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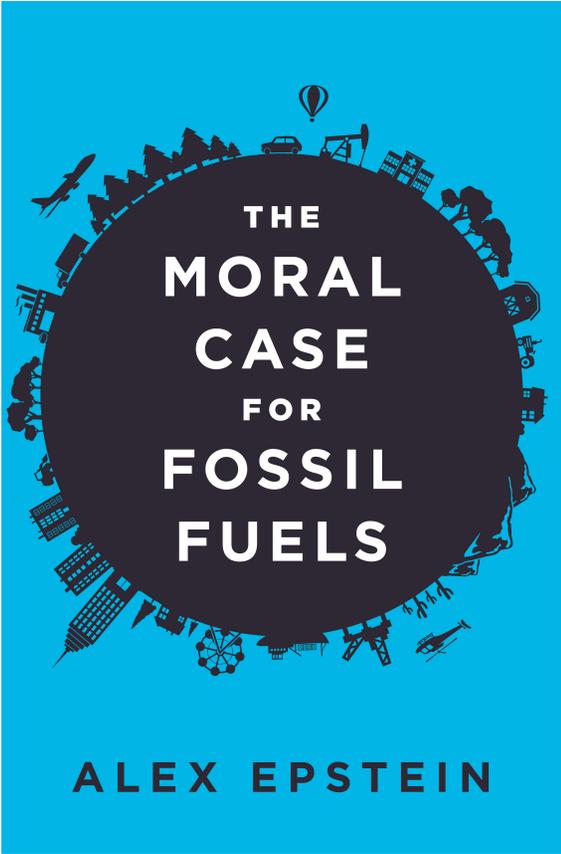
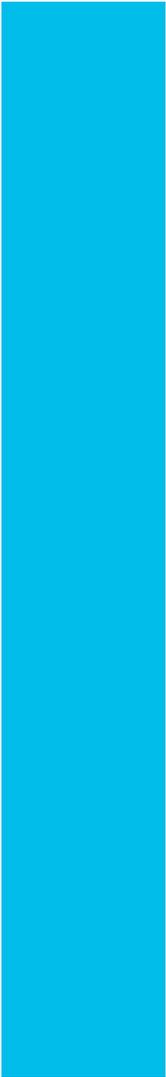


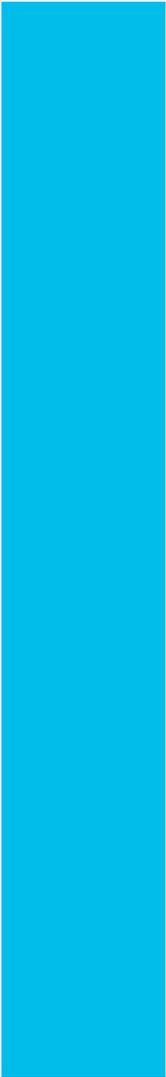
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# INTELLECTUAL PERSUASION

Alex Epstein





# The New York Times

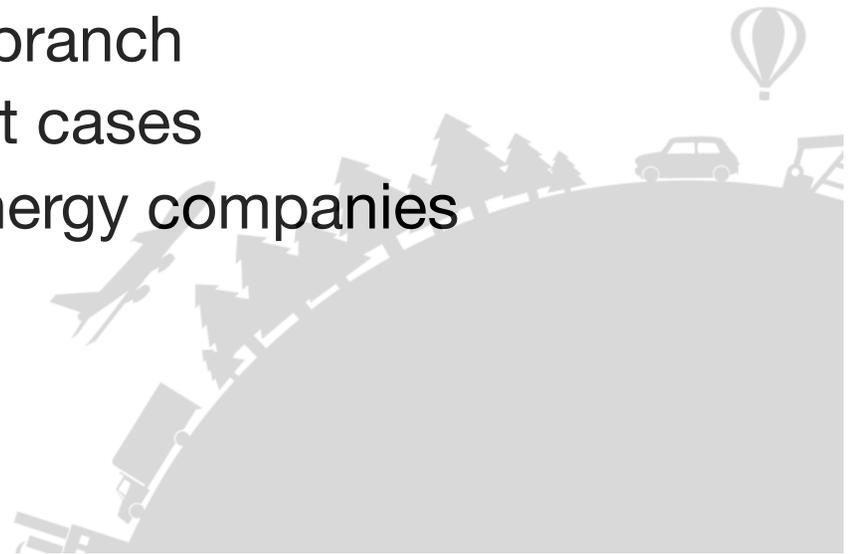
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BESTSELLER



## Used by

- ✓ Department of Energy
- ✓ Congress
- ✓ Senate
- ✓ Executive branch
- ✓ Major court cases
- ✓ Leading energy companies



# Energy Secretary Rick Perry calls shift away from fossil fuels 'immoral'



James Osborne | March 7, 2018 | Updated: March 7, 2018 11:30 p.m.



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## Turning non-supporters into supporters

“ Alex, I have always considered myself both an environmentalist and a skeptic, **and I want to thank you for 1) changing my mind regarding fossil fuels**, and 2) reminding me that I am a skeptic first and foremost.” –Dylan, Harvard University



## Turning non-supporters into supporters

“ I saw you speak in the University of Minnesota in 2009, and I HECKLED YOU! That’s right, I used to be an eco-activist Occupy protester anti-industrialist. Now after 5 years of studying to find the truth, I am a supporter! I have a YouTube channel, I self-publish books, and I arrange small group discussions over movies or topics in the ‘environmentalist’ movement and with entrepreneurs. It’s important people are aware of their actions as they vote & lobby to kill the one industry that has given us a better quality of life.” –Anonymous



# Context Bridging

## Context bridging

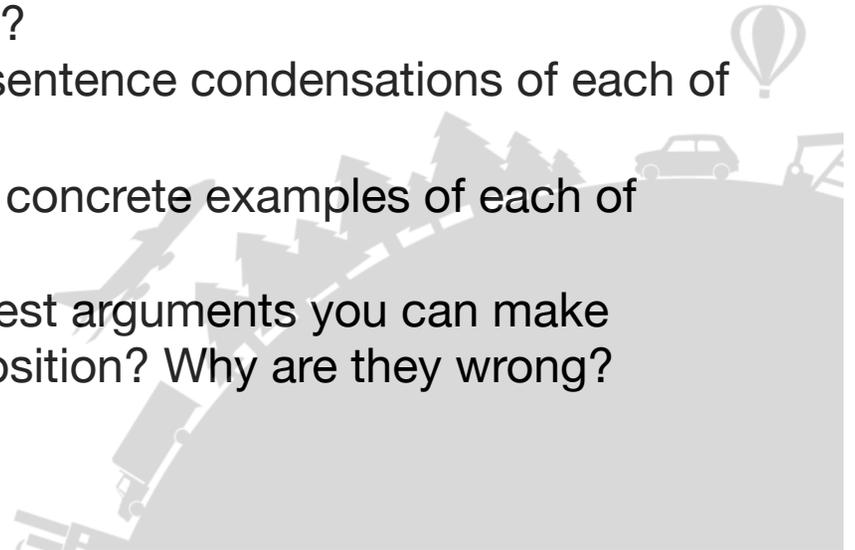
Bring another mind's context of knowledge closer to your context of knowledge on a given topic.



## Step 1

### Be clear on your context

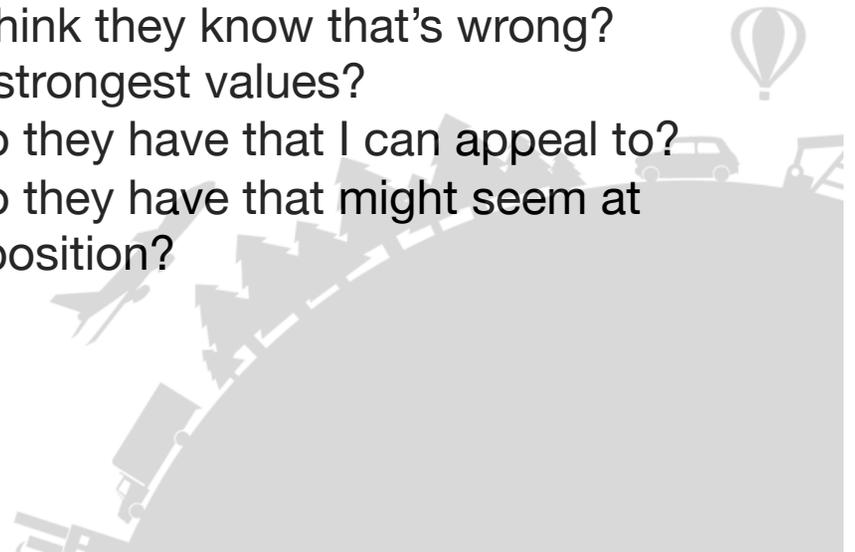
- What is the essential position I want to communicate?
- What are the fundamental logical steps that lead to that position?
- What are one-sentence condensations of each of these steps?
- What are three concrete examples of each of these steps?
- What are the best arguments you can make against your position? Why are they wrong?



## Step 2

### Be clear on their context

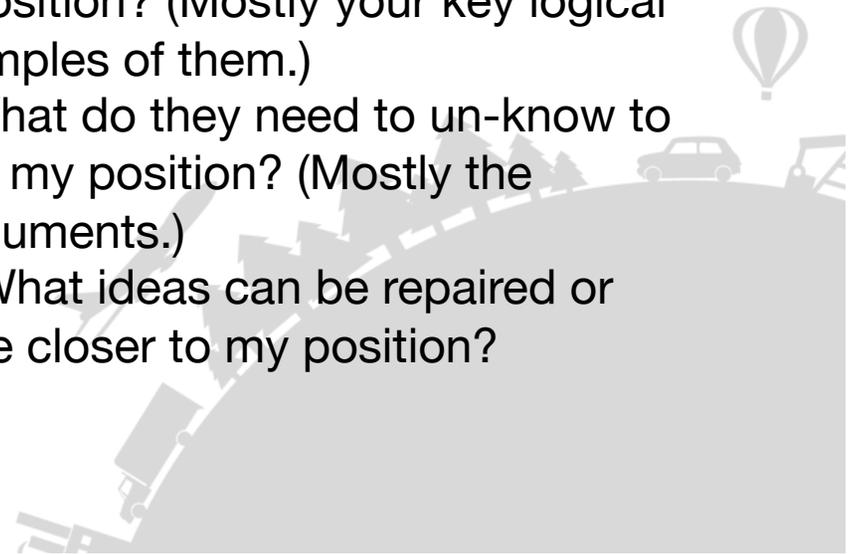
- What arguments have they been exposed to?
- What do they know that I can count on?
- What don't they know that I need to explain?
- What do they think they know that's wrong?
- What are their strongest values?
- What values do they have that I can appeal to?
- What values do they have that might seem at odds with my position?



## Step 3

Bridge the differences between the contexts through addition, subtraction, and modification.

- Addition: What do they need to know to move closer to my position? (Mostly your key logical steps and examples of them.)
- Subtraction: What do they need to un-know to move closer to my position? (Mostly the contrasting arguments.)
- Modification: What ideas can be repaired or refined to move closer to my position?



# Extreme Clarity Tool

## FORMAT

I want to create a (#) \_\_\_\_\_ page/word/minute/book/webpage/video/audio that is tentatively titled  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**(title)**

## AUDIENCE

I want to persuade \_\_\_\_\_,  
**(audience)**

*Name the specific audience are you trying to persuade. Your formulation must cover ALL of your audience members and ONLY your audience members.*

## AREA

Who are evaluating \_\_\_\_\_,  
**(area)**

*Name the specific area of life they are evaluating and you are trying to influence them on. Do not include an evaluation or opinion—that comes later.*

# Extreme Clarity Tool

## VALUES

Which they want to pursue in a manner that

maintains/gains/improves \_\_\_\_\_,

maintains/gains/improves \_\_\_\_\_,

maintains/gains/improves \_\_\_\_\_.

**(value)**

*Name the values they most want to advance in this area of life that you also want to help them advance.*

and

avoids/decreases \_\_\_\_\_,

avoids/decreases \_\_\_\_\_,

avoids/decreases \_\_\_\_\_.

**(disvalue)**

*Name the disvalues they most want to fight in this area of life that you also want to help them fight.*

# Extreme Clarity Tool

## MISCONCEPTIONS

They have been exposed to the misconceptions that to advance their values in this area they need to

\_\_\_\_\_ will advance their values because \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_ will advance their values because \_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_ will advance their values because \_\_\_\_\_.

**(wrong action)** **(wrong reason)**

*Name the three most compelling misconceptions they've heard about advancing their values (and fighting their disvalues) in this area of life. Wrong action refers to the action they advocate and the object of the action. E.g., "Vote for Donald Trump" or "Vote for Hillary Clinton."*

*Wrong reason should be a complete, coherent, compelling thought—the best version of an idea you think is wrong.*



# Example: Johnson's Baby Shampoo

I want to create a 300-word advertisement: "No more tears with Johnson's Baby Shampoo"

## **AUDIENCE**

I want to persuade parents of babies and toddlers (0-4 years of age)

## **AREA**

who are evaluating shampoo types

## **VALUES**

which they want to pursue in a manner that:

- improves their infant's health,
- improves their infant's comfort, and
- improves the experience of bath time

and

- avoids the pain of shampoo in the eyes,
- decreases crying, and
- avoids lice and other hair-related ailments.

# Example: Johnson's Baby Shampoo

## **MISCONCEPTIONS**

They have been exposed to the misconceptions that to advance their values in this area they need to

- use any shampoo because all shampoos are the same,
- accept their infant crying because all shampoos cause pain on contact and therefore cause infants to cry,
- wash their baby's hair with water because it'll reduce screaming and probably not cause a problem.

## **CLARITY**

But in fact, to advance their values in this area they need to

Use specially-formulated baby shampoo because it cleans hair while eliminating the causes of tears.

- Specially formulated baby shampoo uses ultra-low-irritation cleansers called "surfactants."
- Specially formulated baby shampoo dilutes the cleaners to make them imperceptive but still effective.
- Specially formulated baby shampoo has a pH of 7, the same as water.

## **NEXT ACTION**

The next action they need to take is buy Johnson's Baby Shampoo.

# Example: Hillary Clinton

I want to create an 800-word article: "Vote for Hillary Clinton"

## **AUDIENCE**

I want to persuade undecided likely voters in the Presidential election

## **AREA**

Who are evaluating Presidential candidates

## **VALUES**

Which they want to pursue in a manner that:

- improves the economy,
- improves national security, and
- improves health care.

and

- avoids a war or terrorist attack,
- decreases the influence of Russia and the Middle East, and
- decreases illegal immigration.

# Example: Hillary Clinton

## **MISCONCEPTIONS**

They have been exposed to the misconceptions that to advance their values in this area they need to

- vote for Donald Trump because he'll fix the economy using his experience succeeding in business and witnessing government corruption firsthand.
- vote for Donald Trump because he'll protect us by embracing America's superpower status, the heart of our security, not concede it to Russia or the Middle East.
- vote for Donald Trump because he'll fix health care with a fundamentally superior health care plan to replace the disaster of Obamacare.

## **CLARITY**

But in fact, to advance their values in this area they need to vote for Hillary Clinton because she has the real experience and seasoned judgment we need to move forward as a country.

Three crucial aspects of this are:

- Hillary Clinton has real experience growing an economy with her Husband Bill.
- Hillary Clinton, as former Secretary of State, has real experience dealing responsibly with foreign policy.
- Hillary Clinton knows how to improve our health care system not blow it up and start from scratch.

## **NEXT ACTION**

Vote for Hillary Clinton on November 8, 2016.

# Example: Donald Trump

I want to create an 800-word article: “Vote for Donald Trump”

## **AUDIENCE**

I want to persuade undecided likely voters in the Presidential election

## **AREA**

who are evaluating Presidential candidates,

## **VALUES**

which they want to pursue in a manner that:

- improves the economy,
- improves national security,
- improves health care.

and

- avoids a war or terrorist attack,
- decreases the influence of Russia and the Middle East, and
- decreases illegal immigration.

# Example: Donald Trump

## **MISCONCEPTIONS**

They have been exposed to the misconceptions that to advance their values in this area they need to

- vote for Hillary Clinton because Hillary Clinton has real experience growing an economy with her Husband Bill,
- vote for Hillary Clinton because Hillary Clinton, as former Secretary of State, has real experience dealing responsibly with foreign policy,
- vote for Hillary Clinton because Hillary Clinton knows how to improve our health care system not blow it up and start from scratch.

## **CLARITY**

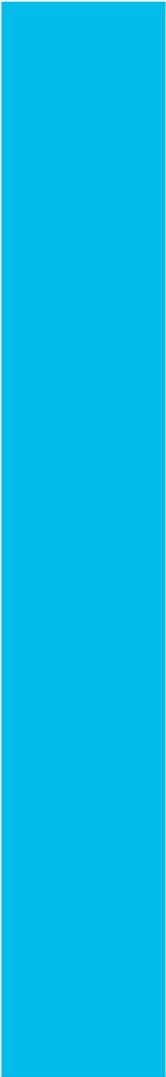
But in fact, to advance their values in this area they need to vote for Donald Trump because he is an outsider with the business sense and common sense we need to Make America Great Again.

Three crucial aspects of this are:

- Donald Trump understands how to fix the economy because he's succeeded in business and witnessed government corruption firsthand.
- Donald Trump embraces America's superpower status, which is the heart of our security, and won't concede it to Russia or the Middle East.
- Donald Trump has a fundamentally superior health care plan to replace the disaster of Obamacare.

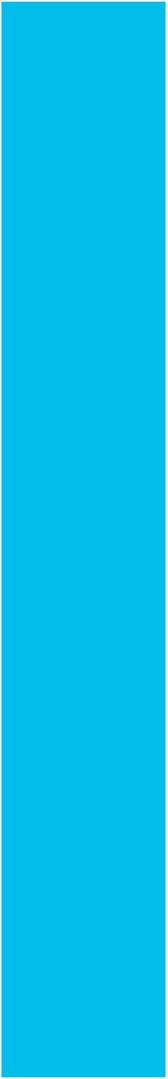
## **NEXT ACTION**

Vote for Donald Trump on November 8, 2016.

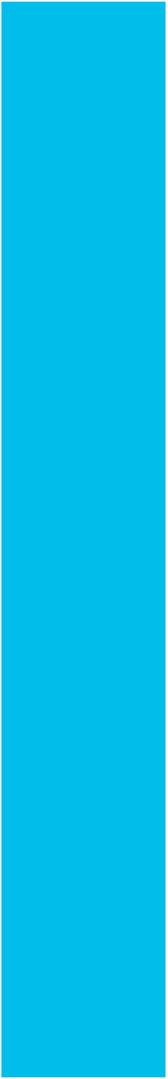


The problem of the context chasm

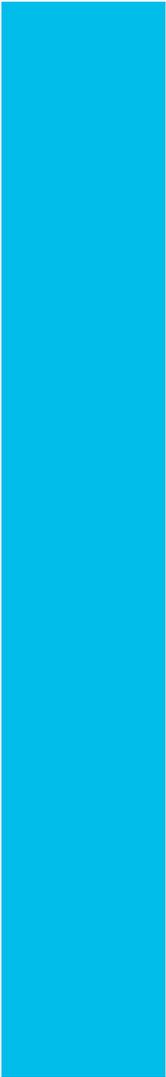
# Framing



A framework is a starting structure



Every thought process or conversation  
has a framework—usually unstated



Overwhelmingly, people are not wrong  
about one fact, but about the way  
they're processing information

Most thought processes and conversations are:

1

Biased

2

Sloppy

3

Unclear on the goal

# Thought processes and conversations should be:

1

Evenhanded

2

Precise

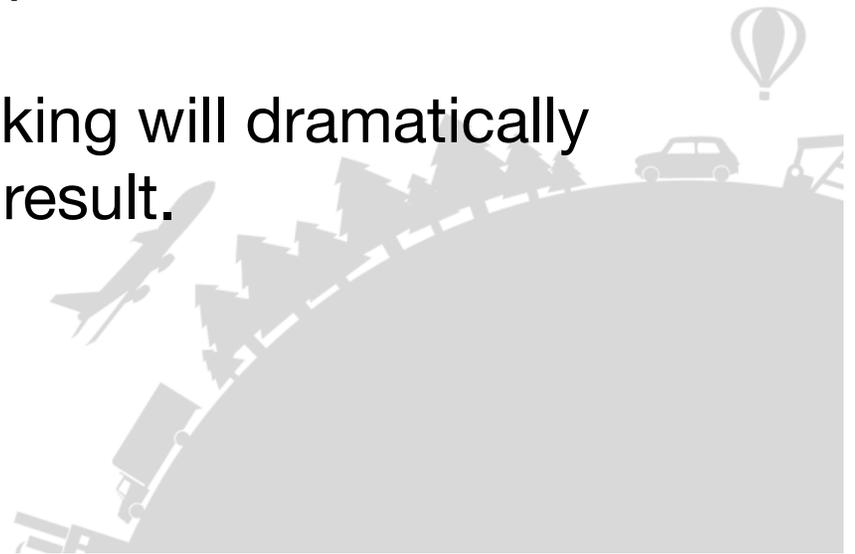
3

Clear on the (shared) goal

## The breakthrough

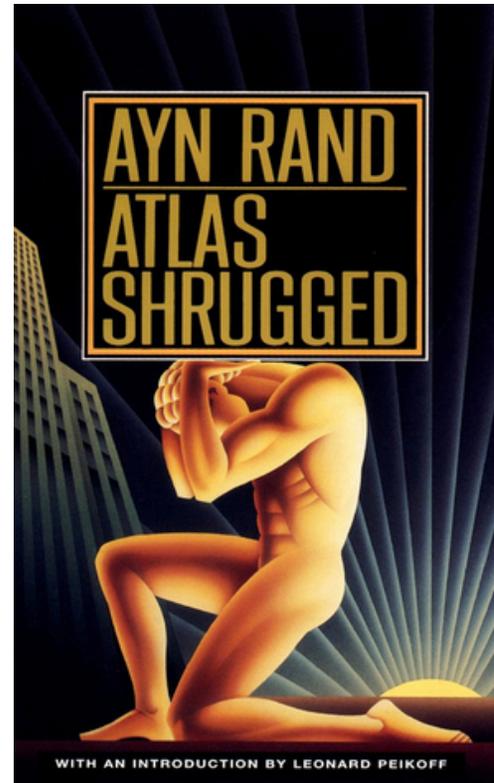
Since most of the right framework is common sense, most people will adopt it when it's explicit.

And their thinking will dramatically improve as a result.



# Opinion stories

# My first opinion story

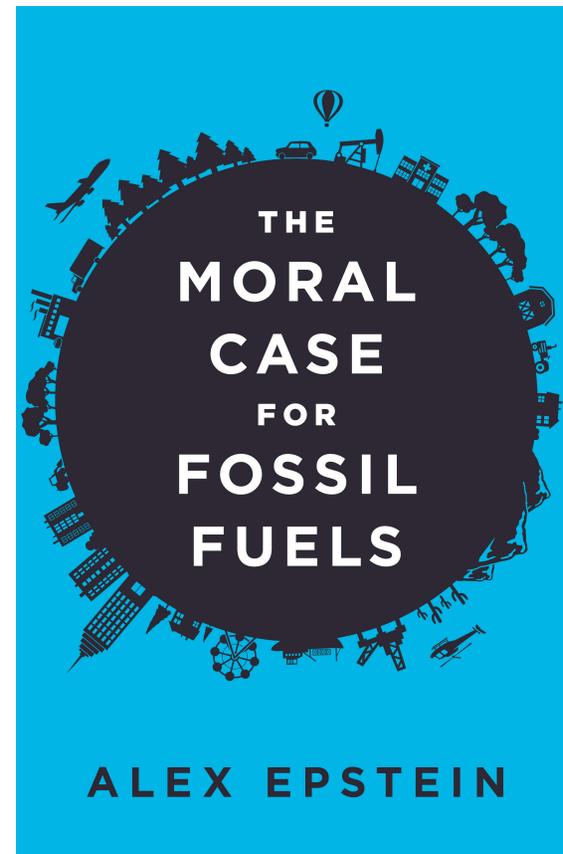


## Lesson

For the same idea people will respond to a declaration with defensiveness and a story with curiosity

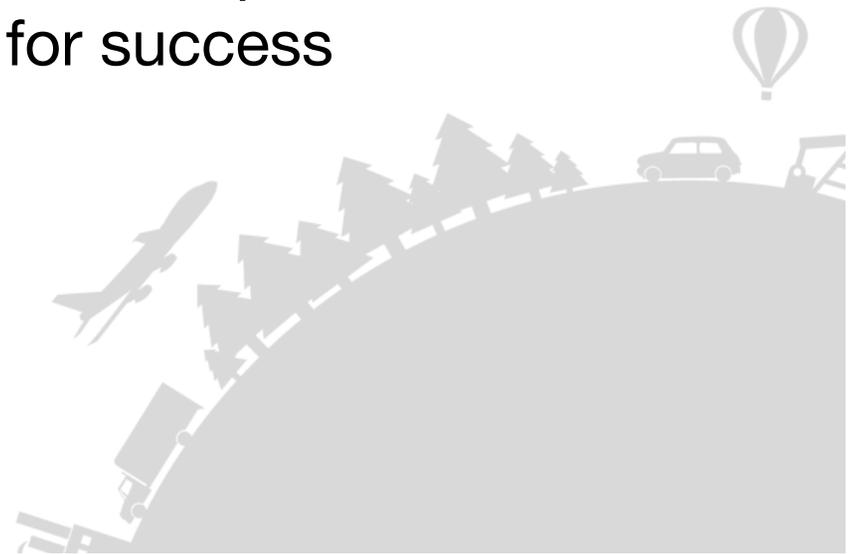


Opinion story:  
“What do you  
do?”



## Lesson

If I incorporate framing in my opinion story then I can make it more persuasive AND set up the rest of the conversation for success



## Why opinion stories work

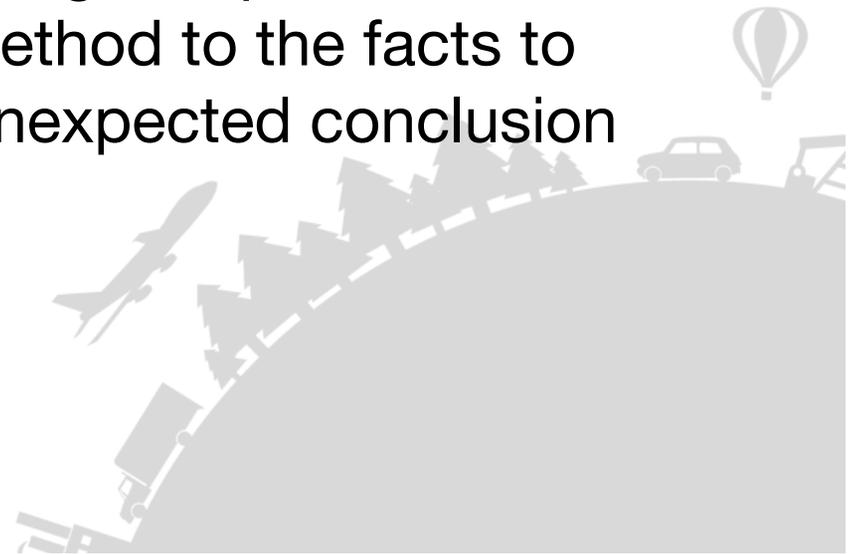
They explain our ideas in a way that respects the starting context and intellectual independence of the other person



# Guidelines for opinion stories

## Fundamental

Tell the story of you struggling with a crucial, concerning, complex issue by applying a thoughtful process/framework/method to the facts to arrive at an unexpected conclusion



## Additional guidelines

1. It should be all about you, not about them: you should not be comparing yourself to them in any way (e.g., “I was once in your shoes.”)
2. The story includes you being uncertain about the right answer
3. The story includes you applying a thoughtful process/framework/method

