



Sell Liberty like Don Draper

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GUIDE 1.0

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INTRODUCTION

I don't care if you're twelve, twenty-two, or sixty-five. I don't care if you're a professor, a plumber, or a photographer. I don't care how many treatises you've read, how many conferences you've attended, or how many Adderall you had for breakfast. Sharing your ideas about liberty is difficult.

Walking the fine line between zealot and ignoramus, you struggle to keep your thoughts straight in your own head, let alone communicate them to anyone else. You strive to discuss and write about liberty in ways that will inform and impassion others. Yet you know the effort is ultimately worth it, for liberty fights for peace, unleashes creativity, and alleviates suffering. So then, how can you communicate better and share liberty with more efficacy?



THE CONCEPT

Conventional wisdom classifies communication into four distinct genera:

- **Individual-to-Individual**, including one-on-one conversations, letters or emails, and any other interpersonal discourse between two (and only two) people.
- **Individual-to-Group**, including lectures, speeches, seminars, sermons, articles, books, treatises, open letters, and any other interpersonal discourse in which an individual communicates with multiple persons at once.
- **Group-to-Individual**, including conventions, white papers, advertising copy, and any other interpersonal discourse in which an organization made up of multiple people communicates with individuals.
- **Group-to-Group**, including white papers, business-to-business advertising copy, press releases, and any other interpersonal discourse in which an organization made up of multiple people communicates with a different organization made up of multiple people.

However, such a tedious taxonomy belies the reality of actual communication. While a priest might address an entire congregation at once, he isn't communicating with an abstract group. He's communicating with individuals, each of whom will hear and interpret his message in a unique way. Likewise, when the Democratic Party issues an official statement rebuking the action of a Republican, the entire population of Democrats isn't simultaneously communicating with that singular Republican. The official statement is written by a writer, edited by an editor, approved by a manager, submitted to the media by an intern, and then read by a news reporter, each of whom is an individual.

All communication is fundamentally of the first genus; namely, Individual-to-Individual. The other forms are simply modifications. When sharing the message of liberty, whether through a casual conversation at a coffee shop or an article in the New York Times, this basic fact must always be borne in mind. By whisper, cry, pen, or pigeon, effective communication rests on a foundation of individual connection.

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THE PLAN

Learning to play a classical piano sonata tests your patience and drive. If it isn't preceded by deliberate, disciplined practice, a performance of the the *Appassionata* will tire and perturb even the most dedicated listeners. But with thorough preparation, a pianist can illuminate the shrouded beauty of Beethoven and entrance an audience. Sharing liberty is no different than learning to play piano: concentrated thought must precede any action.

Emerson once said that thinking is “the hardest task in the world.” While that may or may not be true (I haven't thought about it), communication becomes much easier with a systematic, thoughtful plan in place. In *Thinking as a Science*, Henry Hazlitt recommends setting aside one half hour each day for “pure, independent thinking.”

Thinking begins with asking questions, and at some point it evolves into planning. To quote Francis Bacon, “Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man.” The more concrete and precise your plan, the more achievable your results will be. Moreover, if your plan fails, you'll have a record to turn to; you'll be able to quickly identify your mistakes and act to correct them, while at the same time preserving your successes.

While every circumstance differs, successful communication almost always exhibits certain essential characteristics. At the primary level, a communication plan should flow from description to prescription. The most comprehensive exposition of this process comes from Roman G. Hiebing Jr. and Scott Cooper. As professors and practitioners, these two gurus have educated thousands of students and businessmen in the art and science of marketing and communication. Their treatise, *The Successful Marketing Plan*, outlines a rigorous and methodical approach.

In my short time on earth, I've had the great fortune to be involved in the marketing and communication efforts of many organizations, from Internet start-ups to law firms to political-activism groups. I have adapted the lessons of the Hiebing-Cooper approach to these efforts, and in the pages that follow I adapt them to the process of sharing liberty.

SELF-EVALUATION

Becoming an effective communicator of liberty starts with a self-evaluation. When you talk about liberty, do the eyes of your interlocutors glaze over? Are you articulate and concise when discussing civil rights? Are you glib and voluble when talking about foreign intervention? Are



you unassertive and confused when debating social policy? Self-evaluation will teach you to identify your strengths and weaknesses.

Our goal is for others to recognize the value of what we're offering.

Based in commerce, the Hiebing-Cooper method begins with a product assessment. We're not working with a product, per se: liberty is neither a good nor a service. Liberty is an idea. Yet, just like with a good or a service in the commercial world, our goal is for others to recognize the value of what we're offering.

YOUR BRAND

"Liberty" means different things to different people. An eighteenth-century liberal, an anarchist from the 1910s, and a modern social democrat could argue about the definition of liberty for hours. Labels shouldn't comprise the substance of what you're sharing. For example, if "freedom" better encapsulates and communicates your philosophy, then use that word instead. Your brand should be easy to understand and relate to. Google changed its name from BackRub for a reason. Corporations spend

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thousands of hours naming their products in order to entice and excite potential buyers. While you don't need thousands of hours, there's no reason not to follow their example. Also, keep in mind that, unlike most companies, you can tailor your brand to best fit each individual interaction.

CORE COMPETENCY

A *core competency* distills all your skills into a coherent thrust. Honda, for example, manufactures automobiles. They also produce racing cars and jet airplanes. Consumers associate the company with safety and value. Despite all this, Honda expresses its core competency—the consolidation of all their products, technologies, and reputations—as the production of reliable, quality engines. All of Honda's business decisions are influenced by its core competency. When a company loses sight of its central focus (its core competency), consumers can tell. It's bad news.

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Likewise, without a central focus, your efforts to share liberty will be defeated before they even enter the arena. Identifying your core competency involves introspection. Harness your passion and knowledge into a coherent thrust and then base all your communication on it.

Also ask for the input of others when considering your strengths and weaknesses, both of which should be considered when identifying your core competency. Ultimately, your core competency should distinguish you from the pack without being too specific.

Determining brand and core competency both involve a tradeoff between a horizontal component and a vertical component. “Horizontal” refers to the number of potential individuals with whom you can easily communicate. “Vertical” refers to the depth with which you can connect with others in regard to a particular niche. In general, the more horizontal your reach, the less vertical it is, and vice versa. For example, if your focus is economics, your horizontal component is quite high and your vertical quite low; the opposite would be true for agricultural microeconomics in Illinois. As a general rule, it is best to be an expert on a narrower (more vertical) focus first, and then use that to branch out and connect to a broader (more horizontal) realm of ideas.

METHODS OF EVALUATION

If you’re sharing liberty as part of an organization (e.g., on a university campus), you may want to consider other formal methods of evaluation. *Primary research* can be conducted with just a little manpower.

- **Focus groups:** Assemble a few friends, acquaintances, and strangers in a coffee shop or classroom. (Offer each participant a small gift if necessary.) Engage in honest discussion about how peers perceive your organization—or even whether or not they know it exists. Ask them for suggestions for events and on how to improve your organization. Try to gauge what they think your ultimate mission is. Does that agree with what you think your ultimate mission is?
- **Surveys:** Like focus groups, surveys can provide you with insight about your organization that you could not obtain from your usual contacts. Being a part of the group, your judgment will naturally be clouded and biased. Surveys circumvent the bias and are a more objective source of information.



Secondary research, including an analysis of current events, trending topics, and related research, is no less valuable to your self-evaluation.

A self-evaluation of yourself or your organization should expose your true colors. It's like a job interview. You can build up your resume with all the pomp and circumstance in the world, but when you're face-to-face with your future, that doesn't really matter.

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COMPETITOR EVALUATION

*“If you don’t like what’s being said,
change the conversation.”*

—Don Draper, *Mad Men*

Businesses have it easy. To assess their competition, they just need to look at other businesses. Granted, they also must consider industry trends, ever-changing consumer whim, and potential new technologies, among other things. But, really, the process of competitor evaluation is quite straightforward.

Contrast that with your task. Who—or what—are you competing against? You could argue that your biggest competition is your own weakness. Your shortcomings prevent you from achieving all your dreams and from sharing liberty in the best way possible. Or you could argue that you are competing against other social and political philosophies—Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative, socialist, and so on ad infinitum. Anyone or anything with a seat at the table competes against you for the time and attention of another. Or you could argue that the competition of liberty is the state. Truth be told, there is no correct answer.

You are tasked with determining your competition. When you do, it is imperative that you take time to frame the enemy, so to speak. Businesses deal with concrete entities, namely other businesses. You must condense and codify the nebulous concepts of personal weakness, political philosophies, and/or the state.



For example, the state is everywhere, yet it is elusive. Is the state the law, is it people, is it geographical territory, or is it something else? You cannot simply go around town assailing the state at every opportunity. That will earn you no friends, and more than a few suspicious looks. Moreover, it doesn't really mean anything. You must realize this before you do anything about the state. To promote liberty effectively, you must define and evaluate your competitor(s) in detail.

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FORMAL EVALUATION

When a company like General Mills performs a competitor evaluation, it starts with a particular product (e.g., Cheerios). Then, it reviews competing products in great detail, focusing on four central issues.

1. ***Manufacturing process:*** How is the competing product made? What raw materials in what quantities are used? What manufacturing technology is employed? How much labor is needed? From start to finish, how long does it take to produce the product?
2. ***Description/appearance:*** What does the product look, smell, taste, sound, and feel like? How is it packaged? What emotions are evoked in the consumer upon seeing or interacting with the product?
3. ***Advantages in the marketplace:*** What gives the product a competitive edge? Does it fulfill a niche demand? Is it the least expensive (to produce and/or at market)? Is it of high quality? Is it sold at the most stores? Is it the easiest to use?
4. ***Weaknesses in the marketplace:*** What inherent weaknesses compromise the product? Is it the most expensive (to produce and/or at market)? Is it of low quality? Is it difficult to access? Is it hard to use?

In broad terms, a competitor evaluation must also consider the history, trajectory, and expected future path of competing companies and products. All of the elements of an informative competitor evaluation can be adapted for liberty.



1. ***Manufacturing process.*** What is the theoretical groundwork of the competing philosophy? How do arguments in opposition to liberty proceed?
2. ***Description/appearance.*** What makes, say, Democratic or Republican policy popular? What parts of the human psyche do the competitors of liberty seek to appeal to? How are arguments against liberty presented, and what helps them succeed?
3. ***Advantages in the marketplace.*** What offerings or conclusions draw individuals to the competitors of liberty? Do the competitors of liberty enjoy an aura of legitimacy or the benefit of the status quo? Why is there a demand for government?
4. ***Weaknesses in the marketplace.*** What problems do philosophies other than liberty suffer from? What niche demands do they not satiate? What problems do they not solve?

What is the theoretical groundwork of the competing philosophy? How do arguments in opposition to liberty proceed?

After a thorough analysis of the competing product, the final part of a competitor evaluation involves assessing what the competitors are doing to sell their product. What marketing strategies and tactics are they using? Has their product's popularity been waning or waxing—and why? Which consumers are being drawn to which alternatives? And the list goes on. In the end, a comprehensive competitor evaluation includes three distinct sections: a definition and framing of the competition, a description and evaluation of particular products, and a description and evaluation of how those products are being marketed.

PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Once you've prepared detailed evaluations of yourself and your competitor(s), you'll want to condense that information into meaningful summary points. Here's where writing your thoughts down on paper becomes absolutely necessary. Your summary points should address either problems or opportunities in actionable ways. Include pertinence as a factor—why now? And finally, be familiar with each problem and opportunity so you can act upon it if and when the appropriate moment comes. Here are a few examples:



- *The term “capitalism” offends some people. Fears of exploitation and images of greedy bankers cloud the minds of many.*
- *People are concerned about the welfare of children. Compared to the well-being of any other age group, that of children benefits from more attention, focus, and resources.*

The term “capitalism” offends some people. Fears of exploitation and images of greedy bankers cloud the minds of many.

Using these actionable problems and opportunities, you can employ your strengths to share liberty in a relevant and genial manner. You already own the suit. Now tailor it.

TARGET MARKET

Of course, you want to share liberty far and wide. You want to shout from mountaintops. You want to reach as many ears as possible. Unfortunately, resources are scarce. The limits of the natural world bind our undertakings and necessitate trade-offs. Time, the scarcest resource of all, requires us to prioritize our lives. By pinpointing in advance the segment of the population that is most receptive to your message, you can maximize your communicative potential.

At this point, you should have a well-defined message that separates you from your competition. Instead of haphazardly sharing it, however, you must consider with whom you will be sharing. Hiebing and Cooper warn, “The biggest marketing mistake is to attempt to be all things to all people.” Take time to assess the various characteristics of the individuals with whom you might potentially communicate. They are your target market: a group of individuals with common characteristics.

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For example, let’s say your core competency is foreign-policy expertise and you want to share your thoughts on U.S. intervention in the third-world nation du jour. There are many ways to approach the issue. You could discuss national security, fiscal cost, human cost, humanitarianism, historical tradition, etc. Learn to adapt your content and delivery based on the target market you aim to reach.

Within a target market, influence the influencers: observe who in a social circle commands the most respect. Who is the person perceived to be the most earnest? The most knowl-



edgeable? Who is listened to the most? Connect with that person first; your message will be carried much further and with more legitimacy than it could be by your efforts alone.

As a final step, consider the behavior you want the people who comprise your target market to exhibit after interacting with you. Will they leave the conversation with you feeling hopeful, informed, or curious? Will they visit your website? Read a particular book? Share what you said with others?

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OBJECTIVES

Up to this point, your communication plan has been descriptive—that is, it has described what already exists. Going forward, the plan will become prescriptive. You will morph your thorough analysis into a comprehensive strategy. You will develop goals, tactics, and evaluation metrics while always remembering, as Hiebing and Cooper do, that “companies don’t

Companies don’t sell products; customers purchase them. Likewise, liberty cannot be forced upon anyone.

sell products; customers *purchase* them.” Likewise, liberty cannot be forced upon anyone.

To start your comprehensive strategy, write concise, actionable objectives. These objectives can be goals for yourself, goals for your organization, or even goals for your ideas. In the commercial world, objectives need to be numerically measurable.

When it comes to sharing liberty, this becomes more difficult, though it is not impossible. If you’re aiming to improve the efficacy of your one-on-one conversations, keeping score may not be practical. For individuals, meaningful connections generally outweigh quantity. An organization, on the other hand, will want to set goals for fundraising, membership, event participation, publication readership, or other applicable criteria.

PLAN STRATEGIES

Liberty-minded individuals have long sparred over the best way to share liberty. Some advocate conversion, while others suggest leading by example. Still others practice a form of agorism, circumscribing Leviathan in unconventional ways. It is not my place to comment on the merits and pitfalls of any of the above. I can only say that my strategy of choice is to



highlight the glory of human freedom in its many manifestations, hoping that others will come to appreciate it, too. Take some time to consider the semantic implications of the words you choose to associate yourself with.

THE NEGRONI EFFECT

Have you ever indulged in a Negroni, the classic Italian cocktail? Many people haven't. Sprightly floral gin, subtly sweet vermouth, and rich herbal Campari coalesce perfectly into a magical red elixir.

Try ordering one sometime in a bar or a restaurant. "What exactly are you drinking?" your friends will inquire. You'll offer them a taste. They'll be tepid at first, but twenty minutes later, everyone at the table will be drinking one.

You'll realize that your best strategy is not to force the Negroni upon others. That only compromises its valor and charisma. You must set an example. Whenever it's your turn, you'll order with a reserved confidence. You won't coerce others into ordering a Negroni; rather, you'll let natural curiosity get the best of them.

Alas, there will still be a demand for bad drinks—those everyday concoctions with which people are so blindly content. Yet even one other individual discovering the Negroni because of you is a win for both you and the Negroni. After all, it only takes one spark to ignite a flame and one flame to engulf a forest.

It only takes one spark to ignite a flame.

POSITIONING STRATEGY

Positioning is the art of representing what you have to offer. Effective positioning triggers desired perceptions in the minds of others—particularly those individuals who make up your target market. How will you position yourself, your organization, your ideas? There are many tactics, including positioning by

- *Key attributes:* **What particular benefits do you and your ideas offer?**
- *Audience:* **How can you frame your ideas in terms of your audience?**



- *Against a competitor:* **How do your ideas differ from the pack?**
- *By association:* **Who else holds your ideas in high esteem?**
- *By problem:* **What specific problems do you and your ideas address?**

Combine your positioning strategy with your objectives to create an overall communication strategy: a single, concise statement of your overall plan to effectively communicate your ideas about liberty. As an example: “I will position myself as the authority on issues of free trade in order to demonstrate the flaws of NAFTA.”

FINAL PREPARATION

Now that you’ve thought about your strengths, weaknesses, competition, objectives, and general strategy, it’s time to create a concrete plan of action. You have all the tools and information to answer the five *Ws*: Who will I communicate with? *What* will I be communicating? *When* will I be communicating? *Where* will I be communicating? *Why* will I be communicating? (Also, *How* will I be communicating?)

DISTRIBUTION

Communication can be planned in advance—a planned conversation, an article, a speech, a letter; or it can be ad hoc—an unplanned conversation, a spur-of-the-moment interview, etc. Many forms of communication blur this distinction.

When planning communication, there are multiple distribution factors to consider. These include medium (writing, in-person conversation, phone, email, etc.); duration (a few seconds, an hour, days, a column, 200 words, etc.); relation (friend, acquaintance, boss, stranger, etc.); and whether the communication is formal or informal.

THE VALUE OF FRIENDS

Organize and keep track of friends, colleagues, and experts—anyone you know or have knowledge of. In the course of conversation, you may find that you don’t know the answer to a question or that someone else could explain an issue better. Have go-to contacts ready at the tip of your fingers so that instead of saying, “I don’t know,” you can say, “This is who



knows.” Even if it’s not the result of being stumped, constantly think of how you can bring individuals from disparate social circles together.

Constantly think of how you can bring individuals from disparate social circles together.

If you are part of a student organization planning an event to share liberty, reach out to other student groups. When I coordinated a speech by a high-profile author at the University of Wisconsin on behalf of Young Americans for Liberty, I didn’t do it alone. I enlisted the aid of the student union, the advertising club, other political groups, and various community organizations. I worked with the ACLU, the Federalist Society, and professors of many disciplines. The farther you extend your reach, the farther you extend your influence.

EXECUTION

You’ve reached the moment of truth. You’re engaged in conversation. Your article was published. You’re giving a speech. You’re listening to a lecture. Whatever it is, you can’t plan anymore. From this point forward, for the extent of the communicative experience, all you can do is perceive and adjust.

OBSERVE

Throughout a conversation, you must continuously observe and listen to those opposite you. Become a mirror; reflect the body language of the person with whom you are speaking. Fine-tune your discussion points to match his or her tone and rhetoric. Most importantly, listen a lot.

In his bestselling book *Never Eat Alone*, communication expert Keith Ferrazzi describes what he calls a “networking jerk”:

He is the man or she is the woman with a martini in one hand, business cards in the other, and a prerehearsed elevator pitch always at the ready. He or she is a schmooze artist, eyes darting at every event in a constant search for a bigger fish to fry. He or she is the insincere, ruthlessly ambitious glad-hander you don’t want to become.

Sincerity is essential for portraying any message in a positive light, especially the message of liberty. When conversing with someone—whether by chance at a bar or on behalf of an organization at an event—focus your entire attention on him or her. Don’t be an unctuous eye-darter. Attempt



to connect on an emotional level by telling personal stories. Ask questions and listen attentively to the answers.

If, at some point, the discourse with this person reaches an impasse and you determine your efforts are futile, then cut your losses. Do so politely, however, because his or her friends might be more receptive to your message. You'll only find out, though, if they want to talk to you.

KEEP THE KITCHEN LINGO IN THE KITCHEN

I once worked as a waiter in a busy restaurant. As you can imagine, effective communication was a cornerstone of a well-executed dinner service. To facilitate ease and foster efficiency, the wait staff developed a lingo. (Well, we didn't develop it; it was just kind of in place.) Anyway, there were phrases that guided us, words that protected us, and abbreviations that saved us time. We had a lot of specialized language, but our lexicon was dwarfed by the size of the kitchen's.

Our conversations made little or no sense to our guests. Anyone outside the very exclusive social circle of restaurant employees had no clue what we were prattling about. But for us, the lingo was indispensable. If you worked in the restaurant (and especially in the kitchen), you were expected to know the lingo and use it correctly, no matter how much of a neophyte you were.

When you're discussing liberty with someone, make sure both parties agree on a common language. Be accommodating. Avoid using overly specialized jargon and lingo, unless you're communicating with a circle of people who expect you to use it.

LEAVE A GOOD IMPRESSION

“You are the product. You feeling something. That’s what sells.” ”

—Don Draper, *Mad Men*

There is a single maxim that applies across all forms of communication: “To like your ideas, they must like you.” Beyond being more receptive to your message, individuals who truly like you are more apt to speak highly of you when you're not around. They're more likely to refer others



to you, your writing, and your organization. When it comes to communicating with others about liberty, quality builds quantity.

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When you find yourself communicating with an individual you haven't met before, always get their name early. Repeat it often throughout the conversation. Acquire contact information and then follow up in a timely manner. In the words of Ferrazzi, "Follow-up is the key to success in any field." A simple, personalized email the day following a conversation (perhaps with a relevant article attached) goes a long way.

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Finally, at the end of a conversation or any other form of communication, make a graceful exit. There are no special techniques for this—just be courteous and polite.

EVALUATION

After any encounter for the purpose of sharing liberty, take time to reflect. What exactly was discussed? Did you stick to or stray from your core competency? Did you meet your objectives? How successful was your positioning strategy? Did you gain a new contact? How could you handle similar situations better in the future?

The overwhelming importance of liberty warrants and even requires us to be thoughtful, earnest communicators. I have confidence that the more consciously you consider your words and actions, the more effective your communicative efforts will become. Try applying the structure and lessons of the Hiebing-Cooper method. I doubt you'll be disappointed.



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