Information Warfare

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Workbook

WINNING COMMUNICATION STRATEGY WORKBOOK

REMEMBER THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

1. Clear vision for success and desired outcome
2. The powerful idea or cause that drives the vision
3. Understand the strategic situation
4. Actionable strategy and obstacles to success
5. Actionable plans
6. Smart, well-executed operations and tactics
7. Metrics to measure outcomes

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I. ESTABLISH A CLEAR VISION FOR SUCCESS AND DESIRED OUTCOME

What objective or conditions for an end state define success or a desired outcome?

Why are you trying to achieve that objective?

What does achieving it mean to target audiences? How do they benefit?

As you begin planning, in what manner do you expect to achieve the objective?

In executing operations, whose law are you using: that existing in a theater of operations or ours? If ours, do we want the law to change?

If we are dealing with foreign leaders, who are we going to deal with: the present leaders of a state or culture within a theater of operations, or do you prefer others? Are you changing the present leadership entirely? If not, who stays?
What resources do you anticipate are required?

II. WHAT CAUSE DRIVES YOUR STRATEGY AND OPERATION?

What larger cause justifies your strategy and operation and will arouse popular support, compared merely to advancing your own interests?

III. DEFINE THE STRATEGIC SITUATION

What is the strategic situation or operating environment in your theater of operations? What is the current state of affairs? What assumptions govern this analysis?

What dynamics drive it?

Who are the key players who can influence the outcome of your operations?
Do these influencers support or oppose your operation, and why?

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What role will these influencers play? Will they be passive or active? If active, will they use force for or against you? If so, which?

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Which of these influencers are *indispensable*:

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Very *important*:

____________________________________________________

Somewhat *important*:

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____________________________________________________

Not that *important*:

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

If they oppose your operation, how do you anticipate neutralizing them or motivating them to switch to support?

____________________________________________________
Is there kinetic conflict in the theater of operation or is it relatively peaceful or stable? What is it and how will that affect operations? Who are the players, who has momentum, and what is the state of affairs at the outset of the operation?

Do your operations aim to affect ongoing conflict within the theater, or is there a separate aim? How might one affect the other locally at the purely tactical level (where a battle occurs), the theater level (a nation or broader area encompassing a series of tactical activities), or the strategic level (the national or international)?

IV. WHAT IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE/OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT CULTURE?

What are the key beliefs, social norms, customs, and behavior relevant to your operation?

What role does geography play in the culture?

What role does history play in the culture, and how might it affect the operation?
What role does religion play in the culture, and how might it affect the operation?

What role do ethnic groups and tensions play in the culture?

What role do tribes, clans, families and the ties of family play in the culture? Is this a culture in which tribal vs. individual identity dominates?

What key values drive different groups within the culture (e.g., honor, revenge, loyalty, respect for elders or chiefs)?

What other factors about the social organization within the theater of operations are relevant to success?

What is the political structure within the theater of operations? Who holds what power, how is that determined, and how does it relate to social organization within a theater of operations?
What economic factors within a theater of operations affect the operations?

What role does nationalism play in the theater of operations, and how will that affect operations?

What law governs behavior (e.g., civil state law, tribal or religious law, custom)?

Is the theater of operations within what is effectively an ungoverned space? If so, what is the anticipated impact on operations?

How will you communicate your intentions in a manner consistent with the local culture(s)?

What bonds of trust or relationships can you draw on to enable effective partnerships and to provide manpower, local knowledge, or political legitimacy?
What history of working with local populations exists and how do you anticipate that will affect your planning and your ability to succeed?

V. IDENTIFY THE ENEMY

What motivates the enemy? What is its cause? What are its goals or desired outcomes?

How do enemy goals or desired outcomes differ from yours?

How is the enemy organized?

What is the enemy’s narrative, story, theme, and message to maintain its current position? Do you anticipate it will alter those elements in opposing your operation?

*Narrative:*

*Story or stories:*

Themes:


Messages:


Who comprises the enemy’s target audience(s)?


How credible, believable, or persuasive is the enemy narrative, story, theme, and message? With what audiences? Why (agree with cause, fear, anxiety, etc.)?


Enemy supporters or those leaning to support the enemy:


Neutrals:


Enemy opponents:


What channels does the enemy use to communicate its messages?


What messengers does the enemy use and why were they chosen?

How can you show that their threats will not deter your forces and make your threats to them credible?

Will the enemy respond kinetically? What mandates or motivates it to fight?

What is the enemy's capacity to respond using cyber capabilities or social media to drive its messages?

Who comprise the enemy's key allies or links within the traditional news media (e.g., satellite television, radio, newspapers, etc.)?

How efficient or effective is the enemy in exploiting links or alliances within traditional media (e.g., getting propaganda to them quickly or getting their message aired)?
VI. IDENTIFY DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN PARTNERS

Who are your partners?

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____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

What is the basis of the partnership with each?

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____________________________________________________________________

What are the key interests of each partner?

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What role do you anticipate they will play in the operations? What resources will each provide?

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How will the role of each partner affect command and control for different aspects of operations?

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____________________________________________________________________

How important are these partners to achieving a successful outcome? Why?

*Indispensable:*

____________________________________________________________________

*Very important:*

____________________________________________________________________
What interests or worldviews does each partner hold that differs from yours, and how might that affect the operations?

Do you anticipate that any partner might take action that could subvert or undercut a successful outcome? Do they share the same or a compatible vision? Is their risk assessment compatible with yours? Do they concur on the strategy, operations, and tactics envisioned? How might the issues that these questions pose be addressed, forestalled, or countered?

Possible subversion of outcome:

Risk assessment:

Compatible vision:

Concurrence on strategy, operations, tactics:

What leverage do you have to support or maintain the partnerships?
Who will coordinate or ensure coordination between you and your partners, and in what manner will that be achieved?

What weakness(es) exist in the partnerships and how will these be addressed to ensure a successful tactical, operational, and strategic outcome?

Some in the military insist on separating influence activities under the rubric of information operations and public affairs by erecting a firewall. Where that occurs, how will coordination between these functions be achieved, and who will ensure that it is?

How are coordination and cooperation for communication strategy going to be achieved within the interagency, from collection, processing, analysis, and sharing of information and intelligence and provision of resources?

What steps are you taking to ensure that partners and allies—foreign, domestic, within the interagency, and on your operational team—have access to information about what you are doing, why, how, and what it means to them?
VII. FORGING A STRATEGY

Where will you acquire the knowledge of the operating environment that enables you to forge a winning strategy and develop plans for operations and tactics?

What are the obstacles (problems presented) to achieving success?

Who presents the obstacles?

What is behind the obstacles or drives them?

Where do the obstacles occur?

Why would the obstacles frustrate success?

What has the enemy done in the past that helps you to understand what to expect?

What sources of information can inform you about expected obstacles?
What is your strategy for the operation and for tactics to be employed?

*Operations:*

________________________________________________________________________

*Tactics:*

________________________________________________________________________

What is the strategic narrative? What you are doing, why, and how do your actions help achieve the strategic goal?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What actions using information strategy will you take to support operations and tactics?

*Operations:*

________________________________________________________________________

*Tactics:*

________________________________________________________________________

What are the most important keys to success?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What points will most likely strike a responsive chord with your target audiences and stir their emotions, including excitement, awe, or anger, and trigger top-of-mind things that help people to remember your points?

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________________________________________________________________________
What stories can be communicated to help audiences make sense of events; why you are conducting the operation; and why does it benefit them?

What is your key theme?

What are your core messages for each targeted audience?

What is the credible rationale for each message?

What elements of the message achieve emotional resonance among your targeted audience (for example, using story, concept, image, symbol, etc.)?

What elements of your message use reason or facts to persuade logically?
What actions are you taking to ensure your narrative, story, theme, and messages are communicated in the right language, which is nuanced and culturally tuned to a specific audience?

What makes your narrative, story, theme, or message memorable?

How will your narrative, story, theme, and messages enable coalition building or gain new allies?

What are the stakes for target audiences in the outcome? Why does it matter for them?

How does your message claim and retain moral high ground?

How does your narrative, story, theme, or message neutralize allies of the enemy or win over undecided (persuadable) audiences—bearing in mind that these elements may be communicated by word, action, symbol, image, or a combination of these?
Would use of humor strengthen the message or help discredit the enemy, and if so, what action will you take to employ it?

Who are the target audiences for each theme and message (you may have many)?

Who are your most credible messengers and how will you employ them?

How do you anticipate the enemy will counter your narrative, stories, messages, or themes? What narratives, stories, messages, themes? What channels? What messengers?

Attacks must be answered. How do you plan to answer enemy propaganda?

How does each aspect of the communication strategy help overcome each identified obstacle to success?
What actions will maintain message discipline?

Create a message grid. Answer the following:

*What do we say about ourselves?*

*What do we say about the enemy?*

*What does the enemy say about itself?*

*What does the enemy say about us?*

VIII. TEAM MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

Who is on the communication strategy team?

Who is in charge of the team and leads it?

Who does the team leader report to; how and when?
How will you integrate information strategy with relevant command authorities?

What are the responsibilities for each team member?

Who will give instructions to whom on the team?

Who will supervise what each team member does?

How will performance be monitored?

How will corrections or modifications to strategy be made?

How will communication within the team be facilitated?
How will you enable sharing to ensure relevant parties have the right information on a timely basis?

How will the operational plan be integrated with parties outside the team?

What metrics will apply and who will develop and apply them?

IX. DOS AND DON’TS IN ACTIONS AND MESSAGING

Are your messages, actions, symbols, and images consistent?

What steps are you taking to ensure consistency and message discipline?

What specific actions support each message point?
What are the strong points in your strategic messaging and what makes them strong?

How can you further strengthen them?

What are the weak points in your strategic messaging and what makes them weak?

How might you rectify these weaknesses?

How do the agendas of local leaders affect messaging?

What steps are you planning that will realistically project confidence in success?
What steps are you taking to ensure that your narrative, story, themes, and messages are clear and understood? How are you testing them, aside from using the formal methods noted at the end for this section (see pg. 168)? You may want to express the idea to a small group of colleagues first. What did they remember? What did they hear? What was their response? Was it consistent with your intention?

What steps that provide visible leadership from commanders and spokespeople and that help project confidence and optimism will you take?

X. INTEGRATING INFORMATION AND INTELLIGENCE INTO THE PLAN

Where will you obtain the information and intelligence to forge and evaluate the plan?

Social media intelligence (SOCMEDINT):

Open source intelligence (OSINT):

Human intelligence (HUMINT):

Signals intelligence (SIGNIT):

Other(s):
What rumors are circulating among different target audiences, and what impacts might they have on the information strategy?

*The rumors:*

________________________________________________________________________

*Narrative and narrative landscape for each rumor:*

________________________________________________________________________

*Audience for each rumor:*

________________________________________________________________________

*Impact of rumor (e.g., wedge, clarification, fear/anxiety, etc.):*

________________________________________________________________________

*Channels, extent, and breadth of circulation of each rumor:*

________________________________________________________________________

*How would using rumors offensively help achieve the desired outcome for your operations?*

________________________________________________________________________

*What actions will enable you to effectively launch helpful rumors?*

________________________________________________________________________

XI. INTERACTING WITH THE NEWS MEDIA

What steps will you take to communicate your narrative, story, theme, or message to relevant news media in a timely way? You need to keep ahead of the story, anticipate negative coverage, and consider that in today's world, media with global reach makes the living room part of the battlefield.

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________________________________________________________________________
Will members of the media be embedded in your operations?

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Who is in charge of handling the news media?

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How will you ensure that the news media’s cooperation respects operational security?

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How will you address unfavorable coverage?

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Are you making provisions to include combat camera crews in the operation and to get out its footage to relevant parties on a timely basis? How?

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What special steps are you taking to ensure that media from other countries with potentially hostile perspectives toward your actions respect fact and truth and do not distort the story or be used by enemy for propaganda?

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XII. HOW EFFECTIVE WAS YOUR CAMPAIGN?

What did the strategy achieve in changing behavior?

What was the most powerful factor about the campaign that influenced behavior?

What impact did the campaign have on molding and shaping attitudes, opinions, and beliefs? Did that impact have a causal connection to the behavior of target audiences? Why or why not?

Did you measurably help to neutralize or paralyze the enemy’s ability to exert command and control?

Did you measurably help deny the enemy’s ability to achieve its objectives?

Did you change the minds about adversarial decision makers and if so in what way?
Did you affect the performance of the other side kinetically or in information warfare? If so, how, when, and what was the impact?

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________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Did you create confusion, distraction, or deception in the mind of the enemy? If so, how, when, and what was the impact?

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________________________________________________________________________________________

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Did the campaign reframe an issue raised by the enemy in terms favorable to your side?

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________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Did the campaign succeed in properly branding the enemy in terms favorable to your position?

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Did the campaign discredit and marginalize the enemy and its rationale?

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Did the campaign make effective use of symbolism?

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________________________________________________________________________________________
Did the campaign avoid tactics that enabled the enemy to use symbolism against you?

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__________________________________________________________

Did the campaign identify your narrative, story, themes, and messages with citizens, effectively communicating why you are acting and that your actions benefit them?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Did the campaign enable you to claim and maintain the moral high ground?

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__________________________________________________________

Did the campaign consider how the enemy was organized to fight and its rules of engagement?

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__________________________________________________________

Did the campaign stir up division among enemy forces?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________

Did the campaign effectively broadcast success?

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__________________________________________________________

Did the campaign engage fully with target audiences to achieve its goals? If not, what more should have been done? What should have been done differently?

__________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
Did the campaign expose deceptive or fraudulent tactics of the enemy in a credible way? Was the enemy tactic countered, and if so, how successfully; why and how?

Did the campaign expose and capitalize on enemy hypocrisy, whether inconsistent statements or actions?

Did the campaign identify and capitalize on enemy statements and actions by turning those against the enemy to discredit it?

How rapidly did the campaign respond to unfolding events?

Did the campaign identify and capitalize on targets of opportunity?

Did the campaign win over allies in local or foreign countries who may form part of a broader coalition?
Did the campaign mobilize an active minority within a target population who helped us succeed?

What does the data show in comparing performance metrics (e.g., how many clicks did a webpage receive, viewings did an ad receive, mentions did a news media story make of the message) against qualitative metrics (how well did the campaign actually work: the answers to the questions above)?

XIII. OPINION TESTING

Do you plan to employ any form of opinion testing to test messages or for metrics?

If so, which ones?

When?

Who will conduct such testing?
Endnotes

1. Whether the source law is civil law, tribal, religious, or customary law.
2. See the discussion of the battles of Fallujah. The second battle produced military victory but also complicated the strategic situation across Iraq.
3. For example, illicit activity such as growing opium, smuggling, or other criminal activity, as well as legitimate economic activity.
4. As noted in the book discussion, during the Second Battle of Fallujah these functions were wisely consolidated. As discussed in Farwell, *Persuasion and Power*, the distinctions often drawn are in many ways absurd.
5. See the discussion in the book of how Gen Stanley McChrystal achieved this with cross-functional teams in Iraq.
7. The goal in World War II was to effect Nazi Germany’s unconditional surrender. Opening up a second front by invading Normandy was a strategy to achieve that goal. The invasion itself required strategy for operations and tactics. This book is focused on strategy at the operational and tactical levels. Forging a strategy is an iterative process, and strategies and plans will undergo new iterations during development as more questions are asked, more information and intelligence collected, more thinking occurs, and suggestions provided. See also *Art of Design Student Text, Version 2.0* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: U.S. Army School of Advanced Military Studies, 2010) section 2.1.1.2, and 2.2.2. These sections set forth the conceptual framework for operational design. It employs its own language: learning; understanding the difference in the existing and desired environment; critical thinking; drawing distinctions to grasp what makes a new situation different, unique, or similar to other situations; identifying what information is relevant; taking a systems approach that sees the whole picture in an operating environment and the relationship of action to logical lines of operation, so that information can be placed within a strategic context; and creative thinking. It is easy to get lost in jargon. This workbook’s approach incorporates the elements of operational design but translates them into a framework that communication strategists will more easily employ.