio.com](http://abc-clio.com)). Also see “The Skill Every Fundraiser Needs: Cultural Wisdom” by Lilya Wagner, *Nonprofit World*, Vol. 34, No. 3. 

### A Communication Checklist to Engage People

Before communicating any message, strategic communicators begin by asking questions in a certain sequence:

1. **What is the challenge or opportunity** we're hoping to address?
2. **What do we want?** What's our goal? What do we hope to accomplish?
3. **Who matters?** What do we know about our stakeholders? What don't we know that we should?
4. **What do our stakeholders do, think, feel, or know in relation to us?** What changes in their actions, thoughts, feelings, or knowledge would benefit our goals? What are the opportunities and barriers for those changes to take place?
5. **What do they need to see us do, hear us say, or hear others say about us** to think, feel, know, and do what we want them to?
6. **How do we make that happen?** 

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—adapted from *The Power of Communication* (published by Financial Times Press, [ftpress.com](http://ftpress.com))

## Reflecting on Your Cultural Worldviews

We make cultural assumptions all the time. We often use stereotypical language when we talk about people from different backgrounds, including gender, generation, religion, geographical location, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. Such assumptions and communication styles limit our effectiveness.

*Building Cultural Competence* by Kate Berardo and Darla K. Deardorff (Stylus Publishing, styluspub.com) provides a treasure house of exercises you can do to broaden cultural competence for yourself and others in your organization. These activities will help you learn to suspend judgment, communicate successfully, and work with different people in different environments.

Ask the following reflection questions of yourself and others in your organization to help you assess and develop intercultural competence:

- **Are you eager to learn about different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences?** Do you make an effort to learn such information about everyone you meet?
- **Can you easily view things** from more than one perspective?
- **Do you engage in active observation of others,** paying attention to subtle nuances and dynamics among people?
- **Are you able to adapt your communication style** to accommodate people with different culturally conditioned communication styles?
- **How do you show that you value others,** even when you disagree with their beliefs and judgments?
- **Are you flexible in responding to other people's needs,** seeking to understand those needs from their viewpoints?
- **How would you describe your worldview?** Are other worldviews represented in your organization's materials, including your website? How can you enhance those materials to incorporate other worldviews?
- **Do you seek to understand not only why something occurs** but what lessons you can learn from the situation?
- **How much do you really listen** to your peers, teammates, clients, supporters, and others?
- **Do you find out how others want to be treated, or do you assume** they want to be treated by your cultural standards?
- **Are you sensitive to body language,** pauses, intonation, and other nonverbal cues as well as the language you and others use to communicate?
- **Do you encourage others to be open** to a variety of worldviews? 

—from *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence* as quoted in *Building Cultural Competence*.

## Use the Power of Metaphor

There's no better way to engage people than through metaphor. Emotions underlie all relationships, and metaphors help us grasp, communicate, and share feelings more effectively than literal communication.

Metaphors – figures of speech that connect two seemingly unrelated things – create vivid mind pictures. When you explain something metaphorically rather than literally, you reach people at their deepest emotional level. That's the level where people are most easily persuaded and deeply touched.

How do you choose the right metaphor for the situation? Here are a few tips:

- **Be sure the other person “gets” it.** Many metaphors are universal and easily understood. If you say, “Stop looking daggers at me,” even someone who has never heard the phrase before will intuit what you mean. But if you use a metaphor that's common only to a narrow field of knowledge or a certain culture, you may not make a good connection. If you have to explain a metaphor, you'll drain it of its power.
- **Use metaphors to confront dark emotions with humor and a light touch.** If you tell a colleague, laughingly, “Don't blow your top” or “Don't bite my head off,” your message is more likely to get through than if you warn, “Don't get angry.” When people connect to the images in such metaphors, they can't help but lighten up.
- **Don't mix your metaphors.** When you use two inconsistent metaphors together, it creates a confusing image (I smell a rat, but I'll nip him in the bud”; “If you hit the bulls-eye, the rest of the dominoes will fall like a house of cards.”) Such mangled speech is not the way to make a strong connection or deliver a message with power.
- **Use metaphors to make your message clearer and simpler.** If the metaphor makes it harder to understand what you're saying, it's not the right metaphor.
- **Weave similar metaphors throughout your message.** For example, you might speak about how you and your team are on a voyage together. You can then add bolstering metaphors such as “We've been through some stormy seas, but the lighthouse is in sight. If we continue to pull together, that beacon will lead us home.”

With metaphors, you can deepen understanding in profound ways. With just one or two words, you can trigger entire worldviews and elicit a whole range of feelings. Metaphors are far more than ways of using words. They're ways of seeing and shaping the world.




—adapted from *Metaphors We Live By* and *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* (University of Chicago Press, press.uchicago.edu)

### Overcoming the Perils of Groups

Is a group of people wiser than one person alone? Does a group add to decision-making and help correct individual biases and errors? Or does a group make individual mistakes worse? *Wiser: Getting beyond Groupthink to Make Groups Smarter* (Harvard Business Review Press, hbr.org) answers these questions by exploring studies of group behavior.

These studies help us understand why people make the decisions they do, especially when they seem to be deciding against their own best interests. Behavior doesn't always appear rational because it includes the effects of emotion, long-term thinking, and just plain misconceptions.

There are notorious examples of groups making individual behaviors worse (William Aramony's United Way, several Red Cross examples, the Smithsonian Institution board in the 2000s, just to name a few). This book explains the common shortcuts we take that can lead into wrong turns. The authors, Cass Sunstein and Reid Hastie, offer simple interventions to make sure groups do the opposite by amplifying good decision-making. Here are a few of their suggestions:

- **As a leader, indicate your willingness** to hear information from every member of the group. Some people with important information may not share it unless they're sure others value their perspective.
- **Ask some group members to act as devil's advocates**, deliberately advocating a position that is contrary to the group's inclinations.
- **Ask the group a simple question:** "If we brought in new leadership, what would it do?" 


—reviewed by Terrence Fernsler

### Use Your Introvert Skills to Advantage

Not all successful leaders are extroverts. In fact, it's often the opposite. Here's how some introverted leaders have done it.

- **They do serious deep thinking** before they make decisions (Bill Gates).
- **They team up with extroverts** to create balance (Steve Jobs teamed with extroverted Steve Wozniak to create Apple).
- **They think long term and stay cool** when others don't (Warren Buffet).
- **They change the rules** to grab opportunities (Jeff Bezos).
- **They challenge themselves** (Mark Zuckerberg dropped out of Harvard and taught himself Mandarin in his spare time).
- **They don't mind listening to experts around them** (Larry Page is known for promoting the ideas of employees).
- **They visualize**, imagining the results of their vision (Elon Musk is pioneering space travel, electric cars, and battery storage all at the same time).

- **They take time to reflect** (Jack Dorsey spends every Sunday analyzing the week's decisions, then uses this feedback to plan ahead).
- **They stay humble and value their mistakes** (Tony Hsieh considers being humble a core value).
- **They meet their fears head on** (Guy Kawasaki hated being in the spotlight but worked on developing his speaking skills).

To find out more about the world's most successful introverts, visit [yourtradebase.com/introvert-entrepreneurs/](http://yourtradebase.com/introvert-entrepreneurs/). 

### How to Use Board Members' Time Wisely

Highly qualified board candidates often turn down positions on nonprofit boards by saying, "I'm too busy." That's often a polite way of saying, "When you say 'nonprofit,' I think of slow processes, board agendas loaded with minutia, long presentations, and unfocused discussions."

In *Going for Impact: The Nonprofit Director's Essential Guidebook*, Eugene Fram (amazon.com) explains that you can change such perceptions if your organization can deliver on the following:

- **Directors receive the agenda** one week before the meeting and the minutes within a week.
- **There's a time limit** for staff reports, and such reports are prepared well in advance, with the CEO working ahead of time with the presenter.
- **The maximum number of slides** in a PowerPoint presentation is 10.
- **Board meetings begin** and end on time.
- **The board chair quickly refocuses** discussions that get off track.
- **Policy and strategic topics** (not day-to-day operations) are the board's focus.
- **The board eliminates time-consuming discussions** with approaches such as a consent agenda. With a consent agenda, routine items are approved as a group. If anyone questions an item in the group, it's placed on the agenda for the next meeting. 