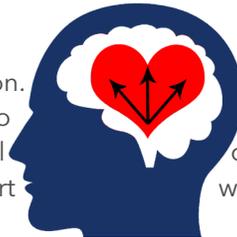


An effective message, one that inspires its audience to know, think, feel, or do something different, leads first with a frame, followed by facts. Facts alone are not persuasive. It is the context in which facts are embedded that drives meaning, and this context is called a frame. Humans make judgments on facts that make sense within a given frame, a worldview that gives the facts meaning.



To default to emotion is part of the human condition. We understand this, and that in order to get people to do something different, they need to speak in ways that make an emotional connection to the audience. One way to do this is to start



We feel first, think second. Effective leaders think, feel, know, or do something differently, connection to the audience. One way to do this is to start with a frame.

Take the following example:

FACT: On April 3, 2015 ABC Insurance Co. filed a rate request with its regulator, requesting a 42 percent increase in the overall rate level.

Without a frame explaining the need for this increase, ABC Insurance leaves its customers to draw their own conclusions; perhaps that ABC is greedy. Look at the same fact, but this time with a frame preceding it:

① FRAME:

In order to protect its policyholders from catastrophic loss from natural disasters, ABC Insurance Co. needs to stabilize its financial condition.



② FACT:

That is why on April 3, 2016 ABC Insurance Co. filed a request with its regulator for a 42 percent increase in its overall rate level.

Effective leaders frame first, and give facts second, because facts do not speak for themselves. Humans make judgements on facts that make sense *within* a given frame; that is why it is essential to put the frame before the facts.





Frames have the remarkable ability to change the way people understand facts and information. The full effect of a frame's power to shape understanding – and how impactful the effects can be when the wrong frame is used – is evident in General Motor's 2014 recall crisis.

Customer Convenience vs. Safety Defect



It may be difficult to believe that the difference in choosing one of the above phrases over the other to frame a product issue, is **13 human lives**. But, that is the tragic consequence that came as a result of GM engineers and executives making a series of bad judgements for over a decade, all stemming from just one poor choice of words.

The Product Issue: In 2002, GM engineers approved an ignition switch to be used in a new fleet of compact sedans. **The ignition switch used was 1.6 mm shorter than GM specifications required.** If the keys were moved a certain way in the ignition, it could turn the car's ignition system off while the car was in motion, creating a "moving stall." This would cause the driver to lose steering power, and failure for airbags to deploy when the driver needed it most.

The Fatal Word Choice: By 2003, GM had received multiple reports of moving stalls caused by the ignition switch. **When GM engineers performed an internal review, they failed to fully understand how the car operated.** They framed the moving stalls as "customer convenience issues" and not safety hazards, despite the fact that airbags would not deploy if the ignition switch was moved out of position. As a result, GM executives did not view the issue with the same sense of urgency had it been properly identified as the true safety hazard it was.

The Irony: During the same 10-year period the fatal ignition switch problem persisted, GM issued hundreds of recalls on other car defects that were identified as "safety hazards," prompting urgent action from executives and engineers, despite significant costs. **Had the ignition switch defect been properly framed as the safety hazard it was, it is almost certain GM would have issued a recall much sooner.**

The Result: By the end of 2013, over 10 years after the product defect was first identified by engineers, GM determined the faulty ignition switch was responsible for at least 31 crashes and 13 fatalities. In an abundance of overdue caution, **GM recalled a total of roughly 30 million vehicles, 2.6 million of which were tied to the ignition switch defect. The total cost to GM in repairs, victim compensation, and other expenses was approximately \$4.1 billion.**

THE THREE TAKEAWAYS:

1. How the problem is first identified, or framed, has a defining influence over one's approach to fixing it.
2. Framing matters. The frame defines what makes sense and what is possible.
3. Situational awareness is more than knowing "the facts"; it is also about understanding significance – and that comes from frames.