PERSUASION CONVERSATIONS

Objectives: (Be able to…)

* Describe the framework for effective persuasion conversations
* Use the effective persuasion conversation framework for talking to undecided voters
* Feel motivated to apply the framework to organizing work

Session plan:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Activity** |
| 00- | OPENING   * Hook -- by what percentage point did XXXX person win? Every vote counts y’all (illustrate both turnout and persuasion -- we need folks to care about what we care about and then show up! -- elections are won by the people who show up (west wing clip) * Introduce Griffen! * Share goals and agenda of the training   + Describe the framework for effective persuasion conversations   + Use the effective persuasion conversation framework for talking to undecided voters   + Feel motivated to apply the framework to organizing work   INTRODUCTION  Voting universe slide - who are we talking about when we are talking about turnout (set audience)  Define persuasion and turnout   * **Persuasion**: folks who are undecided but might likely side with the issue or candidate when pushed (undecided voters) * **Turnout:** talking to people who are likely supportive but might not vote without a nudge (sporadic voters)   WHY PERSUASION?  Oftentimes, there are several competing narratives about what we *should do* in an election year. Some say we don’t need to do persuasion—we should only focus on turnout. Others say we need to lean in real hard to persuasion.  Ask the group: Why might we need both of these methods to prepare for an election?  This training will help us understand why these tactics are not mutually exclusive, and how we need to do both in order to be successful. So—why persuasion?   * **1) It is necessary (it’s a numbers game)**   + There simply aren’t enough voters to turnout to win on turnout alone   + Whether we’re talking to voters about an issue advocacy campaign or knocking doors for a candidate, the fact is that in many states and districts have close margins   + *\*Choose a relevant example (i.e. CA-48 or TX-7 as swing districts in 2018, or an issue that took time and persuasion in a community to gain steam)* * **2) It is challenging—and you are the one who is willing to get out there and talk to them**   + Voters may not actually know about your issue or candidate— think that you might be talking to a mother or father that works two jobs and takes care of their children. They may not be as engaged as you are.   + Partisanship has deep roots—people’s upbringings, families, friends, religion’s, social clubs, etc… all are tied to their identity. A contrasting opinion can sometimes feel like your identity is being challenged!   + It’s tricky precisely because you’re trying to present someone with your views and shape their opinions * **3) Thoughts on persuasion are still evolving!**   + There is no proven algorithm for persuasion. As people continue to practice persuasion tactics, and as it continues to be studied by groups like the analyst institute, some methods are found not to work, while others are.   Ask the group: What other reasons do you believe persuasion is important?   * Share and discuss as a whole group |
| 0000 | AUDIENCES/UNIVERSES   * There are many different types of people we can talk to: this model breaks down who we’re talking to for persuasion convos * **Support**   + Low: No chance they’ll support!   + Lean Low: Low odds they’ll support   + Medium: Undecided   + Lean High: High odds they’ll support   + High: They’re on your team! * **Turnout**   + Low: You’d have to drag them to the polls!   + Medium: They might turnout. They voted 5 years ago!   + High: They always turnout, come hell or high water * **Our persuasion audience: Medium support and high/medium turnout** * *\*NOTE* - Your local races and initiatives will provide you with a list of these voters. This is simply to demonstrate who we are talking to.   Prompt the group to think about someone in their life that they know that falls into the persuasion universe. Ask them to keep that person in mind as they move through this module. |
| :25- :45 | MAKING THE CASE FOR PERSUASION:  (Part of the purpose of the training is to help trainees understand its importance!)  Persuasion is one of the best options because it adds two votes to your side (the vote you persuaded and the one you took from the other side), while increasing turnout and registration will only add one vote.   * PA-18 special election in 2018   + In case there was any doubt whether turnout vs persuasion is a false choice… it is a false choice   + Elliot Morris is a data-cruncher and came up with this model   + What he found in his data was that in PA-18 in 2017, there were two things that contributed to Conor Lamb’s victory:     - 1) Democratic turnout was high       * Very important for Lamb’s victory       * Important to note that it was not high enough for him to win     - 2) Approximately 9% of voters who voted from Trump in 2016 voted for Lamb!!!   + The combination of this turnout and persuasion contributed to Lamb’s victory—and it would have been impossible without turnout and persuasion!   + ~~However, campaign tactics that influence voter turnout may not always influence voter choice~~      - ~~In a study that aimed to understand the consequences of persuasion tactics on voter choice, researchers examined a case study of Obama canvassers for the 2008 election in Wisconsin. The researchers found that among historically low-turnout voters, pro-Obama canvassers appeared to have decreased support for the Obama Campaign.~~        * ~~This further demonstrates the importance of channelling our critical incident and speaking to our shared values so we remain effective when talking to voters.~~ * And just in case it still isn’t clear as to why we knock doors and make phone calls—studies show that with a 25% contact rate, the estimated impact of each contact increases a voter’s likelihood to vote by 3-8% (with knocks being 56% more effective)   + This is why traditional voter contact methods are so important!   + ***But increasing research shows that having an effective conversation is the most effective thing we can do*** |
| :45- 55 | PERSUASION FRAMEWORK   * Let’s dive into the framework: How do we have an effective conversation with a voter who is undecided? * Understand the *voter’s concerns →* connect on *shared values →* Connect values to the *narrative of your issue or candidate*   + Marshall Ganz’s method of (Another example): story of me → story of us → story of now * Consider 3 points of a triangle (let’s work backwards): you, the undecided voter, and the candidate/issue.   + The line between you and the candidate/issue is strong   + The line between you and the voter is what you are establishing using your personal story   + Then, you have to use the connection you establish with the voter to establish a connection between the voter and the candidate/issue.   + In other words, the voter establishes a connection to the candidate/issue through you and with your help via a connection over core values.   + In order for the triangle to be complete, you have to not only establish a connection with the voter, but you also have to tie that connection to the core traits and values of the candidate. * **Step 1: Acknowledge and relate**   + Use your personal story to connect with the voter on their concerns and ISSUES important to them!   + Think hyper-local! What issue(s) have a direct impact on both of your lives? Is it the low access to quality education, racial segregation, water quality, affordable housing? You have an inherent connection with the voter as it relates to the community you both live in!   + Validate the voter’s concern- *“I hear what you’re saying…”*     - Need to employ effective listening to understand what the person is saying     - Repeat back and acknowledge where the undecided voter is coming from     - This helps create a space in which the person feels heard   *\*Note -* **Important to remember that the goal is to build trust and rapport** with the voter, not to hand a piece of literature or simply state your views. A voter may not remember what you say to them in the ballot booth but they will remember the impression you leave.   * **Step 2: Connect on values**   + Surface what the underlying values are in what the voter is saying   + This will require some non-judgemental, probing questions!   + The conversation should move to the core values of the issue you support and connect that value to the other person’s values   + This is the part of the conversation where you’re connecting with the heart of what someone cares about—are they a parent? What values do you have in common? Do they work several jobs? Are they a small business owner? (this is the perfect opportunity to affirm them!)   *\*Note-* You figure out who they are through probing questions and your personal story! … ***and if you get nervous, just breathe and circle back to your “why.”***   * **Step 3: Pivot to persuasive language- tie shared values with key facts and figures on the issues you both care about**   + Explain why you support the candidate and connect that with what you’ve heard in this conversation. Share the benefits and impact of ‘winning’ (positive facts) before ever getting to the consequences of ‘if we don’t win’.   + EX: Shared value = fairness     - I’m out here knocking doors for Candidate X because they support policies that ensure that everyone pays their fair share in taxes so that we can protect programs such as social security and medicaid. * **Step 4: Contrast**   + What will happen if we don’t act, don’t vote, do nothing, or the other side wins?   + How will that hurt the value we share?   + Let’s look back to the same example from before about the shared value of fairness     - I’m out here knocking doors to tell people that their vote matters. If Candidate X does win, then his opponent plans to pass policies that support tax cuts for the wealthy, while defunding programs such as social security and medicaid. |
|  | Experiential Activity - Stick Person (role play)  Note for facilitator: You’re playing Lucy (undecided voter) and the participants are practicing using the framework on you as a volunteer (this is persuasion so you are talking to an undecided voter). This means that you will have the opportunity to coach through responses to make sure the framework is being used correctly. You should also have specifics prepared (example: you are a volunteer for a clean climate campaign in Gainesville, FL). To connect the activity to their application encourage the participants to bring that person they might use the framework to the forefront of their minds during this activity. We are going to walk through how we might apply this framework to a voter during a phonebank.  When drawing: Head - issue, Heart - why, stomach - values   * Use a flip chart or giant post-it and draw a stick figure.   + This will be useful for us here, and also for you to use with others on your teams and in your turf when explaining why talking about values is so important. Tell the participants that this stick figure is a member of their community who you just called in a persuasion phone-call. * **INTRO:**   + Ask the group: What is the first question we might ask on persuasion calls?   + Listen for: something like who do you support?   + Facilitator says: Lucy is **undecided.** Write “**undecided**” at the top right-hand corner of the flipchart paper. * **DO WE HAVE SUPPORT:**   + Ask the group: What do you say or ask when she says that she is undecided?   + Listen for: What’s holding you back from supporting XXX? What issues do you care about?   + Facilitator says: I care about climate change   + **What are some common pitfalls here?**     - Immediately diving into the script and why she should support your campaign   + **Issues are the point of entry into deeper conversations—which we know is empirically true.** * **CONNECT TO ISSUES:**   + Tell audience: Let’s pretend that Lucy answers the issues question. What does she say about **which issues she cares about**? (write down what issues Lucy cares about next to her head, and label them ISSUES).   + Ask the group: What is best approach from this point in the conversation?   + Listen for: Questions that find out **why** Lucy personally cares about those issues— digging into Lucy’s personal story around that issue so that she can relate to her and establish common ground.   + Facilitator says: Why is this good?   + **What are some common pitfalls here? (reading from a script)** * **UNCOVER WHY:**   + Tell Audience: Let’s assume that we’ve gotten past the support question and the “what issues question”   + Ask the group: **What does Lucy say when you ask her about why she cares about those issues? Tell us about what we know about Lucy?**   + Listen for: Personal reasons that Lucy cares about those issues---example: she cares about HC because her mom falls into the “doughnut hole” and she pays too much for her family, cares about education because x personal tidbit, etc.   + Facilitator says: Let’s write the “Why” reasons by Lucy’s torso and label them “WHY” * **UNCOVER VALUES**   + What we need to do now is connect to something deeper in people. Our Message gets at **their VALUES, and our shared values as Americans.**   + Ask the group: What can you infer about Lucy’s values if she cares about those issues and has those specific interests in the issues? Point to Our Message and ask which ones might hit her in her gut?   + Listen for: she believes that “hard work and responsibility should pay and everyone should play by the same rules”, etc. Write those down, and draw a line connecting VALUES to her gut.   + Facilitator says: Now you have a platform on which to really engage Lucy.   + **What are some common pitfalls here? (Example: assigning values to what the person is stating is important to them, judgemental questions)** * **COMBINE ISSUES, WHY, AND VALUES TOGETHER:**   + Facilitator says: At OFA, we do a really great job, for the most part—of the front end of that call. Asking voters who they support, what issues make them undecided, and why they care about those issues is generally something we do ok. These are called ISSUES, and VALUES. Draw arrows from the text you wrote labeled “ISSUES” to Lucy’s head, and the text you labeled “VALUES” to her heart. Most progressive organizations do a decent job of engaging people on the issues, some of them get at values (which is why we use personal story) but…. * **PROBING:**   + Ask the group: How did you find out all that valuable information about Lucy? Did you talk at her and tell her your story? Did you talk at her and tell her why policies matter? Did you talk at her and read script?   + Facilitator says: You uncovered the values associated with the issues Lucy cares about and connected those values with the issue you want to persuade Lucy on * **In politics we don’t get at values enough:** To build community and connections with our neighbors, we need to improve our engagement of people by asking them the right questions and getting to know them before we make the sell for them to support our candidate/issue. This exercise walked us through what you want to learn about someone before engaging them—and what questions to ask to get there. * **Putting it all together:**   + Ask the group: We need to combine what we just found out from Lucy to our whole purpose of call - PERSUASION. Can someone model putting it all together and tying back to the example we are organizing around?   + COACHABLE MOMENT   + Closing application: Let’s now take a look at why engagement like this matters, and how you might replicate this probing about Issues, Why, and Values seamlessly and naturally in a phone conversation. * Individual work with partners (Experiential 2)   + Voter at the door: “use powerpoint example scenario 1”   + Phone banking: “use powerpoint example scenario 2” |
|  | CLOSING   * Debrief:   + What values do you hold that you believe are also values that are embedded within your community?   + How will these values assist in your or change your communication style that you implore while organizing?   + Where do you predict the biggest challenges in implementing this persuasion framework will be? * Group share * Teaser for next section |