



A think tank model of storytelling

On Think Tanks
11th November 2020



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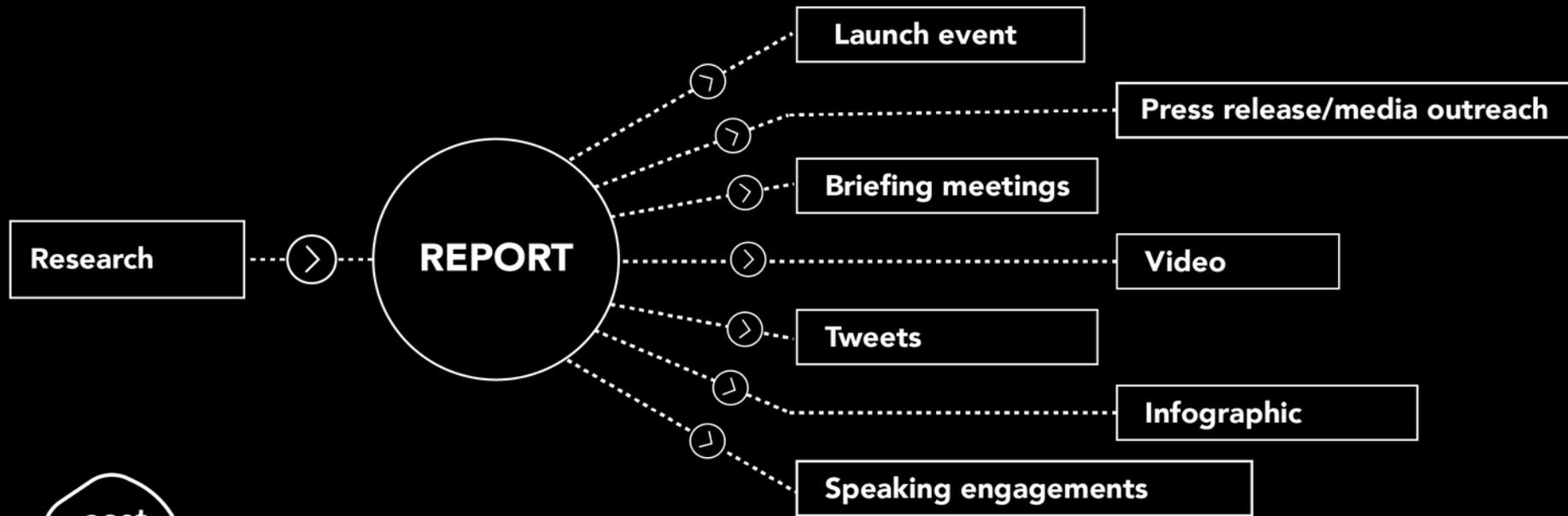
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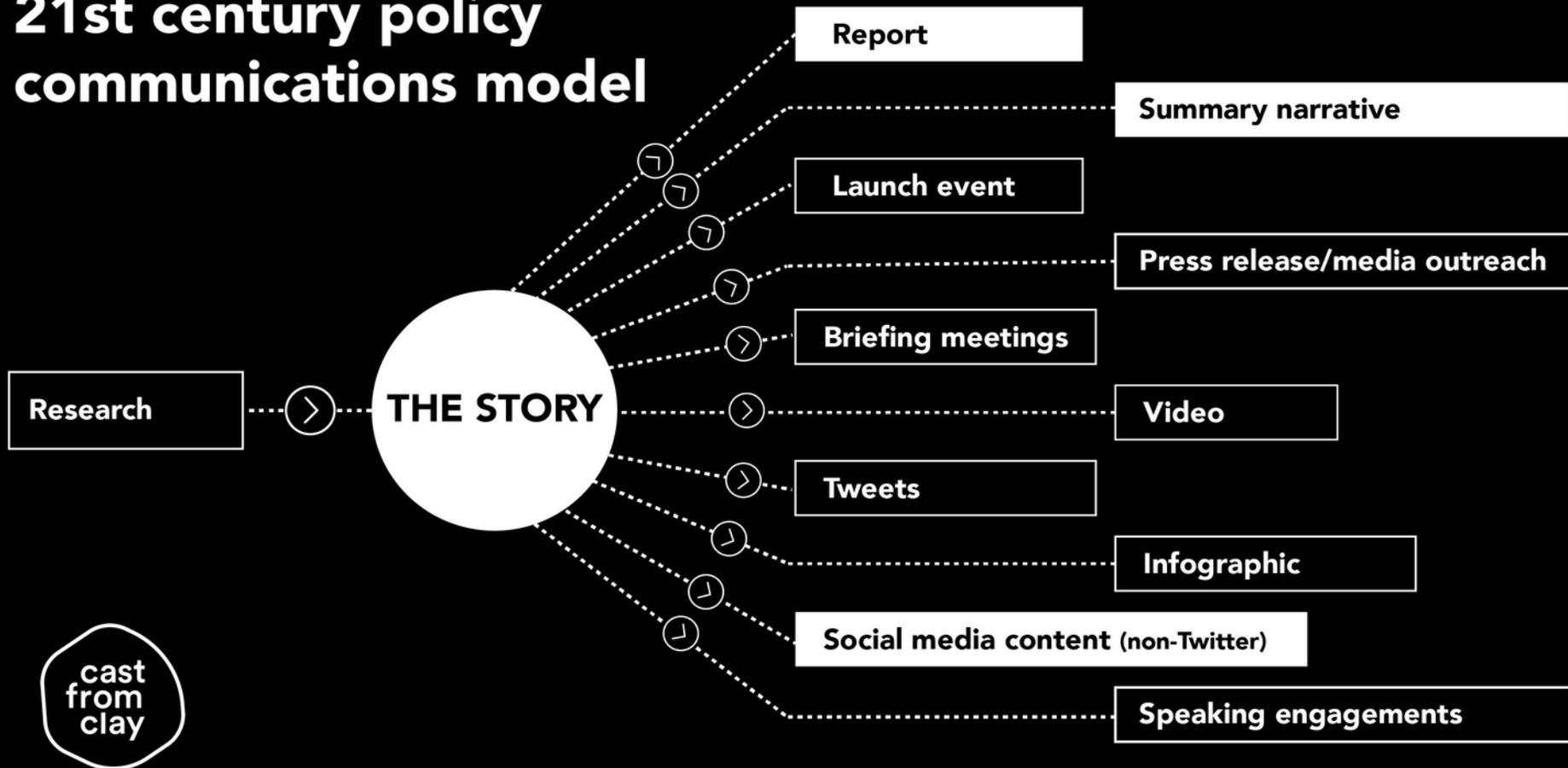
This is the standard model of think tank communications.

Old-fashioned policy communications model



Put the story – not the report – at the heart of your communications effort.

21st century policy communications model



1

Embrace the new policy dynamic.

2

Take people as they are.

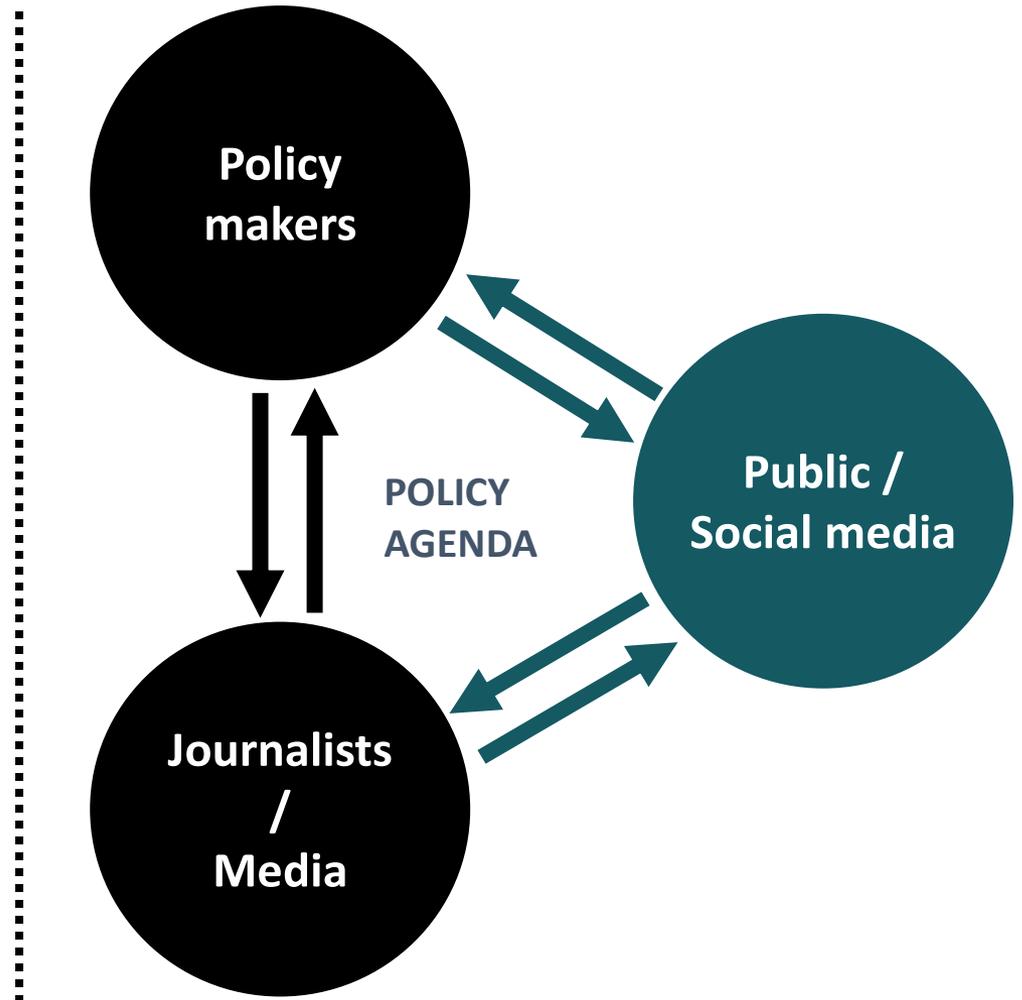
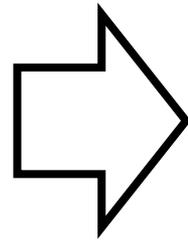
3

A think tank model of storytelling.

1

**Embrace the new
policy dynamic.**

Policy experts



1. COMMENTARY & OPINION
as valid as NEWS

2. HUMAN EXPERIENCE & EMOTION **as**
valid as FACT



“ *The politics of blue-collar people are **based on emotion** – on that seismic feeling that they have been under-represented.*

“ *[President Trump] probably even knows **he is not saying the truth**. What you need to understand about his base: **they don't care**.*

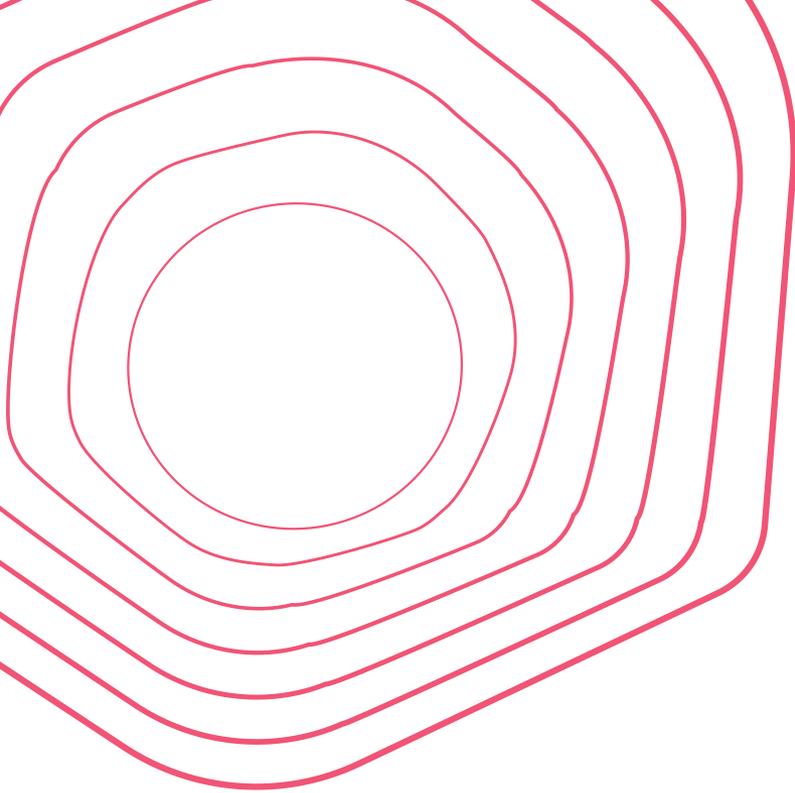


Anthony Scaramucci

*Former White House
Communications Director*



The best story wins.



Policy makers do not want facts.

They want arguments.



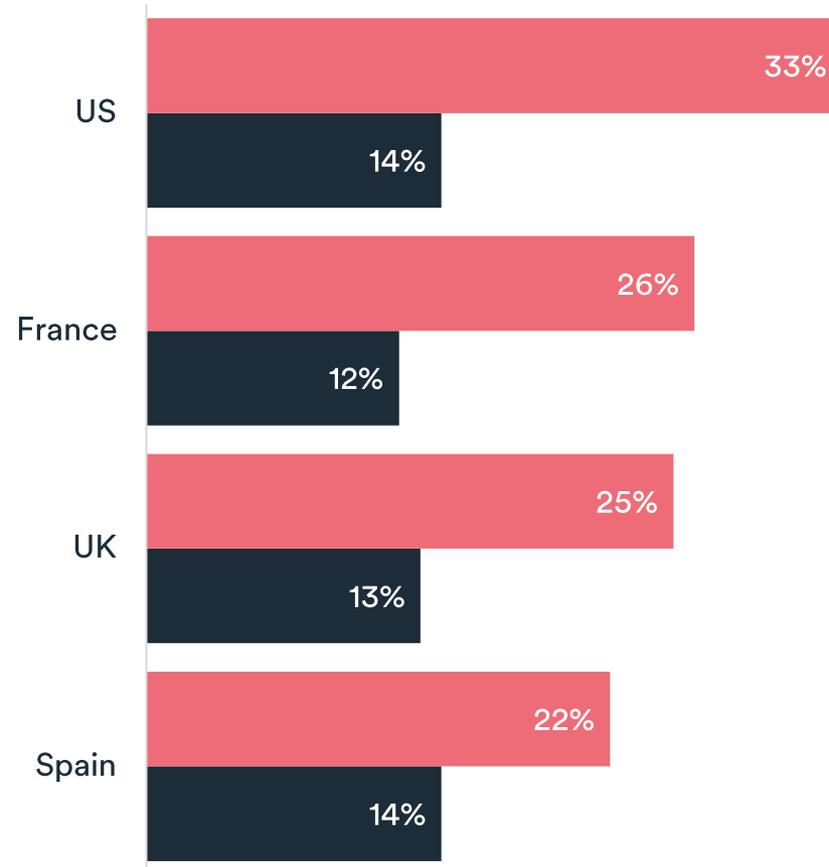
2

**Take people
as they are.**

Our perceptions are easily misled. For example, we think immigration is much higher than it is.

Difference between real and perceived levels of immigration*

Guess Reality



* Data from "Perils of Perception" by Bobby Duffy



“Even after people were shown that the numbers were much lower than they had guessed, they *insisted* that their estimate was accurate.”

“the top two answers given were that the government’s figures were wrong, because they don’t include illegal immigration – or ‘I just don’t believe you.’”

Bobby Duffy
The Perils of Perception



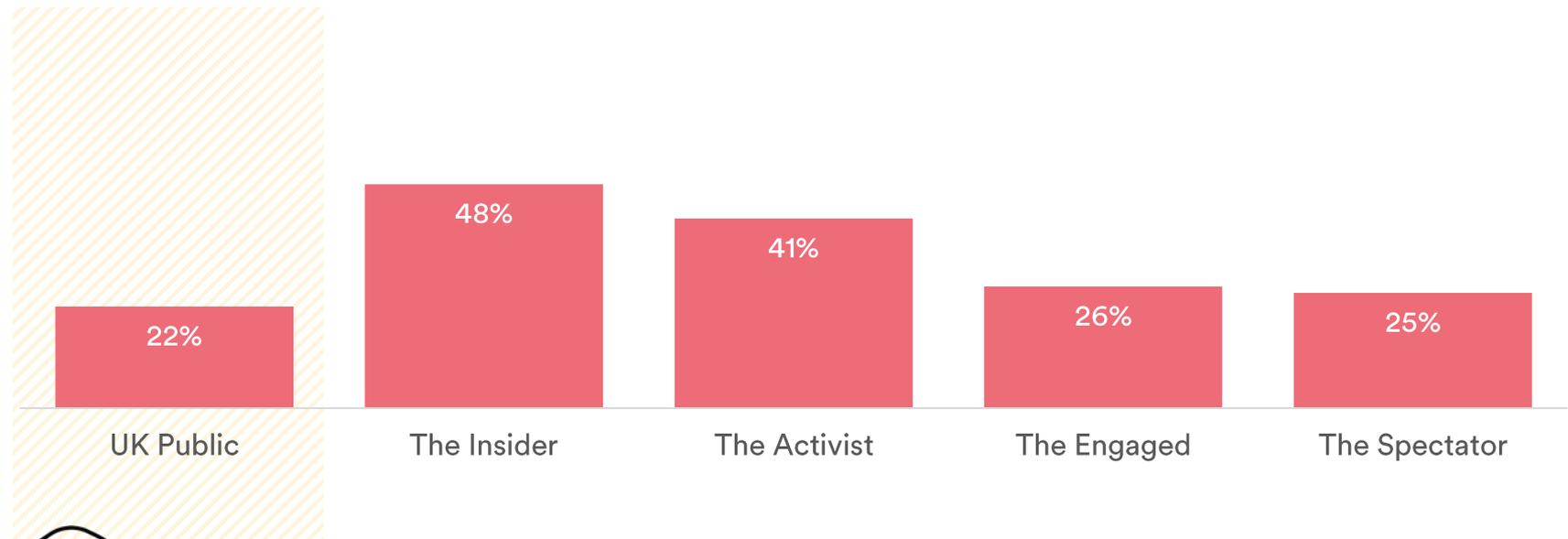
“One of the fundamental findings of cognitive science is that people think in terms of frames and metaphors...
When the facts don't fit the frames, the frames are kept and the facts ignored.”

George Lakoff
Don't think of an elephant!

The closer respondents were to the heart of politics, the more they reported that emotion played a role in shaping their political views.

“When it comes to politics I go with my heart over my head”

Agree

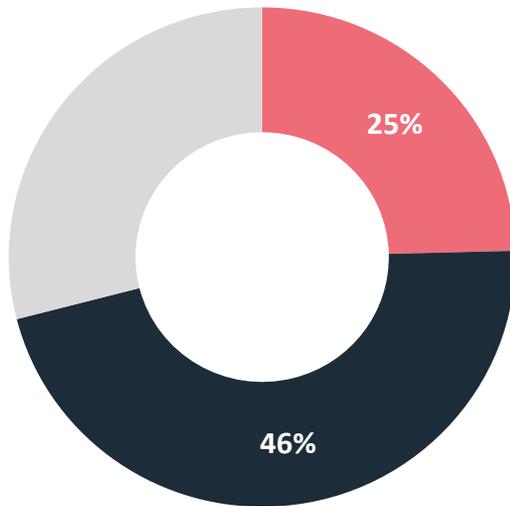


Base: All UK (n=2,000)

We're also prone to pointing out emotion in others, while under-estimating it in ourselves

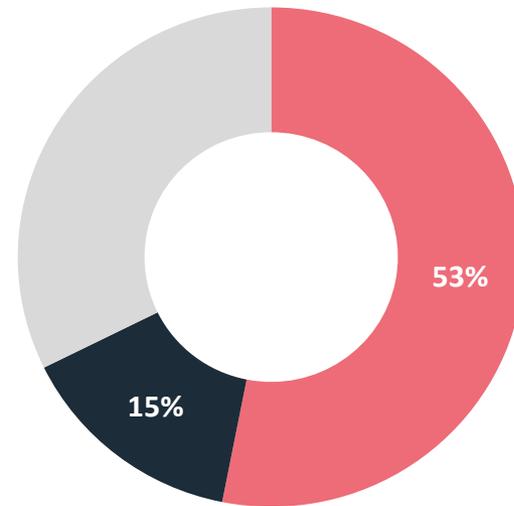
In ourselves

“When it comes to politics I go with my heart over my head”



In others

“My friends and family make political and policy judgements based on what they feel, not just what they know”



Agree Don't know Disagree

Base: UK - Spectators (n=1,095)

**Use storytelling to tap
into the human.**

3

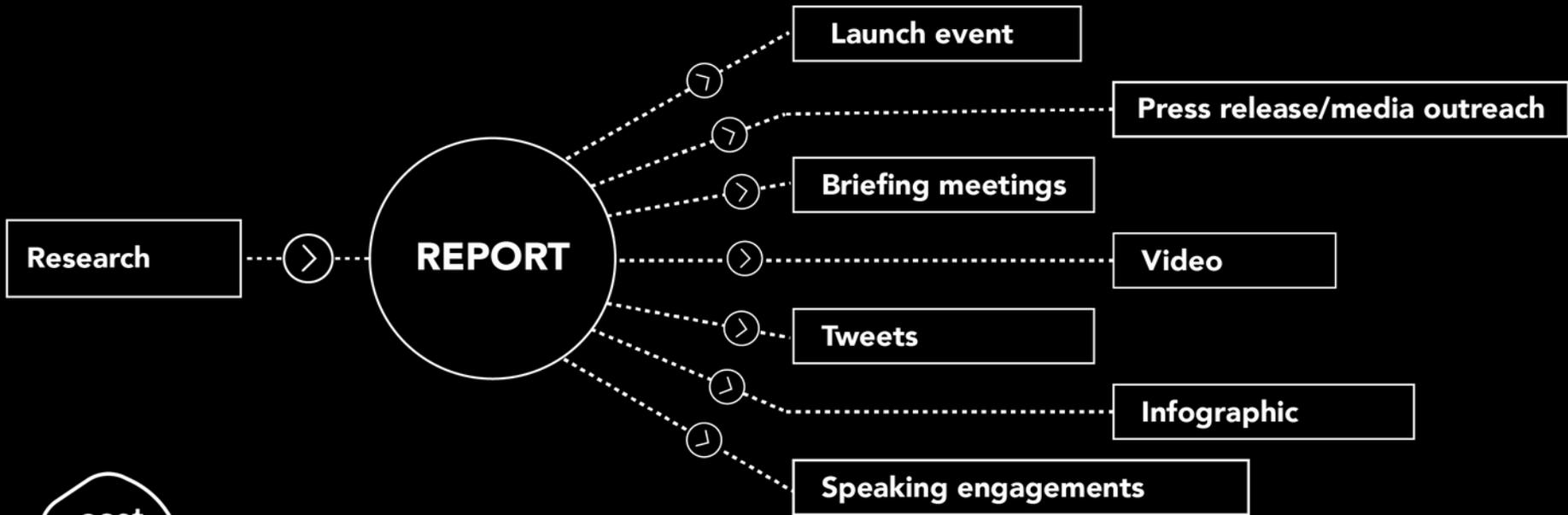
**A think tank model
of storytelling.**

“Research papers that exceed 10-15 pages are **not useful** to policymakers.”

Paul Avey & Michael Desch, 2014
“What Do Policymakers Want From Us?”

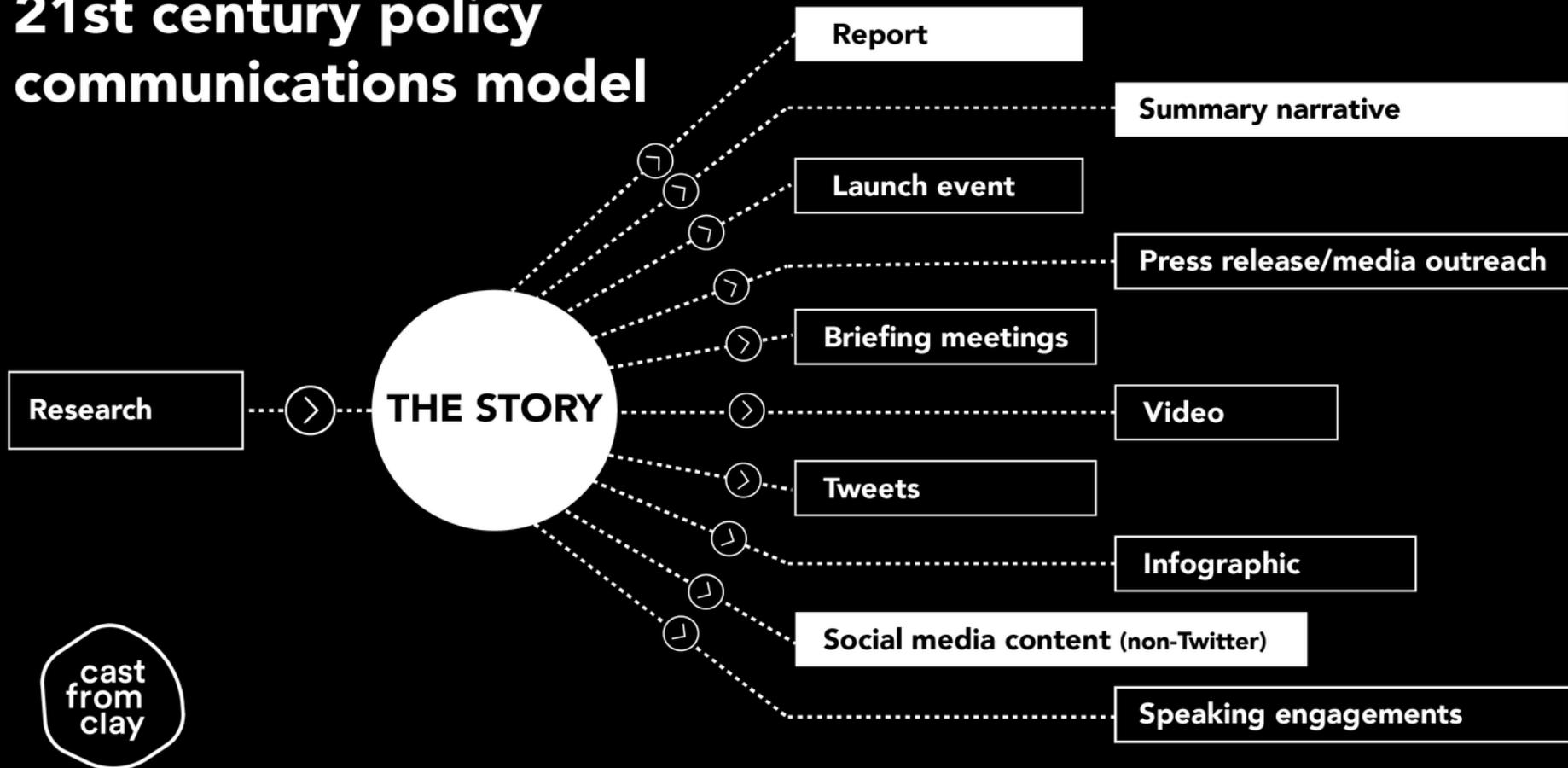
And yet...

Old-fashioned policy communications model



Put the story – not the report – at the heart of your communications effort.

21st century policy communications model



Our personal narratives are shaped by a collection of stories.

→ Lived experience

→ Friends & family

→ Third-hand - news & social media

MY PERSONAL NARRATIVE

cast
from
clay

Contradictive stories will be ignored if they don't align with our personal narratives.

→ Curated Stories ← Contradictive stories

MY PERSONAL NARRATIVE



Mainstream political narratives fray when they no longer align with lived experiences.

→ Stories supporting the mainstream narrative ← Lived experience

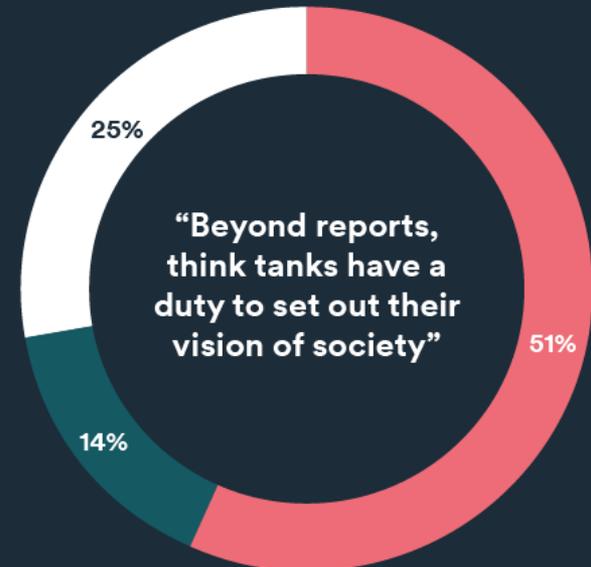
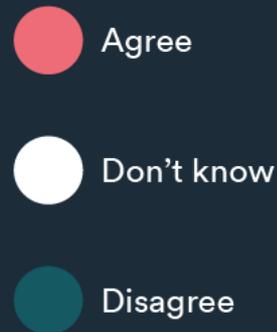
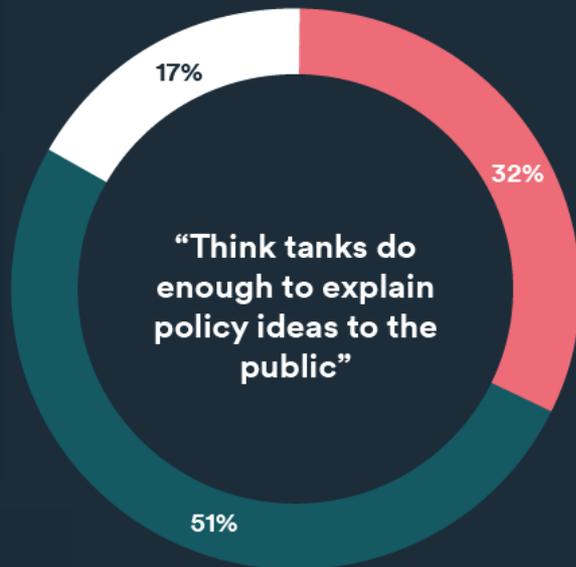
LIVED EXPERIENCE
VS
POLITICAL NARRATIVE



Storytelling at two levels:

- 1 The message
- 2 The environment

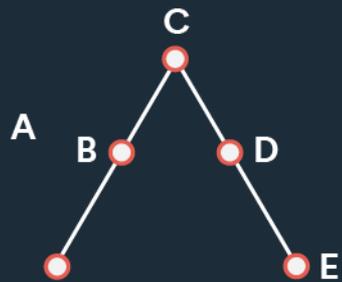
UK members of Parliament feel think tanks need to be more ambitious in their communications.



Base: UK MPs (n=100)

The standard storytelling model: Freytag's Pyramid

Freytag's Pyramid (1863)



- A. Introduction
- B. Rise
- C. Climax
- D. Return or fall
- E. Catastrophe

Modern representation of Freytag's Pyramid



Story-mapping for think tanks



PROJECT-BASED

Why current policy landscape
Introduction to protagonists

The factual story
The human story

Publication
of the report

Policy debate
Media commentary

Outcome feeds into
your version of history

Your version
of history

Your
organisation's
story

Your
values

Your
assumptions

Engaging
the
narratives

Your
vision for
society

CORE / ONGOING



4

CASE STUDY

Theos think tank



The Sower, Vincent Van Gogh (1888) oil on canvas

Case Study - The Sacred Podcast



**The
Guardian**

The Sacred Podcast is an interview series in which people of faith, agnostics and atheists air wildly incompatible beliefs on the Big Questions, such as whether there is any God or meaning to life, and is excellent for renewing your sense of plurality. Most rewarding of

I don't believe in
God, but I miss him.

*Julian Barnes, via Pippa Evans,
comedian and co-creator of The
Sunday Assembly*

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THE SACRED

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Case Study - The Sacred Podcast



The Sacred Live with Richard Ayoade and Lydia Fox
Elizabeth Oldfield will host a live recording of The Sacred podcast with guests Richard Ayoade and Lydia Fox.
theosthinktank.co.uk



The Sacred Podcast @sacred_podcast · May 15
'We need to find the truth for ourselves'.

Our next episode is with actor, comedian, writer, director and producer [@rainwilson](#), who is best known for his role as Dwight Schrute on [@theofficenbc](#). In this trailer he speaks about his return to the Bahá'í Faith. Out next Wednesday.





MY DREAM, MY TASTE

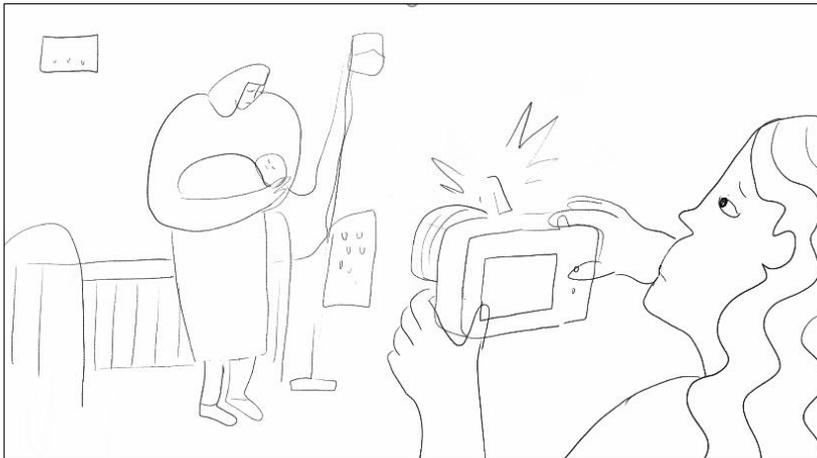
“If we think about our lives as simply chasing one dream after the next our lives tend to lose weight” – Miroslav Volf, Episode #50

Case Study – 3 Reports

'Forgive us Our Debts'



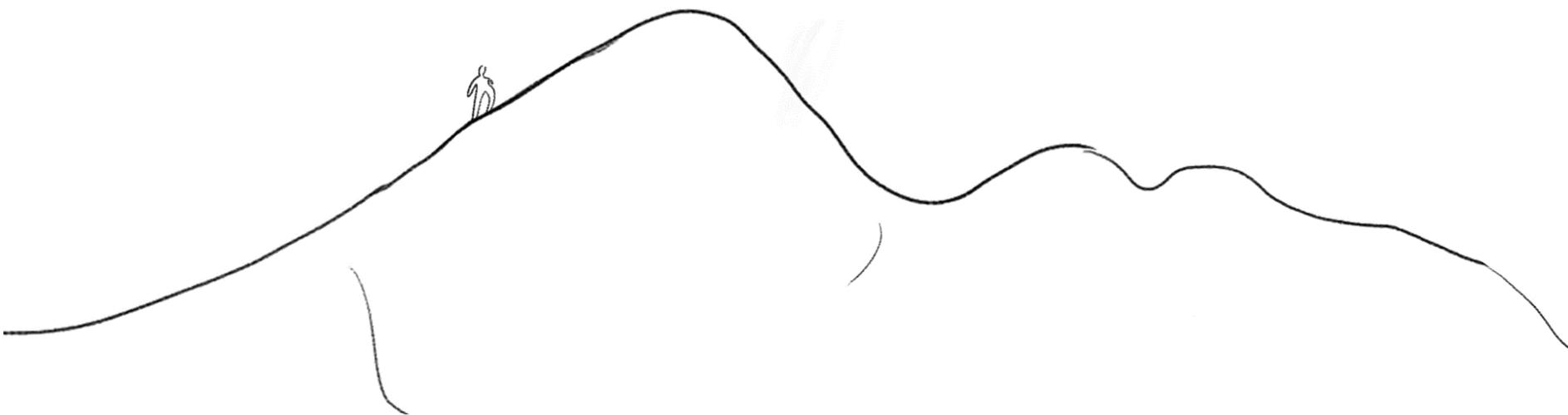
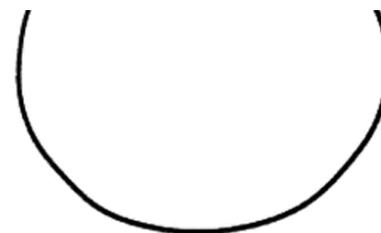
'Worldviews in Religious Education'



'Growing Good'

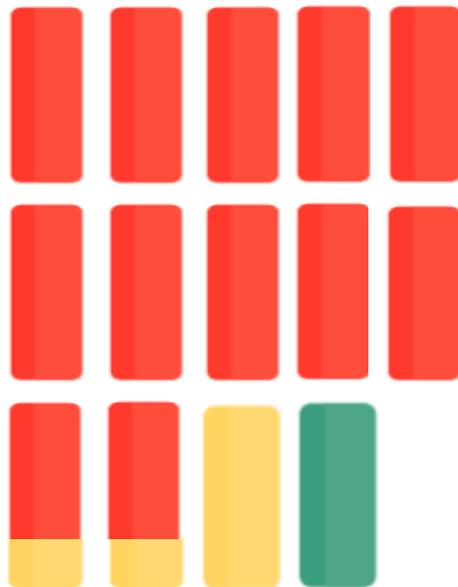


Case Study – Religion and Worldviews Report

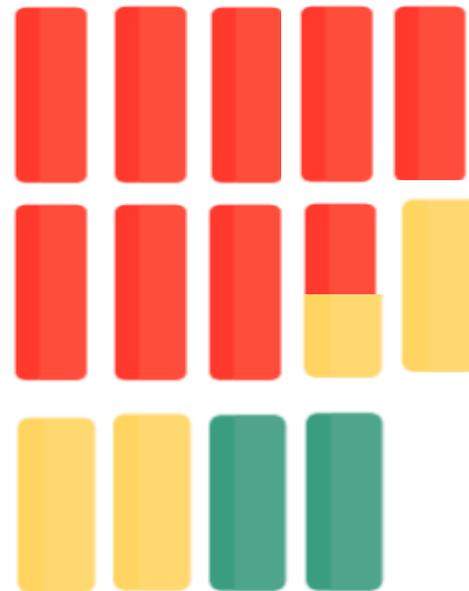


It doesn't take a huge team, but it does require putting communications at the heart of your organisation...

2018



2020



Research



Communications



Events/ fundraising

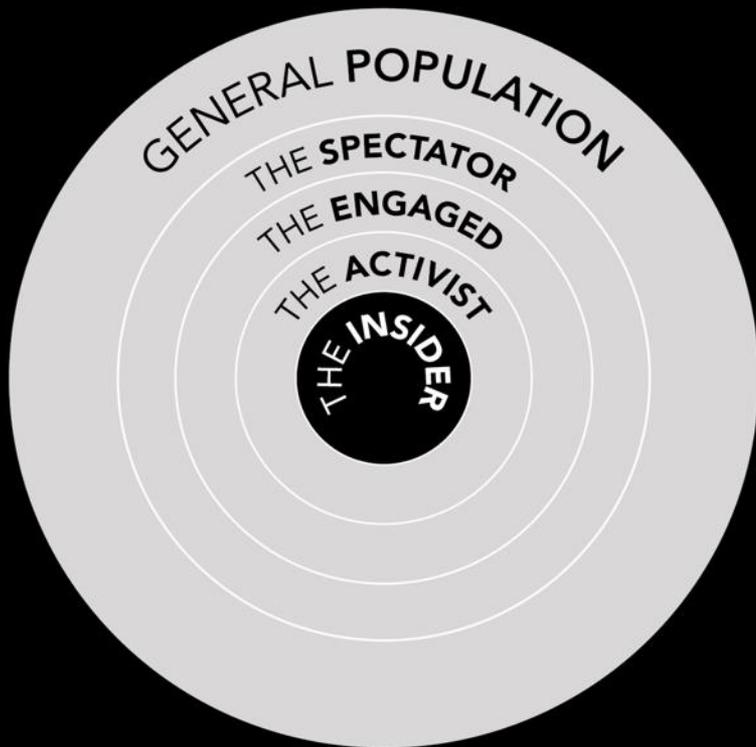


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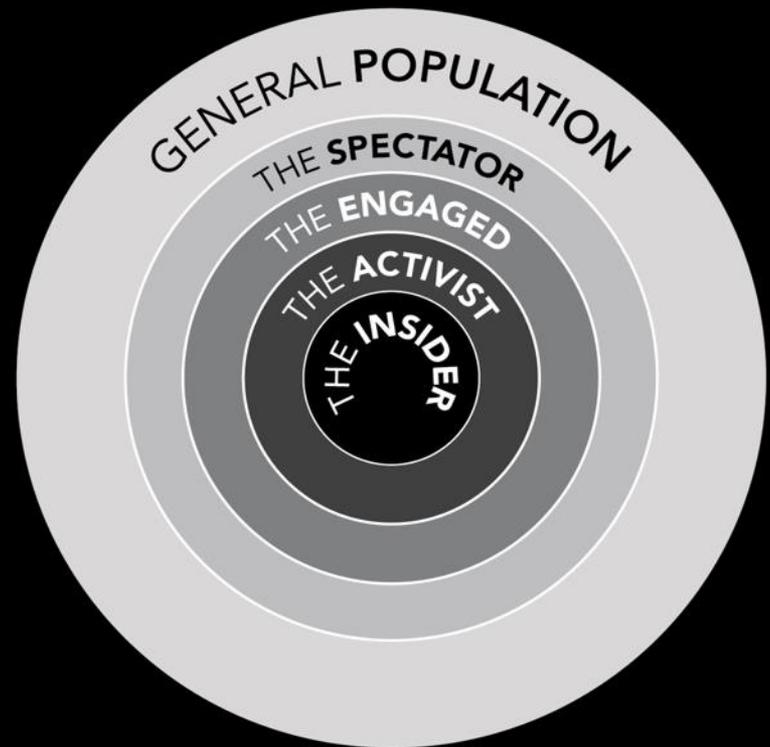
APPENDIX

Influencing policy today

Old-fashioned audience



21st century audience



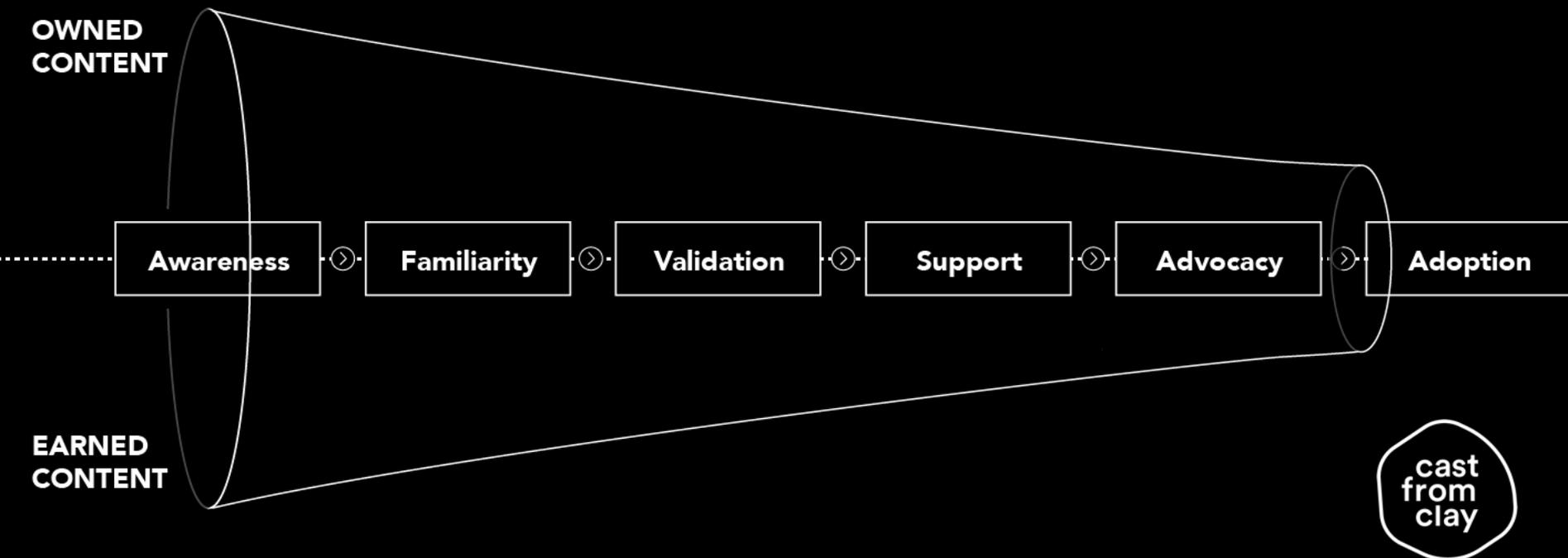
Light touch



Heavy focus

Consider the full policy maker journey – from awareness to adoption.

The Policy Adoption Funnel



Map the content you need to guide policy makers along that journey.

The Policy Adoption Funnel

