Basic introduction in coding unvirtual realities

Ulrich Langer
ulong@liwest.at

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Abstract

The ability to *shape teh future* becomes more and more important for the computing communities. The freedom and openness we enjoy today, that has unleashed many positive aspects to society, culture and commerce, is at stake. Positive and negative examples of the past clearly show that the ability to communicate beyond the borders of different communities is a vital task. The most important *hacks* in the future are far above all ISO layers.

This paper is about a simple model to think about communication and some conclusions. One out of many misguided models but enough to start sharing some basic ideas and providing some tools.

Contents

1 A warning at the beginning

There is a fine line between PR and propaganda. This is not about "information warfare". What creeps out of some agencies these days hardly deserves the word "intelligence" and to try a "war for hearts and minds" is as hopeless as speed seduction, on speed. The most valuable resource for communication is established trust. The "hacks" are about overcoming communication hassles and establishing trust.

2 Motivation

Information technology has developed from a small field to a part of everyday life. It's been a long time since IT was a playground for technical skilled people with long hairs and beards. With patent office bureaucrats claiming responsibility for the progress in information technology we irrevocably broke trough the dilbertian barrier[1].

Years after the e-commerce bubble imploded, information technology is now the root of all evil and also the cure for everything. In absence of visions, politicians replace the dream of service society with knowledge society[2]. Many stakeholders, mainly US-based companies[3] with music companies on the front, sing-along their slogans and create an illusion based on ignorance and theft[4]. Their methods are restriction, surveillance and criminalization[5]. With an untrustworthy computing base[6] commercial interests behind each piece of iformation and lawyers booby-trapping the net[7], the information society could die at very young age.

The freedom of communication is a fundamental building block of the information age. It is the root of personal and commercial freedom and it has unleashed many positive effects for individuals, societies and commercial development. One of our biggest problem is bridging the information gap between those, who have the knowledge and those who decide.

Those who have to decide have one major problem: IT issues are complicated and there always will be a liar offering the easy way.

This paper is an invitation to look at communication as an adaptable method to transport knowledge, values, visions. Not only for people who are speaking the same language, but also for those who normally can not understand, but often have to decide.

The actions against the bureaucracy of patent lawyers have proven that a community can communicate values and form the environment. It has also brought up a new picture of *hactivity*: The coding on unvirtual realities.

3 Some definitions

Reality is the mindset a person lives in. As individuals and societies differ, so do their realities. A reality is represented by a set of items.

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[1] `http://www.dilbert.com`

[2] Instead of making our living by cutting each others hair, we now sell knowledge to each other.

[3] Note that licensing is a top issue in the foreign trade balance of the US.

[4] Theft is taking, what is not yours. The discussion about "Intellectual Property" is simply one about how much knowledge from the society we allow to be stolen by companies, so that the public can buy it back. The good news: Then we know how much worth it was.

[5] EU-Directives on "Intellectual property protection" and "data retention".

[6] What is TCPA more than Sonys CD trojan, protected by cryptography?

[7] In memoriam Tanja Nolte-Berndel. [2]

Figure 1: The reality puzzles
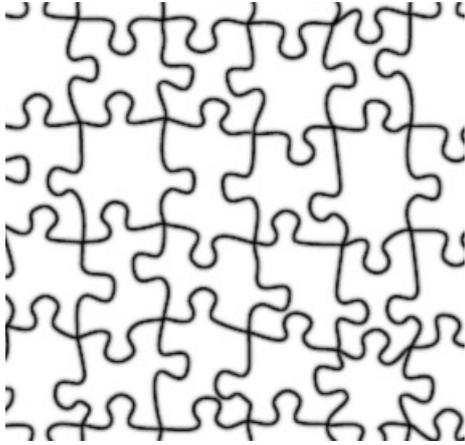
Items are values, thoughts, rules, ... and the weights a person applies on them. In that model we use those items as the smallest entities to work with. Items are bound together. They react to each other like neurons, but it is much easier to think about them as pieces in a puzzle. They have to fit to their neighbors. Note: This does not mean that there are no contradictions, but we'll keep our model simple.

Communication always addresses some of this items. It is about exchanging information about this items and the values applied to them. The values are like weights applied to that items. The more weight an item has, the less easier it is for that person to change that piece.

3.1 Communication: Messages and Transmissions

A transmission is consists of the information one partner sends to another, hoping that it will create some foreseeable effect.

Messages are requests to either present items, or change items. Transmissions can have from zero to many messages. In private communication, transmissions will not get ignored when they have no message. Instead of this, the receiver will, most probably, try to invent at least one.

3.2 Introduction

Our model shows that messages are evaluated in context to others and to already learned items.

The acceptance of Echolon being real, and not just rumors, needed much context building. The hard fact that the antennas in Bad Aibling are not just for watching television, was clear from the beginning, but it needed a lot more, before the message "Echelon is the US spying on the EU citizens"" finally was acceptable for European politicians:

A. whereas the existence of a global system for intercepting communications, operating by means of cooperation proportionate to their capabilities among the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand under the UKUSA Agreement, is no longer in doubt; whereas it seems likely, in view of the evidence and the consistent pattern of statements from a very wide range of individuals and organizations, including American sources, that its name is in fact ECHELON, although this is a relatively minor detail,

B. whereas there can now be no doubt that the purpose of the system is to ntercept, at the very least, private and commercial communications, and not military communications, although the analysis carried out in the report has revealed that the technical capabilities of the system are probably not nearly as extensive as some sections of the media had assumed,

C. whereas, therefore, it is surprising, not to say worrying, that many senior Community figures, including European Commissioners, who gave evidence to the

Temporary Committee claimed to be unaware of this phenomenon, [4]

The quote gives three hints: First of all Echelon was in doubt, and the investigations led to the result that **its existence could not longer be declined**. The neat US spying on EU citizens was far away from the reality of European politics. Second, the repeated reporting about Echelon in the media was helpful, but the overestimation of its capabilities might have caused negative effects. Third, the commission had no clue. That one is no real news.

4   Our model

Figure 2: The item should go here
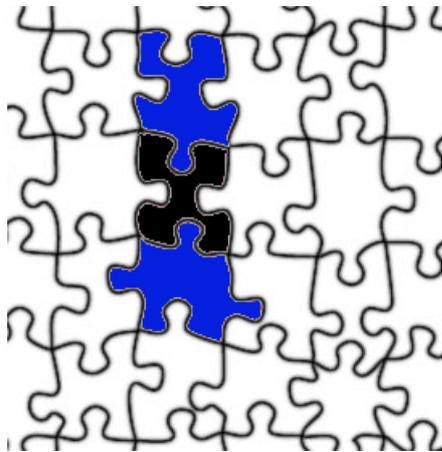
The above can be represented in our model. The European politicians had no reason to believe that such a thing like Echelon existed. The information did not *fit* into the reality:

Until the two blue items, representing some *facts* are not replaced, the fact that such a thing like Echelon exists does not fit (at the black spot) into the reality.
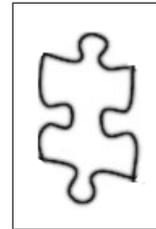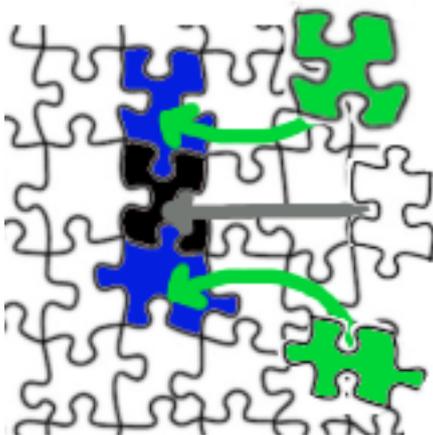
Figure 3: Preparing the environment first

To anchor our piece of reality the blue *facts* have to be addressed and modified in the communication process. After that, the item will fit and allow following the white rabbit.

Accompanied by two changes (green pieces) the final message *gets through* and has a comfortable place in that reality. The predecessors only require small changes. If these pieces fit better into the reality than the existing pieces or if they are hardly deniable facts it would be perfect..

5   Conclusion

When communicating, the reality of the communication partners plays a vital role for the outcome. But complicating that process, in communication between members of different societies, people tend to use the messages they are used to, to address items they know. The more the realities differ, the harder it is to communicate.

Respecting the details of the reality of others can improve the communication results. In political discussions communication is not two-ways but many parties are involved. It is interesting

to observe that people tend to stick to their own reality, or to the reality of their society when they communicate.

A reader assumes that a content is relevant and makes sense. The less contradictions the messages have in the whole text and for the experiences and knowledge of the reader, the easier it is red. The easier the text is red, the more worth the reader applies to the messages it contains.

5.1 Messages and Items

For our model, every transmission is a set of messages that requests information about items and values or requests the change of these. Every message addresses one item and its values. It is important not to confuse messages with text. The sentence *I want to have fun* can address completely different items and values when said wearing either a three piece suit or just underwear with tiger stripes. At least the latter needs ome other items and values already set to lead to predictable results.

5.2 Primary Message

Primary messages are those first visible. Like the headline in news they dominate the transmission. In a single transmission they have to carry the payload.

5.3 Secondary Message

It is almost impossible to communicate without sending secondary messages. They range from the writing style in news to clothing. Their normal use is to support the primary message, but in campaigns it can make sense to put the real payload in the secondary message, using a nearby irrelevant primary message just as medium of transport.

Let us take clothing as an example. Since ancient times, clothing has been used to show affiliation or dissociation to a group. That's why individualists have to uniform, the more public dress codes vanish. Clothing is a side channel.

5.4 Subliminals

These are used quite often in marketing campaigns. Trying to slip beyond recognition sounds promising, but subliminals have to be vague which makes them not very useful for communication. Besides that it is important not to send contra productive subliminals.

5.5 Messages and Items

It is obvious that precision in targeting the correct items and values would be an enhancement for both parties as they could develop a common understanding much faster, but it brings in another problem: it is impossible to achieve. This is just a limited model. It is only possible to draw near enough so that messages are understood correctly and values can be transferred while being unsharp enough to overcome the differences of the realities.

5.6 Maintaining lies - Total Cost of Ownership

We have seen that information is evaluated in its context. This complicates the maintenance of lies and increases the cost of lies. This increase sometimes is the key for winning or loosing.

Software patents came out of the harmonization between the European patent office (EPO), the US and Japan offices. The realization of a world wide harmonized patent system would have

brought strong arguments into a political debate, but being opposed for violating the European patent convention the EPO made a major mistake: Trying to market the European directive, which would have codified its practice, as the exact opposite and as necessary to prevent from software patents and "drifting towards the US", the EPO had not only to maintain that lie, but was also unable to use the original positive argumentation towards a unified patent system.

6 Down the rabbit hole

Based on that model, the preparation for communication can be structured into strategic tasks.

6.1 The profile

Messages never stand for themselves. They are evaluated in context and one of the most important contexts is the origin of the message. Preparing a clear and useful image and some basic outlines provides many improvements.

- Minimal basics to allow a fast orientation for the communication partners.
- Easy checks to prevent sending counterproductive messages
- Understanding the communication scheme of the others allows the translation into their *language*.

6.2 Minimal basics

They are called the *basic Ws*: Who (are you)? What (do you want)? Why (do you want that)?

6.3 Search for mantras

The mantra is a basic check that will be applied to all messages. It is a filter method. It prevents from sending wrong subliminals and shows weaknesses in messages. It also keeps messages in line over a longer period of time. The attributes should be chosen carefully, as they represent the items and values of *the reality* shown to the outside. They should reflect reality. It is also considered helpful to use humor.

- Choosing the basic stereotype: They range from hero in shining armor to poor and getting hurt. Mostly it will be a positive role, but never such an extreme.
- Choosing the behavior: The virtual character chosen above will show a different behavior to different communication partners, or when writing about different topics.
- Choosing the viewpoints: What is the viewpoint? What is considered good, bad, evil?
- Choosing the mood: Angry about the topic? Frightened? Amused?
- These properties should now merge into mantras. Every mantra is a simple set of questions for one transmission channel. Questions like: Are this the words of the hero in shining armor? - Who is the winner in the text? Who is on the loose at least at the end? Is the mood expressed?

6.4 Private investigations

The communication between members of different realities leads to the situation that one of them will feel unsure. One key to effective communication is to know keywords, key phrases and argumentation lines of the others. Different societies use different communication phrases. Giving

thoughts about the communication of others gives a first glance about how to address items and values in their puzzle.

Bad news: This has to be done carefully and can require a lot of work. In political debates it means nothing less than fighting a battle on foreign ground. In the worst case more than one. The debate about software patents in the EU clearly showed that the computing society is able to counter a threat and to be well up on political and on juristical ground. At the high tide of the dispute many former "computer geeks" had excellent knowledge of the European software patent law embarrassing most lawyers and many WIPO representatives.

6.5 Usage: Building it all together for PR

6.5.1 Building trust

As in computer communication the goal is to transport the content, established trust is needed. This is where the first preparation steps help. The minimal basics help to provide a quick orientation for others. Friend or opponent? What are the interests? Over time the mantra helps maintaining style and orientation even facing the rollercoaster of political disputes.

Without restricting the actual texts too much the basic checks of the mantras make sure that schizophrenic behavior, which is often seen in campaigns that have to deal with rapid changes, is not an issue. The clear face together with a stable baseline in communication help to build the needed trust. Additional adaptations, in speech, behavior or clothing are another way to strengthen trust by making communication more comfortable to others.

6.5.2 Messages and Campaigns

Dealing with the communication and the reality of others has two major advantages: Understanding the position and values of the persons the message is directed to and the ability to translate a message into the coding of another reality. The model has also shown, that it is not about getting *the one final truth* through with force but about preparing the environment. The camel and the needle's eye: no problem with a big hole.

6.5.3 Primary and secondary messages

It is now clear that the messages in one transmissions can point at different items. Early PR in a campaign can focus on surrounding items and values just preparing for the main message or advertise it in secondary messages. Addressing a set of items and values is also a method of binding them together, making opposition harder

The messages in one transmission can also target different realities. PR about the WIPO is a primary example because there is, at least now, noone really listening there. Secondary messages in such a PR should target existing audience and there is no sense in coding anything for the reality of the WIPO, which would be too wicked anyway.

6.5.4 Advanced Usage

Advanced usage goes beyond normal communication. What about the opponents? What is their reality? How do they express it? Most probably they will use words and phrases of their reality. Are they prepared to discuss items outside their own reality?

A major example: Microsoft. The software giant was, and mostly still is, completely unprepared for a political discussion. Unaware of that aspects, the microsofties try to respond to the challenges of the information age with answers from the past accompanied with pressure and lobbying. Of course they get caught. A way that leads them straight into the role of the ignorant and bad guy.

6.6 Recipe for a message

First a clear vision of the message is needed. What is the content? What is the format? There are some standard formats for messages [1] . The content needs some checking too, and again there are

6.6.1 Magical *W*s

- *What* happened or has to be done.

- *Who* is affected, has to do something. The more personal, the better.

- *When* did or will it happen.

- *Where*

- *Who* said? Where does the information come from.

A note on journalism:

> journalistic work is oriented, knowingly or not, on the news value of a subject area: Most important value is the "negative potential". [3]

But the more negative a message is, the less likely it will change something in reality. Humans are used to negative messages, as they are to PR messages, so even if very bad news catch short media attention, in most cases a solid text without too much excitement does a better job.

6.6.2 Lead and Text

- The lead is the headline. Sometimes a few lines can be put besides the headline for clarification. Put all what has to be said comes into the lead. People who read much decide on the lead if they read a text or ignore it.

- The first chapter: Do not expect people, which are not very interested in the topic, to read further than the first chapter.

- Other chapters: Only clarify things here, or *tease* future messages.

Teasing future messages basically shows that there is more to come. Because people are not expected to read further than up to the end of the first chapter it depends on the goal where to set such teasers. Teasing below the first chapters can be used to give those a benefit that read further.

If the subject is too complicated to be dealt with in the lead, then there are basically two possibilities:

- Writing an article and publishing a message about the article, its author, why he wrote it...

- Splitting it up into several messages.

6.6.3 Testing

Now the text can be tested and optimized:

- Basic checks: Who? What? Why?

- Mantra checking: Does the message comply to the chosen mantra? Does it fit into the chosen role? Every sentence?

- Substitution: What phrases can be replaced with phrases used by the receiver of the message.

- Optimization: What additional messages can be stuffed in with small variations?

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