

The Communication Compass: an effective tool for communicating your vision

Leaders have an advantage when they create messages that take into consideration how the human mind is thought to function: if you can craft a communiqué that appeals to how people think you can deliver a message with better appreciation and retention (1). The Communication Compass is a tool we have developed to structure effective messages based on an understanding of Jung's work. Jung's theory, made widely available by the Myers Briggs Type Indicator, postulates that four core functions of the mind guide human thinking: iNtuition (N), Sensing (S), Thinking (T), and Feeling (F). When leaders take these functions into account as they structure short opening or closing communications, they are more likely to deliver a message that audiences will attend to and remember. To illustrate: since nearly any audience will include those innately wired to hear messages around Sensing, a good communiqué should be structured to include the sensing perspective. However the same is true for iNtuition, Thinking and Feeling as well. While this may seem complicated, there is a simple formula that leaders can use to structure these messages. The Communication Compass starts with N, followed by S, F, T and then returns to N. See the diagram below.

Open the message with a communication around iNtuition, which addresses the vision or provides context for the situation. Then Sensing, which addresses relevant data or steps to take. The Feeling function acknowledges the noble purpose behind the action, the "benefit/harm" perspective. And the Thinking function addresses the logical nature, objective analysis, or the bottom line end point (1-5). The final step is to return to the vision statement (iNtuition function). Depending on the communication topic, one can also change the positions of the Feeling and Thinking functions and address first the Thinking perspective, followed by the Feeling one, in the cycle.

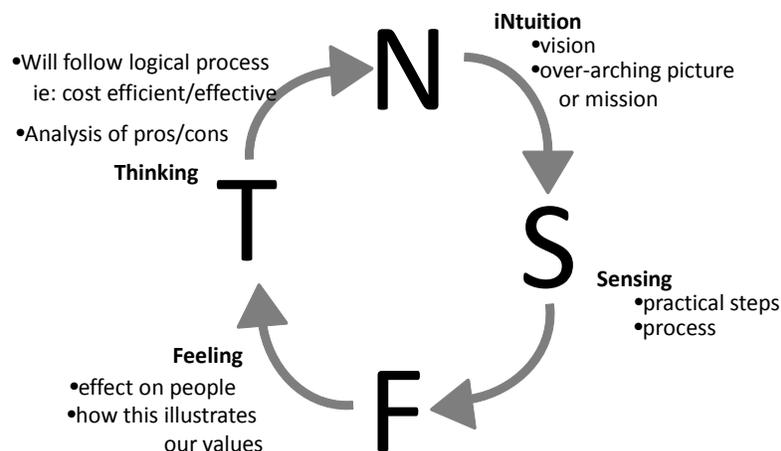


Fig 1: The Communication Compass: 4 Steps to effective message structuring

Here is an example related to a vision for malaria prevention and treatment. The statements are noted to indicate the particular Jungian functions addressed:

Our vision is to wipe out malaria in the next decade (N). We can do this using the tools we have now, by using our established networks to provide the mosquito nets, the medicines and the newly developed vaccines to those most affected (S). We can save tens of thousands of children, the most vulnerable of the human family, and alleviate much human suffering (F). Given our constraints during this economic crisis, we will implement our best practices, so that our efforts are logical, effective streamlined—and bottom line change the world as we know it. We are confident in our ability to make this difference (T). Together with our partners we will see this done within a decade: a world without malaria and the suffering it causes (N).

The next example describes an approach to eliminating food deserts (6) following the N-S-F-T-N compass cycle:

We envision an America without food deserts. We see freedom from the tyranny of the bodegas which fail to nourish its customers as they overcharge them for high calorie, low nutrient deli food and snacks. We envision urban environments where fresh, wholesome food is available and poverty is eased. We see this on the horizon within 7 years (N). In these cities we see local supermarkets, urban farming, and farmers markets—a place where everyone can afford and easily obtain healthy produce (S). We value the health of all our citizens. We are one American family. No one should be forced to live in a desert (F). We know there is a direct correlation between the availability of fresh produce and the health of people in the community. Healthy communities both physically and economically—are in everyone's best interest (T). By taking these steps and promoting these programs we will encourage economic development in our poorest communities as we wipe out our most pervasive food deserts in the next 7 years. Our future is a healthier America—one without food deserts (N).

The next example illustrates a slight manipulation of the Communication Compass formula, presenting the thinking function material prior to that for the feeling function. However, note that the F and T functions—those that relate to analysis and decision making—are still paired here in this illustration. This illustration follows the N-S-T-F-N:

Our vision is to create a system that provides pre-natal care for all expectant mothers in our community (N). We know there are many mothers who never see a medical professional until their third trimester or even until their delivery. Through our existing clinics and those we are partnering with local public health to open in underserved areas, we can create the flexible clinic hours available on public transportation lines and provide care in multiple languages (S). Integrating in this way will make us more efficient and more effective, helping us save resources and support the revenue needed to continue our mission (T). Others may have looked at this as a cumbersome venture, but we are more than a local health system: we are a part of this community and these women and their soon-to-be born children are part of the family of Metropolis(F). Our role, our mission is to provide for all the members of our community family—no expectant mother need be left behind. (N).

Conclusion

Apply the Communication Compass to your messages targeted to the public or groups. Members of your audience with strong preferences for the core function pairs of either S/N or T/F will be particularly aware of when you include language regarding their particular preference. Those without strong preferences will be listening for both the Sensing and iNtuition or the Thinking and Feeling components to the messages. Using what Jung discovered about how the human brain functions can give leaders a significant advantage when communicating to teams, groups, or the public.

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