

## Introduction

If we are to be successful in our Walden Two efforts, it is important that we are able to communicate effectively about them. As an idea that is very powerful, it can also be easily misunderstood. Ideally, we will be able to convey the excitement and potential that we feel W2 has. However, it is all too easy for us to get caught up in details that might actually be undermining our ideas, rather than furthering them.

The purpose of this document is to give an outline of what I have learned in my experience working in communications, and also from my individual experience communicating Walden Two. What I have written isn't perfect. It is meant only as an initial guideline of strategies I have found particularly effective. The model of the document is taken from a typical communications plan that would be given to any group seeking advice. I hope that everyone finds it helpful!

## Knowing Our Audience

### Who should we be talking to?

1. People who could potentially be interested in joining Walden Two\*
2. People who could lend support/expertise to the effort
3. Family and friends in order to gain support for ourselves\*

\*The main focus of this document

### Is there a wrong audience?

Yes.

It is important to note that when communicating about any progressive cause, good strategists understand that about 30% of the population isn't going to be able to hear their message unless their life (literally) depends on it. The reason for this is something I call the 'happy brain' effect. Basically, when people are confronted with facts — no matter how well reasoned — that contradict their current, enduring beliefs, their brains shut these facts out and actually release positive hormones right after doing this. In other words, our bodies actually reward us for rationalizing our way out of situations that are too difficult for us to comprehend with our current belief systems. Because of this, it is pretty pointless to direct any effort toward the 30% of people who just are not going to listen. From my personal experience, I have found that the wrong audience for Walden Two is usually the people who will put a lot of faith into concepts like 'independence,' and pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps... If you hear a family member or friend 'shut down' to what you are talking about, just remember that it is probably not worth your time to try to bring them around.

### How do you identify someone who could potentially be interested in joining W2?

I have had a lot of success speaking with people who are involved with progressive non-profit, do-gooder causes; people interested in sustainability; and people who have done a lot of traveling.

I have found that a main identifier of potential "targets" is expressions of a vague disillusionment with the system in general. Many feel like politics aren't helping them or the people they know. They feel like corporations control everything and are frustrated with things like the war, lack of health care, the failing education system, etc. At the

same time, they aren't really doing anything about it because they feel powerless.  
THESE ARE THE PEOPLE TO TALK TO!!!

### **Creating an Emotional Narrative**

The first step to communicating anything successfully is to create an emotional narrative. Research shows that our brains react much more strongly to anything attached to strong emotions (versus facts). In addition, by far the most powerful way to convey any idea is through a story. **In the case of Walden Two we will be telling a story about what we see wrong with the world, what the solution is for these problems, and a powerful vision of how we see our solution working.**

Since our target audiences will most likely be reached through individual efforts on a one on one basis, I want to give a lot of room for understanding how to form this emotional narrative in a natural, but compelling way. In my experience, I have found that easy points for inserting ideas connected with Walden Two in almost any conversation.

#### **Some important things to remember:**

1. When describing the problem part of your story, keep the audience in mind. Talk about what you know is a problem specifically for them, be it foreign policy, sustainability, health care, spending time with family, education, long working hours, etc. Retain this theme throughout your story so that the solution and vision speaks directly to this specific problem as well.

2. You don't have to go into detail about how you see everything working. Details confuse people's brains – especially when they are first being exposed to a concept. The most important thing is to leave them with a positive impression and ideally a compelling emotional imprint. When you are done talking, they shouldn't be thinking about rammed earth housing and the costs, they should be associating W2 with how they want to see their life and what will make them and their family/friends happiest.

Below is an example particularly relevant to current events, but stay aware that speaking points for W2 come up everywhere.

#### **Example!**

I am talking about politics with a friend. She says that all the candidates are really the same and nothing is going to change anyway. This is where I identify that she might be interested in hearing about W2.

#### **I describe the problem:**

"Politicians are just guessing at the answers and once a politician actually has a chance to do something they are tied to money and special interest groups. The resources we should be able to use for making our lives better end up being put toward corporations that are only interested in getting richer, not creating a better world."

#### **I describe the solution:**

"The only way to make anything better is to do research on a problem and figure out what works and what doesn't work. Then, implement the findings in a way where the leaders are still held accountable. We have the resources to do this."

#### **I describe my powerful vision for how my solution will work:**

"I want to live in a world where I don't have to work 40 hours a week to scrape by. I want to have time to pursue music, art, activities I enjoy, and be able to still spend time with

my loved ones. I don't want to have to worry about where I am going to get the money to pay for my doctor's bill or what is going to happen to my kids with global warming or terrorism. I want to contribute to my community in meaningful ways. We have the technology and the resources for all this to be possible. We can live in a sustainable world where people reach their highest potential in every area. But to do it we have to embrace research about how to do it.

Recently I was exposed to the idea of intentional communities. Basically, the idea is to break off in a way and create micro-communities of about 50 to 500 where we can actually experiment and model with different ways of making our lives better and more sustainable. It is a really powerful concept because it allows you to figure out the best ways of doing things without getting caught up in all the craziness of today's uber-large bureaucratic system. It's like taking all the best from the technology and culture that we already have and then bringing it a step further. I really think that this idea is going to lead to a place where everyone lives an educated, healthy, sustainable, and peaceful life."

### **Communication Tips: Phrases to Use and Phrases to Avoid**

Another thing to understand about effective communication is that people's brains light up whole networks of associations with everything they come across. Our goal is to highlight positive aspects and associations with Walden Two and not the negative ones. So to give an example, think about the associations you come up with when someone says terms like, "peace," "family," and "community." Then think about the associations you have for terms like, "isolation," "bureaucracy," and "corporations."

In my experience, I have found that when speaking about Walden Two it is VERY important to not only use certain phrases associated with our side but also to use certain phrases to describe the other side. I have made a list of phrases to use and to avoid for both speaking about Walden Two and for speaking about America's current political system.

#### **Walden Two, phrases to use:**

- Community
- Sustainability/Survival
- Happiness/Happy
- Great lifestyle
- Freedom to spend time ... (insert activity)
- Surrounded by family/friends
- Healthy
- Ability to achieve our potential
- The best of culture and technology
- The best environment possible
- Contribution to the future
- Research

#### **Walden Two, phrases to avoid:**

- Commune
- Determinism (or anything that seems to inhibit people's individual freedom)
- Utopia
- Science/Scientific Experiments

**Current system, phrases to use:**

Bureaucratic

Controlled by elite/corporations

Exploitative

Anti-freedom (we work so much but never get ahead)

Culture of consumerism

Isolating; and the rise in anxiety disorders

Full of resources, but unable to make our lives better

Failing us

A system at the brink of extinction (climate crisis)

**Current system, phrases to avoid:**

Democracy

Freedom

Individualism

Anything connected to core American values