

# Identifying Your Audiences and Tailoring Your Outreach

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# Purpose

- ❖ This cyberseminar is for investigators, research staff, and those who coordinate communications for their Research Center and/or Medical Center
- ❖ An overview of how to determine your key audiences and tailor communications outreach to their interests and needs



# Today's Agenda

- ❖ Define your audiences
- ❖ Define your purposes: forward the science, identify collaborators, reach operational partners for implementation
- ❖ Tools
- ❖ Your questions/discussion



# Poll Question #1

- ❖ What is your primary role in VA?
  - » Student, Trainee, or Fellow
  - » Clinician or Researcher
  - » Administrator, Manager or Policy-maker
  - » Not affiliated with VA
  - » Other



# Poll Question #2

- ❖ How would you describe your knowledge of research dissemination?
  - » Poor
  - » Fair
  - » Good
  - » Excellent



# Use funding application framework to ID audiences and outreach methods

- ❖ Specific aims
- ❖ Significance of research and relevance to Veterans' health
- ❖ Innovations, features
- ❖ Methodology
- ❖ Expected results
- ❖ How results will affect other areas





## Define your various audiences

What is important to them? Will you reach others through them?  
What actions will they take to forward your purposes?



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# Rank your audiences by potential actions they can take

- ❖ Consider allocating your time spent on outreach in the context of the action they might take to:
  - » Forward your specific study or the field
    - Professional organizations
    - The journal that publishes your article
    - Your colleagues in that field



# Rank your audiences by potential actions they can take

- ❖ Consider allocating your time spent on outreach in the context of the action they might take to:
  - » Collaborate on future studies
    - Extend quantitative study to include qualitative work
    - Expand data analysis
    - Expand population studied (rural, women, etc) and geographic locations



# Rank your audiences by potential actions they can take

- ❖ Consider allocating your time spent on outreach in the context of the action they might take to:
  - » Implement results
    - Operational partners
    - Researchers who have successfully translated work to care, outcomes, etc



# Rank your audiences by potential actions they can take

❖ Forward

❖ Collaborate

❖ Implement



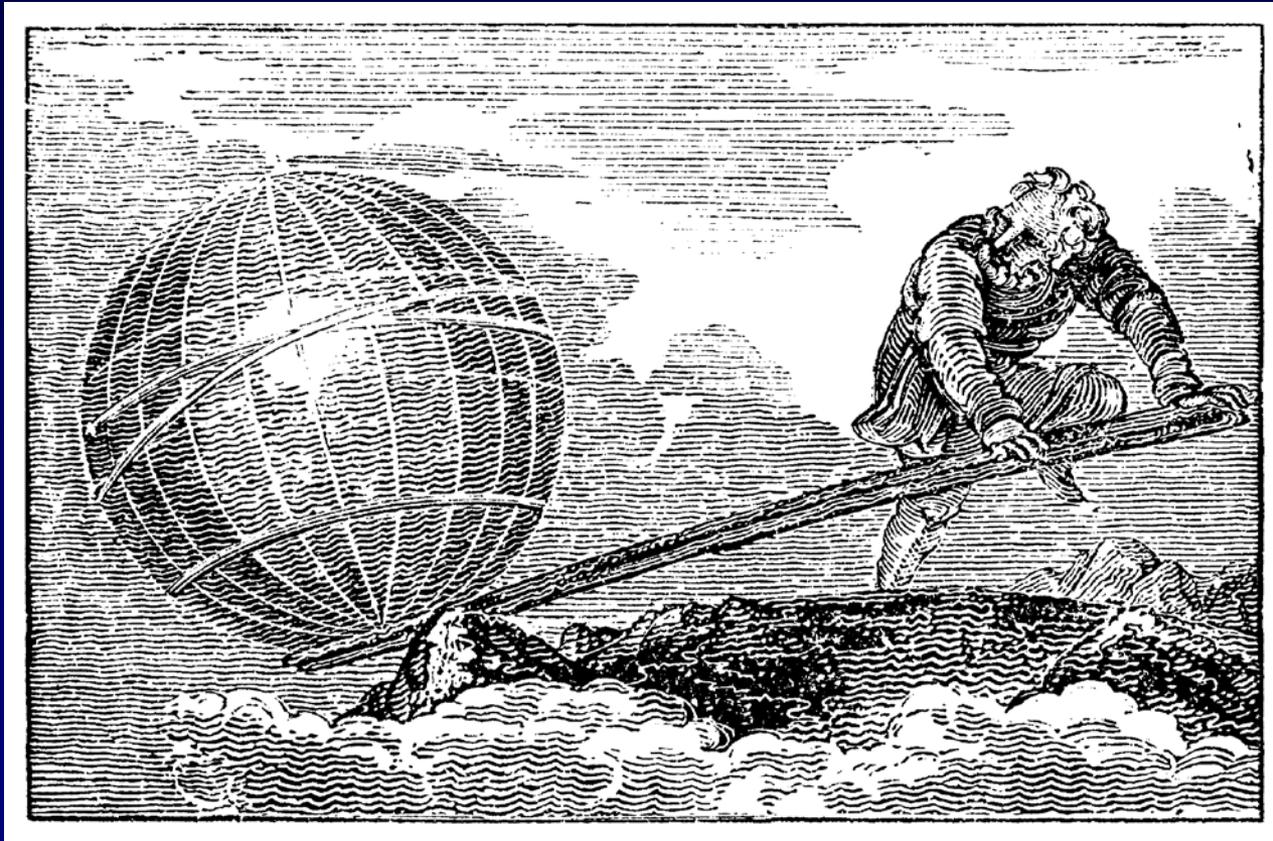
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# Consider the strength/weakness of your ties to different audiences

- ❖ Strength of your connections varies, and expected outcomes vary, too
  - » Awareness
  - » Consideration
  - » Decision to collaborate, invite, include
  - » Advocacy through their own work



Give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum on  
which to stand and I shall move the world.  
Archimedes



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# Leverage internal resources

- ❖ Communications staff at
  - » HSR&D, ORD
  - » medical center and academic affiliate
- ❖ Your center administrators
- ❖ Colleagues and potential collaborators across VA
- ❖ VA operations leaders and policy makers



# Leverage external resources

- ❖ Identify and inform communications staff:
  - » Like-minded organizations with active communications vehicles
  - » Editorial staff at journals
  - » Professional organizations
  - » Veterans Advisory Board at your site



# Give them what matters to them

- ❖ Announcement of newly-funded work
- ❖ Results
- ❖ Impact on clinical/operational systems
- ❖ Publications, presentations, awards
- ❖ New collaborations
- ❖ Mentions of your work in other media



# What do they want to know?

- ❖ Impact on Veteran health and healthcare
- ❖ Include Veteran human interest story if possible
- ❖ Consider your research findings in terms of implications for:
  - » Clinical care
  - » Operations
  - » Policy



# Cautionary Note

- ❖ You are not authorized to reach out directly to the media or elected officials. Contact the Public Affairs Officer at local or regional VA
- ❖ Your communication does not necessarily represent the views of the VA or the US government.



# Audiences at different steps on the road

## ❖ Communication leads to:

- » Awareness
- » Consideration
- » Decision
- » Advocacy



# Hub and spoke communications



# Tools -- email

- ❖ According 2018 benchmark report by GovDelivery's:
  - » 85% of people send and read email daily
  - » Email metrics:
    - 21% public sector open rate
    - 18% private sector open rate
    - 16% non-profit sector open rate



# Elements to improve email

- ❖ Subject line is the #1 driver of the open rate
- ❖ Other factors include sender information (aka strong ties/weak ties), time of day, quality of distribution list
- ❖ Don't create clutter – consider your call to action, keep your message simple, link to more information
- ❖ Keep those links at the top of the page



# Web site

- ❖ Golden rule: web traffic is not linear. Users rarely start on a homepage unless you provide that link. Most visitors enter terms/names in a search engine.
- ❖ Maximize the quality of your on-line presence
- ❖ Ask organizational communicators about their meta-data and search engine optimization strategies



# Newsletters, bulletins, updates

- ❖ Craft consumer-friendly version of your aims, abstract, study results to provide to communicators for their existing vehicles
- ❖ Take advantage of opportunity to link to other sources:
  - » YouTube are most likely to be shared and clicked
  - » Twitter likely to be shared but not opened
  - » Pinterest 2<sup>nd</sup> highest click rate but not for our audience!



# Consider the context

- ❖ Open rates and click rates are very high for these topics
  - » Veterans
  - » Science and research
  - » Education



# Create something to measure

- ❖ Stay focused on your call to action
  - » Click on a link?
  - » Share with others?
  - » Invite you to present or speak?
  - » Contact you with their questions or progress?



# Measure and assess

- ❖ Consider your most important audiences and reflect on what methods were useful and effective
- ❖ Communications habits and trends develop over time (eg, live Tweeting national academic meetings!)
- ❖ Once or twice a year, ask your key partners if your information is useful



# Coming up in this series

- ❖ 10/15/2018 Writing for a Lay Audience
- ❖ 11/19/2018 Dissemination Strategies
- ❖ 12/17/2018 Using Social Media Effectively



# Your questions

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