

Sample Communications

Twitter Exercise

Small spaces like tweets, headlines, and photo captions are great framing opportunities. The sample tweets below model a four-step process for framing even the shortest communications.

Step 1: Identify “swampy” cues.

What words or phrases may inadvertently activate the public’s unhelpful thought patterns about your issue? Where can you fill in explanatory holes or make logical links?

Step 2: Reframe it.

Identify opportunities to strengthen explanations of your issue, add a tested value or metaphor, or moderate your tone.

Step 3: Diffuse it.

Build support for your issue by expanding your audience with hashtags, links, and @mentions.

Step 4: Shorten it.

Once your message is well framed, cut extra words and use abbreviations and symbols. Make every word count: The clarity and brevity of your message will heighten the frame’s effects!

EXAMPLE A

Original:

Check out this important new program in Nevada that is helping to bridge the ever-growing gap between teens and the elderly: bit.ly/1KdLudQ

 **Identify “swampy” cues:**

Cues in this tweet like “elderly” and “gap” are likely to activate an *Older as Other* model. Reinforcing *Us vs. Them* thinking about older adults makes it difficult for the public to see the collective benefits of making sure everyone can contribute to their communities. The phrase “ever-growing gap” could also cue *Fatalism*, suggesting that no programs can successfully address the problem of intergenerational differences.

 **Reframe It:**

Check out Nevada’s innovative new idea to help old and young people alike: bit.ly/1KdLudQ
Intergenerational programs help make sure people can contribute at every age!

Instead of emphasizing the size of the problem, this reframed tweet uses the value of *Ingenuity* to focus on its solvability. It also underscores the collective benefits of intergenerational programs, helping the public understand why it has a stake in the issue.

 **Diffuse It:**

Check out this innovative and #agefriendly new idea from Nevada: bit.ly/1KdLudQ
#Intergenerational programs help make sure people can contribute at every age!

Research suggests that putting links in the middle of a tweet, rather than at the end, increases the likelihood that the link will be clicked. Using established hashtags like “#agefriendly” helps you reach users who are engaged in your issue.

 **Shorten it:**

New innovative + #agefriendly idea from NV: bit.ly/1KdLudQ #Intergenerational programs help ensure people can contribute at every age!

You might need a few extra characters to frame your tweet, but the payoff is worth it: Your followers will be more likely to understand your issue and support solutions to it. That said, brevity is critical—especially on social media. This tweet was shortened from 158 to 134 characters with abbreviations (“Nevada” becomes “NV”) and symbols (“and” becomes “+”). Cutting superfluous words (such as “Check out this”) also helps.

EXAMPLE B

Original:

MYTH: Older adults in the workplace are slower and less productive. FACT: Older adults are highly competent and their years of experience make them valuable employees. Let's end ageism.

 **Identify "swampy" cues:**

The "myth/fact" setup of this tweet will unintentionally reinforce negative ideas about aging because it repeats a dominant, unproductive frame.

 **Reframe It:**

Justice means treating everyone fairly and never letting unfounded, ageist stereotypes affect older adults in the workplace. Let's end ageism to make our society more just.

In this reframed tweet, ageism is presented as a salient social justice issue, allowing the public to think critically about the changes our society must make in order to treat older people fairly.

 **Diffuse It:**

Justice means treating everyone fairly and never letting unfounded, ageist stereotypes affect older adults in the workplace. Let's #EndAgeism and make our society more just.

The established hashtag "EndAgeism" helps your tweet mobilize potential allies and reach a broader audience of people already communicating about your issue.

 **Shorten it:**

Justice = treating everyone fairly = not letting unfounded stereotypes hurt older adults in the workplace. Make our society just #EndAgeism.

This tweet was shortened from 174 characters to 140 characters by combining and shortening sentences and using the "=" symbol.

EXAMPLE C

Original:

Join us for a panel discussion next week where we will talk about the unique contributions older Americans could be making to our communities—and about how the country is choosing to waste that potential.

 **Identify “swampy” cues:**

Talking about the “unique” contributions of older people sets up “*Us vs. Them*” thinking and makes it more difficult for the public to reason about aging as a continuous process that takes place across the lifespan.

 **Reframe It:**

Panel discussion next week will talk about the energy and experience we all gain as we get older, and how we can change our laws and policies so that all that energy is used to move society forward: <http://link.bit.ly>

This tweet uses the tested explanatory metaphor of *Building Momentum* to frame aging as a positive force that benefits society as a whole. Instead of foregrounding a separate, discrete group of “older people” whose contributions are being “wasted,” it emphasizes how communities benefit when everyone contributes.

 **Diffuse It:**

@panelists: Next week we will talk about the energy and experience we all gain through #aging, and about how we can change our laws and policies so that all that energy is used to move society forward: <http://link.bit.ly>

Mentioning other Twitter users with the “@” sign is a way to connect with or gain followers and generate retweets, likes, and favorites.

 **Shorten it:**

@panelists: How can we ensure that the energy + experience we all gain thru #aging is used to move society forward? <http://link.bit.ly>

This tweet was shortened from 221 characters to 135 characters by deleting superfluous words and using abbreviations (“through” becomes “thru”) and symbols (“and” becomes “+”).