



Development vs. Strategic Communication in the Context of Global and Community Health

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About me

- Academic background
 - Sociology
 - Development studies – communication focus
 - Health communication
 - Public relations
- Field/professional experience at local, national, international levels
 - Health communication
 - Development communication
- Current teaching and research focus
 - Health/risk /crisis communication
 - Public relations/strategic communication

Introduction

- The impact of COVID-19 has taught the world the need for effective health and risk communication.
- The infodemic obligated health professionals to rethink how we communicate about health in the age of social and digital media.
- And what is resilience?
 - The ability to withstand a crisis or disruption and to recover from the impacts of likely, imminent or current hazard events (Leykin et al., 2013).
- Adequate information is crucial for resilience after disaster

Purpose

- To reflect on how we can communicate effectively or strategically about global health from a development communication perspective.
- Discuss:
 - Where we been and where to from here on that communication journey post COVID
 - How can we adjust how we do our health communication business?

Our communication work has evolved...

- Paradigms or trends since the 1980s
 - Information, Education, and Communication (IEC)
 - Behavior Change Communication (BCC)
 - Social and behavior change communication (SBCC)
 - Risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) – **current**
 - Strategic communication -- **current**

Communication for Health and Development

- Development communication is interdisciplinary, multifaced and multipurpose
- Health a key component of development
 - Health is one of the development indicators
 - Core principles of development apply in addressing health issues

Key DevComm. Principles

- Theory –based communication
- Research /needs assessment
- Media and interpersonal communication strategies
- Community/resource mobilization
- Participatory communication
- Civic engagement /empowerment
- Social capital and social change
- Social, behavioral, environmental change
- Cultural appropriateness /relevance , etc.

Gaps in DevComm

- Lack of communication planning
- Use of the diffusion approach/Public information approach in governments and health agencies
- Participatory – equated to focus groups
- Evaluation – not clear how to evaluate success
- Limited empirical studies in the field
- Not enough instruments for research and evaluation –
 - e.g. validated health/science communication literacy tools
- Appropriate (non-western) theories/models
- Limited resources

Strategic Communication

- It is how today's organizations are communicating
- Borrowed from the military services but applied widely in PR programming
- Purposive and based on process
- It is the management function of communication
- Strategic publics – not communicating to the masses
- Integrated communication – collaborative
- Bad connotation for DevComm due to its PR association
 - PR is equated to manipulation and spin

What is Strategic Communication

- It is a combination of **facts, ideas and theories** integrated by a visionary design to achieve **verifiable objectives** by affecting the most likely sources and **barriers to behavioral change** and **participation** of stakeholders and beneficiaries.

(Piotrow, 2001, p. 251)

Strat Comm Principles

- Research (Issue, audience, organization/community)
- Goal or result-oriented communication planning
- Management by objectives -- Output and Impact objectives
- Strategy is crucial
- Strategic publics – not mass communication
- Symmetrical communication -- mutual understanding
 - Participatory /Engagement
- Relationship building
- Social, cultural and environmental considerations

Strategic Health Communication

- Science-based communication
 - Research and theory-focused communication
- Theories and strategies from various disciplines
 - Social and behavioral sciences, marketing, public relations, etc.
- Evidence-based planning not jumping to tactics
- Engaging and stakeholders for informed decision-making
- Focus on social and environmental change
- Exchange framework -- what is the incentive?
- Strategic and theory-based message framing
- Resources are crucial – financial, human, physical
- Capacity building

Understanding Our Audiences

- Social, cultural, behavioral, economic, environmental factors etc.
- **Knowledge** and attitudes on health issues
 - Health and scientific knowledge to engage meaningfully
- Literacy level – what is the role of professionals
 - Health literacy/eHealth literacy
 - Digital literacy – how to discern correct information/sources
 - Science literacy
- Communication behavior -- Interpersonal, media, online, etc.
 - Access to information -- media, devices, connectivity, language,

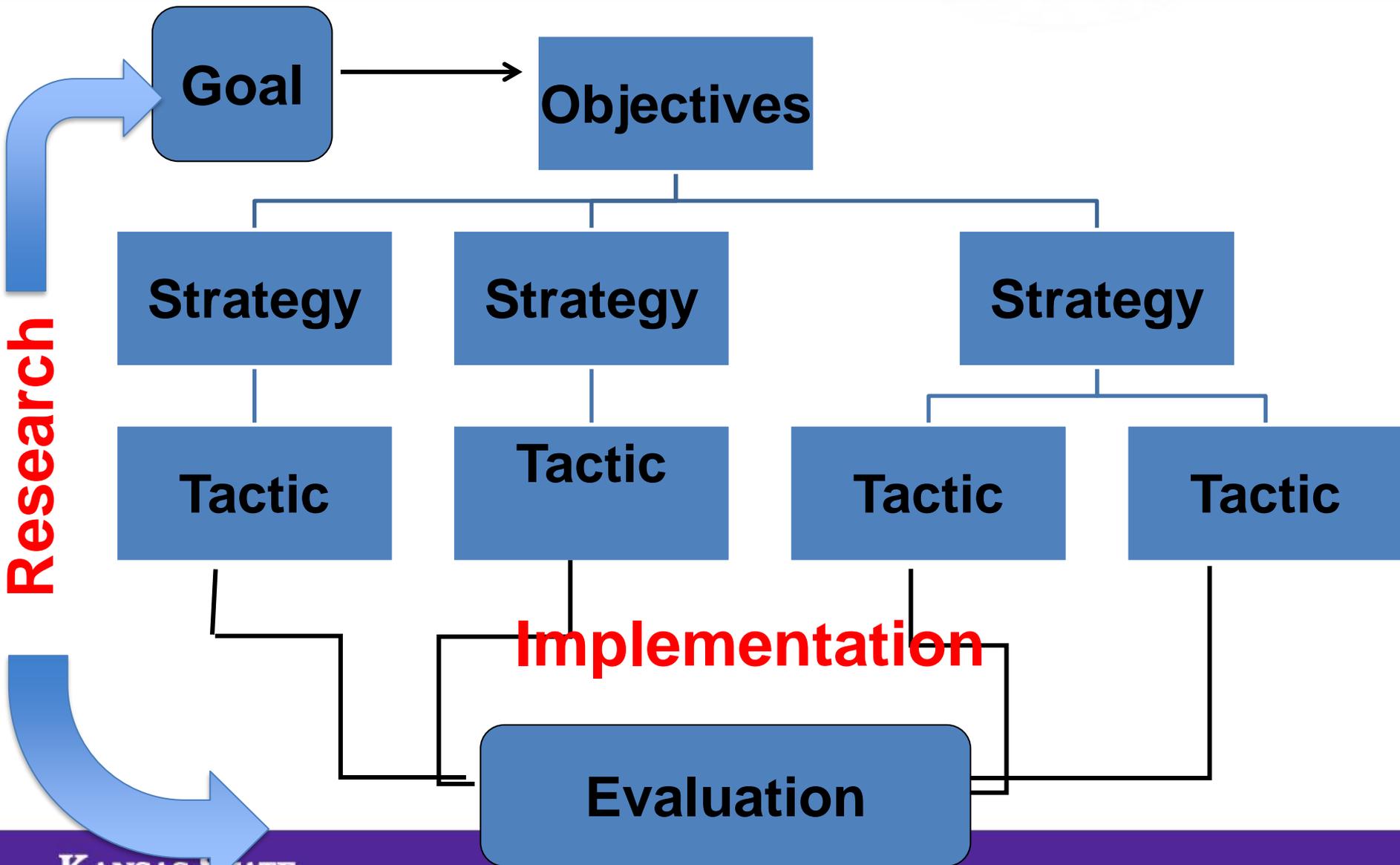
Skilled Professionals

- Research skills
- Strong theoretical grounding – social & behavioral
- Understanding the behavior change process
- Manager, Planner, Program Evaluator
- Understanding the health issues
- Relationship builder and communication facilitator
- Trainer/Teacher
- Creativity
- Resources – grants writing and other funding sources

For Resilience...

- We need to manage health communication interventions strategically
- Have well-training professionals with management skills
- Focus on strategic planning and program implementation
- Focus on each public or audience strategically
- Plan, Implement and Evaluate communication interventions based on research and objectives
- Build relationships – audiences/publics, organizations
- Resources are crucial

Health Campaign Planning



Discussion Questions

- Development communication has been applied in various health interventions. What are the obvious challenges when it comes to communicating about health issues?
- What are the necessary skills for planning and implementing health-related interventions – do they differ from development communication projects?
- In terms of training for global health communication, where should be out focus – the medical professionals or the communicators?
- How can we address the stigma associated with strategic communication as mainly for public relations projects and not an appropriate response to health and development communication?