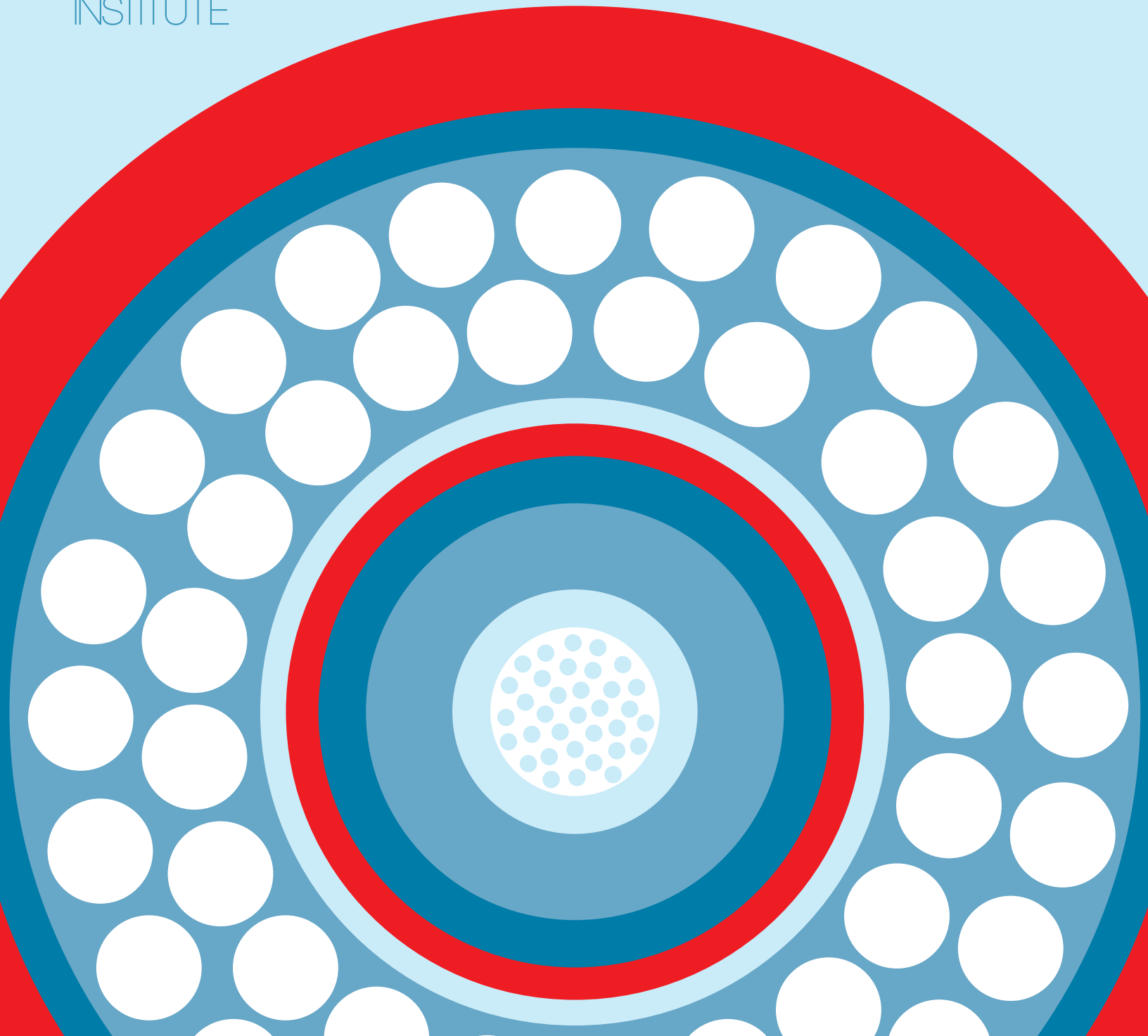


# ***Net Neutrality For The Win***

***How Entertainment and the Science of Influence  
Can Save Your Internet***

HARMONY  
INSTITUTE





***“Net neutrality” is neither as intimidating nor as complex as it sounds. The seemingly technical term simply describes the current culture of the Internet, in which personal interest fuels traffic to Web sites. The few dominant telecommunications companies providing Internet access to Americans today would like to change this culture in order to capitalize off of their relationship with the public and online businesses.***

Internet service providers (ISPs) like AT&T, Comcast, Time Warner Cable, and Verizon are eager to become the gatekeepers of Internet content; reserving faster, more preferential space for their own sites while taxing other Web site owners who would like to continue seeing their content reach Internet users. ISPs look to offer “tiered” service packages to consumers, much like today’s cable and satellite television. Net neutrality, in principle, protects the public and online businesses from ISPs and other interests that would like to restrict Internet access in this way.

### **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SAVE THE OPEN INTERNET?**

Net neutrality is what makes the current Internet “open.” Without net neutrality rules at the federal level, these ISPs have the power to close off certain Web sites and services from Internet users, discriminating between online content as they see fit. A closed Internet structure will lead to limited competition and stifled innovation.

If the Internet is not protected from this small but powerful group of telecommunications companies, Internet users will end up paying more for much less. Small Internet businesses will find themselves priced out of the market, and their loss will cause an already stressed economy to shed more jobs. The effects of this business model would further widen the divide between those who can afford access to the Internet and those who cannot connect to its wealth of information.

Today, multiple policy efforts are underway on both

sides of the debate. The Internet Freedom Preservation Act and a campaign for revisions to current Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rules would protect and codify net neutrality principles into law. Today these efforts need active spokespeople who are invested in supporting federal policy-making to ensure the open Internet that we all benefit from remains a reality.

### **WHO SHOULD I TARGET IN A PUBLIC OUTREACH CAMPAIGN?**

Already there is a large coalition of people who support net neutrality and are working to codify it into law. Journalists, writers and bloggers, small and large Internet businesses, advocates, academics, and a wide majority of the public see the value of having an open Internet that encourages competition among content creators, service providers, and application developers. Still, “net neutrality” has yet to become a household term; many Internet users and online businesses are unaware that the Internet they access each day is in jeopardy.

After a broad survey of potential audiences, ranging from those unfamiliar with the current debate over the open Internet to those already campaigning, two main groups are most likely to support net neutrality policy-making. We highlight the profiles for “core supporters” and “persuadables” below because marketing and behavioral science research shows that zeroing in on target audiences for communication campaigns increases the potential for effective messaging that can lead to real policy changes.

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## **CORE SUPPORTERS**

- Ages 18-39
- Male, Caucasian, and registered Democrat
- Over \$100k yearly household income
- High level of media and Internet literacy
- See the Internet as a public service just like neighborhood utilities or the nation's highways
- Familiar with "net neutrality" as a principle and a term
- Spend more than 20 hours a week online for personal use

## **PERSUADABLES**

- Ages 18-39 or over 60
- Predominantly African American or female
- Self-assign as liberal
- Unmarried
- Live in the U.S. South or rural areas
- Annual household incomes of between \$30k-\$50k
- Unfamiliar with "net neutrality" as a principle and term until exposed to a measured debate

## **HOW CAN I REACH THEM? SEVEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NARRATIVE COMMUNICATION**

The following recommendations offer a basic communications strategy for creating narrative campaigns that successfully reach both core and persuadable audiences. Entertainment creators and communicators have successfully used many of these ideas for decades, although we have tailored them to inform U.S. audiences about the crises facing Internet users today. Some are intuitive, and some run counter to innate beliefs about what moves and motivates people. We concisely explain the applied social theory in each

recommendation and include an example or suggestion for implementing it within narrative.

These recommendations can be applied to new projects, as well as to existing campaigns. They can serve communications efforts directly related to net neutrality or to the large number of issues that are influenced by having an open discourse and accessible information available online. Communicators should consider the broad range of media platforms for telling the story of net neutrality, from film and television to mobile phones and comic books.

## **1 DON'T ALLOW ISPS TO SCARE WITH SCARCITY**

ISPs currently argue that net neutrality slows down connection speeds and limits access through network congestion. Combat these arguments by reframing them. Narrate the scarcity of content, information, and services that would occur without net neutrality. Arguments for the open Internet should highlight the threat ISP monopolies have on affordability, economic opportunity, and privacy for individual Internet users and businesses.

## **EXAMPLES**

- ISPs make billions of dollars in profit each year, but have yet to expand their networks to many rural and underrepresented communities.
  - Without net neutrality policies, the U.S. has fallen to 22nd place worldwide in terms of average broadband penetration, ranks 14th in average download speed (10 times slower than Japan), and experiences broadband prices only slightly less expensive than the cost of Internet access in Hungary and Poland.
  - Without net neutrality policies, small online businesses will find themselves allocated to the "slow-lane" of Internet traffic. If Google had been conceived under this system, it is unlikely that it would have grown to employ the more than 20,000 people that work there today.
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- Privacy is at risk when the Internet is managed by a monopoly of ISPs. Tools that could be widely used without net neutrality rules, like deep packet inspection, log all content, sites, and services Internet users access, and have the potential to lead to content censorship or discrimination.

## **2 DEFEND AGAINST DISASTER**

Today, Internet users and businesses generally have a positive relationship with their ISP and believe they can access what they want, when they want it. Messaging should thus target supporters by asking them to act vigilantly to “prevent”

or “minimize” the potential for a centrally controlled Internet. Included is a list of “prevention” focused words that should be at the core of a communications campaign.

**careful**  
**maintenance**  
**minimize losses**  
**cautious**  
**responsibility**  
**protect(ion)**  
**vigilant/vigilance**  
**prevent**  
**obligation**  
**defend**  
**secure**  
**must**  
**stop**  
**avoiding mistakes**

## **3 CHALLENGE HOW PEOPLE VIEW THE INTERNET**

Most people think of the Internet in terms of private ownership. The ultimate goal of a narrative campaign should be to update the image of the Internet from a privilege like property ownership to a public resource like telephone networks. Today, if you subscribe to long

distance telephone service through AT&T, the telecommunications giant cannot tell you whom you can or cannot call. Neither should they be allowed to tell you which Web sites you can or cannot access. Internet networks deserve protection under the same laws as other services provided by common carriers.

## **4 MAKE IT PERSONAL**

The most inspiring stories keep narratives local. Discussing the dominate ISP in an area by name, talking about how lives will be affected by the loss of an open Internet instead of “regulation” and “the government,” and having characters that we already know and trust talk about the issue, are excellent ways to ground the fight for the open Internet in the audience’s daily life.

## **5 MAGNIFY YOUR MESSAGE IN GROUPS**

Expanding conversations about net neutrality to a group or discussion with a wide range of knowledge, skill, and personal experience enables people to process difficult or confusing information in a way that exceeds their individual capacity. Public gatherings as well as those mediated through the Internet (including social networking sites and message boards) can serve both small community projects to national outreach programs.

## **6 ASK FOR A COMMITMENT MORE THAN ONCE**

Entertainment campaigns are effective at changing behavior when they have specific action strategies for their audience. Below is a list of actions the public can take today to preserve the open Internet:

- Join a coalition of supporters, such as [SavetheInternet.com](http://SavetheInternet.com)
  - Call or write state and congressional leaders and explain why they should endorse net neutrality
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- Sign petitions directed to Congressional leaders in support of the Internet Freedom Preservation Act
  - Spread the word by e-mail/Twitter/Facebook
  - Donate money to organizations lobbying for the open Internet
  - Support new FCC rules that will ensure net neutrality for all Internet users and businesses at [OpenInternet.gov](http://OpenInternet.gov)

## **7 TELL THE STORY**

The story of the open Internet is a story about civil liberties and economic justice. Net neutrality is not solely a tech or policy issue; it's about maintaining basic needs and rights. Every entertainment writer's target audience will differ; and so too must the characters' experiences with access to an open Internet if these narratives are to resonate. Creating narratives about how the Internet impacts people's lives in positive and profound ways will be more effective than taking a cognitive or policy viewpoint.

### **EXAMPLES**

- Tell stories of the many children who fall behind in school because they lack access to the Internet in their homes or are unable to use it effectively.
- Narrate the lives of the elderly or underemployed, who find themselves at a disadvantage when the only way to fill out a job application or efficiently request public and private services is by going online.
- Talk about small business owners who risk financial ruin if they cannot reach customers because their Web site is blocked or slowed down.
- Seek out the stories of grassroots campaigners who, if censored online by ISPs, would not be able to connect with their constituencies, threatening their political or social struggles.

## **CONCLUSION**

There are no limits to how the fight for the open Internet can be incorporated into new and existing entertainment storylines. *FTW! Net Neutrality For The Win: How Entertainment and the Science of Influence Can Save Your Internet* is here to help communicators from policy, education, advocacy, media, and entertainment harness the power of mainstream media, offering U.S. audiences entertainment that educates them on net neutrality and provides concrete ways they can support the cause.

Advertisers regularly take advantage of the reach and influence of entertainment. But net neutrality supporters from a variety of backgrounds have yet to tap its potential for incorporating social messages. Creating entertainment with the Harmony Institute methodology will help communicators connect with viewers on both a conscious and emotional level, providing a channel to significantly influence social change and keeping the Internet open and equal for all.

# Acknowledgements

## **PRIMARY AUTHOR**

Eleanor M. Cleverly

## **CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS**

John S. Johnson, Debika Shome, & Tamara Del Rosso

## **REVIEWERS**

Jed Alpert, Kenny Broad, Art Brodsky, Emma Canarick, Harmony Davis, Steve Gaghan, David Hardisty, Michael Huttner, Lawrence Lessig, Josh Levy, Adam Wolfensohn, & Thom Woodley

## **EDITOR**

Andria Cimino, Leapfrog Communications

## **LAYOUT & DESIGN**

Eleanor M. Cleverly

## **COVER ART**

Gabe Benzur

## **ILLUSTRATIONS**

Ian Webster, Hazard County Illustration

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## **ABOUT THE HARMONY INSTITUTE**

The Harmony Institute is a non-profit research organization that works to harness the power of mainstream media and entertainment within the United States to increase awareness and provide motivation for transformative action within traditional viewing audiences. With a keen understanding of behavioral science, and a wide network of academic and industry supporters, the Institute assists in the production of entertainment that connects with viewers on both a cognitive and emotional level. Accomplishing this goal not only means advising on conceptual projects and existing productions, but also providing key members of the media, advocacy, and public-policy realms with the tools and information they need to develop and market projects that accurately evaluate current concerns and offer empirically-based alternatives.

For more information, visit [harmony-institute.org](http://harmony-institute.org)

The Institute welcomes feedback about this guide. Please send emails to [ftw@harmony-institute.org](mailto:ftw@harmony-institute.org)

