

# **Trust Targets: Setting realistic expectations for relationships with key stakeholders**

Presentation to the 2013 WSPRA Fall Conference



# **A brief introduction...**

**Worked with public school districts since 1992**

**Staff of eight, four of whom are retired school superintendents and one is a retired strategic planning director for a school district**

**Based in Kansas City, but we have clients in six states – most of them in the Midwest**

**Everything you will hear today is based on research we have conducted for those school districts, captured in the book *Think Like a Patron (without losing your mind)***

# **Before we begin...**

- 1. No surprise: Districts that are trusted are able to get things done.**
- 2. Everything you do either builds up, or erodes trust. Everything.**
- 3. Trust and brand are fused at the hip (which is why we'll be spending a lot of time talking about brand)**
- 4. There is no finish line, nor is there a singular trust “recipe” that works for everyone.**

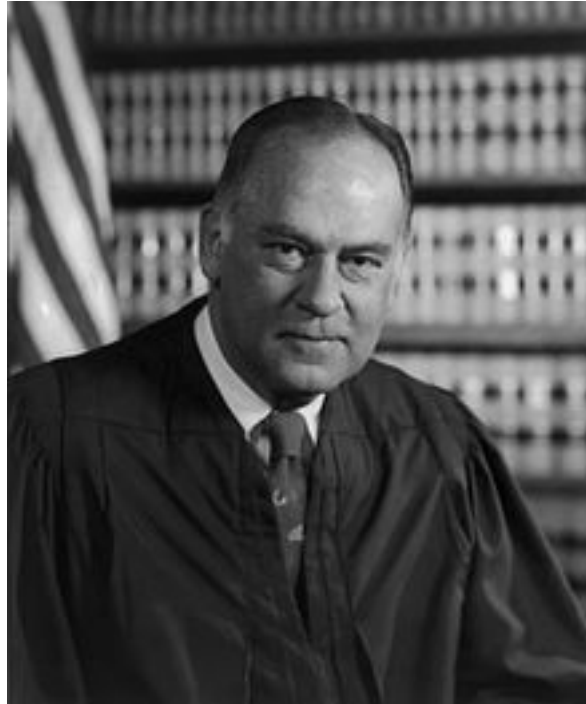
# Let's start with a quiz...



# How about these?



# What we're talking about is "brand"



*(Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart; known for Jacobellis v. Ohio, 1964)*

# **Brand, a definition**

**Noun:**

- 1. The thoughts, feelings, emotions and ideas that come to mind when a certain product, service, person or organization is mentioned**
- 2. A promise**

**So....**

**What is your school district's "promise"  
(as you see it)?**



# **“Promise” ideas you may like**

**Student-focused**

**Visionary**

**Transparent**

**Parent-friendly**

**Frugal/Fiscally  
responsible**

**Scholarly**

**Successful**

# **And....**

**How do you think your stakeholders see it?  
(Be honest)**

# **“Promise” ideas you may *not* like...**

**Test-oriented**

**Behind the neighbors**

**Spendthrift**

**Close-minded**

**Athletics over academics**

**Keep us in the dark**

**Unwilling to change**

# **The truth about your brand (and trust)**

Your brand is influenced by you, but *determined by your stakeholders.*

You influence your brand perception by taking steps to demonstrate your trustworthiness.

You need to be realistic about what you can achieve (the principle of “trust targets”)

# The biggest impact on your brand (and on your ability to build trust)?



**Versus**



# Trust-building opportunities

Current parents  
Students  
Staff  
Affinity groups  
Media  
Key Opinion Leaders  
Social Media  
Recent Alumni  
Long-term Alumni  
Non-parent patrons

**MOST**



**LEAST**

# **Faced with this reality...**

**How can you build the trust you need,  
for your school district to succeed?**

# Step one

Abandon the idea that you can earn the trust of every stakeholder.



*(This is not realistic)*



# Step two

Define the brand  
you would *prefer*.

# An example of defining a brand



Versus





**“The Ultimate Driving Machine”**

Kidney grill

Quad headlines

Aerodynamic design

Hofmeister Kink

Roundel



**“The Power to Surprise”**

Safety

“Green”

Low price

Fuel efficient

# **They know what they want to have come to mind. How about you?**

Now, define the *characteristics* that you want to come to mind  
when your school district's name is  
heard, read, or thought of.

# Step three

Parent Trust  
Target:  
Engagement and  
more advocacy  
than antagonism

Parents  
today:  
Limited  
engagement



Define your Trust Targets: Realistic trust goals for each stakeholder group

# To define Trust Targets...

1. Start with a realistic view of where you are today with each stakeholder group; ignore the noise and the quiet.
2. If you don't know, consider doing research to find out; focus on people, programs, facilities and district/patron relationship factors.
3. Define what's possible, taking into account your environment, history and plans.
4. Use words like “awareness,” “advocacy,” “engagement,” and “participation.”
5. Write it down and – as much as possible – make it measurable.

# Sample Trust Targets

## Current District Parents

Engagement, and more advocacy than antagonism

- Define “engagement” in your district (parent/teacher conference attendance, committee sign-up, etc.)
- Evaluate current level of advocacy (how much, where it is demonstrated, etc.) and set goal

# Sample Trust Targets

## Staff

Engagement beyond the job description, with a significant majority being advocates

- Define what is expected “engagement” for staff, and identify growth opportunities
- Define what advocacy looks like (in a measurable way), and determine how to document increase



# Sample Trust Targets

## Social media

### Accuracy and fairness

- Catalog stories and tone covered on social media (without driving yourself *insane*...)
- Track accuracy and fairness over time

# Step four

Engage in active, strategic communications to build trust.



*(Brands are determined by stakeholders,*

*but influenced by the messages sent by the “brand holder.”)*

# Research says...

## Successful districts:

1. Have patrons with an appropriate amount of interest and engagement.
2. Have processes and plans that fit with their community's expectations.
3. Are seen as being trustworthy stewards of the responsibilities of a school district (educate students, maintain facilities, monitor budgets, etc.)

*(You strengthen each of these with active, strategic communications)*

# Active, strategic communications...

Is outwardly focused  
rather than inwardly directed



**Talk about this**



**Not this**

# Active, strategic communications...

Builds a strong internal network of sources.



(Fits teachers, custodians, food service, bus drivers, front office staff...)

# Active, strategic communications...

Remembers the balance of its audience.



Wants details



Want the basic information

# Active, strategic communications...

Remembers the balance of its audience.



Wants details

Line-by-line budget

Details on size of bathrooms in the renovated middle school

Explanation on cost/benefit analysis of printed versus online textbooks

(you get the idea...)

# Active, strategic communications...

Remembers the balance of its audience.

Why should this matter to me?  
What are the benefits?  
Will this cost me anything?  
(in other words “Just tell me why  
I should care.”)



Want the basic information



# **Active, strategic communications...**

**Is prompt, accurate, and humble.**

- 1. Needs are addressed promptly, at all levels.**
- 2. Information is accurate at all times. (Check your website at least weekly.)**
- 3. Errors are admitted and addressed immediately.**

*(No encounter is insignificant in your efforts to build trust.)*

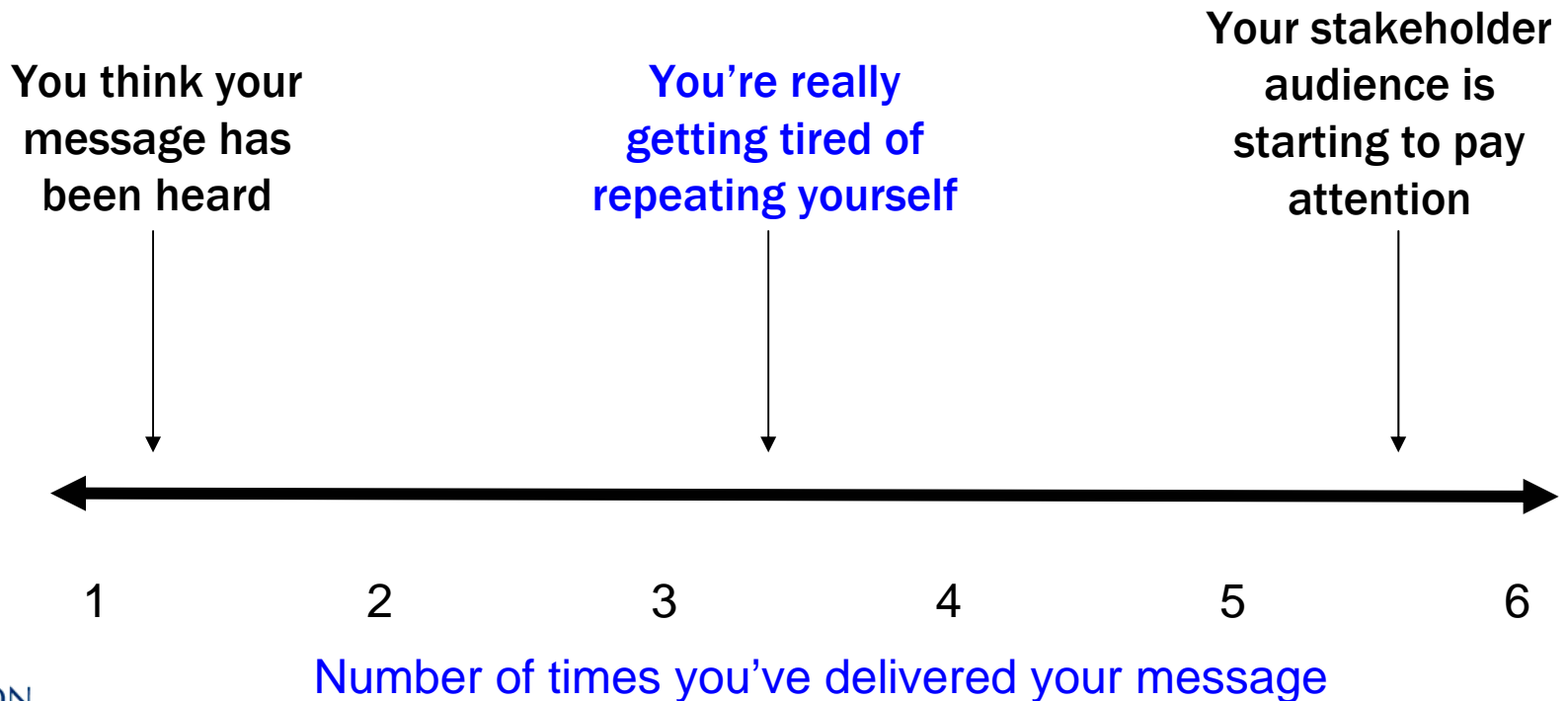
# Active, strategic communications...

Talks about needs early, and often.



# Active, strategic communications...

Repeats itself. A lot.



# **Active, strategic communications...**

**Haven't we said this enough?**

**The answer is always "no."**

**"We just voted for that, didn't we?" (Bond issue vs. operating levy)**

**"Casino money is paying for schools now." (What a sales job...)**

**"I heard you have a big slush fund." (The role of reserves)**

**"Get the money from somewhere else!" (Huh?)**

# Step five

- 1. Measure your progress  
(annually)**
- 2. Update your targets**

# Thank you!

Comments? Questions?

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