



## **Creating the Future and Catalytic Thinking: A Communications Roadmap**

*Updated: November 30, 2020*

Prepared by: Peter Panepento and Scott Westcott

Prepared for: Hildy Gottlieb, Creating the Future

We're living at a time when the world often seems to be unraveling -- and the quest for positive, transformative change feel out of reach.

A global pandemic has claimed more than 1 million lives -- including more than 230,000 in our own country. Making matters worse, the pandemic has left nearly 30 million people out of work, disrupted our education system, and pushed many individuals and families to the brink.

Centuries of racial injustice have come to a head following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others at the hands of police. These tragic incidents have sparked months of protest across the country -- raising hopes about a better future but also sparking those with extreme views to push back with violence and hate.

Political divisions have led to one of the most contentious and acrimonious elections in modern history and have further hardened our nation's ideological divides.

Meanwhile, individuals and organizations are grappling with swift and unprecedented change that continually test established solutions and traditional approaches.

All of these situations share a common theme – *the systems that exist to address these issues are outdated, ineffective, and are incapable of bringing about anything but incremental, uneven, and unsustainable change*. In many instances, these systems actually perpetuate activities and actions that have proven ineffective, and even detrimental. Yet still they endure.

This reality can be crystalized succinctly through Albert Einstein's famous quote defining insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again but expected different results."

What Einstein stopped short of providing was a pathway to move beyond the insanity to revolutionize problem solving in ways that usher in transformative and sustainable systems change.

That's where Creating the Future comes in. The mission of Creating the Future is to be a catalyst for systems change so the systems people encounter every day are positioned to create conditions that advance **everyone's ability to thrive**.

This begins with a clear-eyed recognition that many existing systems, conditions, and structures throughout the world are rooted in structures that have extracted power, wealth, labor and resources from Black, indigenous, and other communities of color, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA people, and our planet as a whole.

This persistent dynamic has led to a level of inequity that prevents the majority of humans – and our planet – from thriving, and in too many instances, from even surviving.

Creating the Future's goal – supported by this public relations and outreach initiative – is to create, foster and promote new systems that advance a healthy, humane, just, and equitable world for everyone.

The method to achieving this is to initiate systems change through a proven approach called Catalytic Thinking, a process based on the simple but powerful premise that if you ask better questions, you will get better results.

Catalytic Thinking offers a powerful blueprint for how individuals, organizations, and systems can undergo powerful, life-altering changes. When we ask more effective questions, commit ourselves to answering them, and then follow through, change is not only possible -- it becomes inevitable. Monstrous, intractable challenges become obstacles we can collectively move beyond.

Turn Two Communications has been taking a deep dive into Catalytic Thinking, with the goal of creating a communications and outreach strategy that maps out how to introduce the concept to those who crave a new way forward.

When we set out on this journey, we began with our firm's usual strategic approach. We interviewed its creators and those who have used Catalytic Thinking. We dug into the client's website analytics, email marketing platform, and social-media accounts for its organizational parent, Creating the Future. We searched for analogs -- other campaigns

and movements that have had similar aspirations. We brainstormed key audiences and key messages.

These efforts have been instructive and have provided us with some important tactical insights. We can, for instance, point to a number of powerful stories that we can tell to help capture the public's imagination. We can make recommendations on how much time to spend courting media coverage -- and which outlets deserve priority. We can emphasize the importance of utilizing social media more effectively.

But we were also struck by the fact that we couldn't limit ourselves to our traditional approach to providing you with a communications strategy.

Instead, we decided that we should take a Catalytic Thinking approach to communicating about Catalytic Thinking. So on the pages that follow we've attempted something different.

We've mapped out a strategy that is structured around answering the key questions that form Catalytic Thinking. We'll still draw from the knowledge and experience we've gained during our careers as journalists and communicators to frame the tactics. But the strategy itself reflects the core tenets of the theory we will be working with you to share with -- and change -- the world.

Here are the key questions we aimed to answer:

- What is the highest possible outcome?
- What conditions are needed to get there?
- Who cares about this?
- What can we do to help create those conditions?
- What resources do we have -- and what do we need to achieve this outcome?
- How will we know if this is working?

## What is the highest possible outcome of this work?

The highest possible outcome of our communications work in support of Catalytic Thinking is simple:

We want to **build a movement** in which people everywhere change systems -- and improve lives -- by using Catalytic Thinking.

This isn't about selling a product, raising money, or building awareness. It's about inspiring people to adopt a new way of thinking -- and to put that thinking into action.

It's a bold and somewhat nebulous goal.

But as we've said in many of our conversations in recent months, we will know this effort has been successful when people and organizations are using Catalytic Thinking without us even knowing it.

## What conditions are needed to achieve this outcome?

It's easy to talk about building a movement and changing systems.

But it takes much more than talk to make it happen.

Movements need a tangible idea: one that inspires people to want to step outside of their comfort zones and take action. With Catalytic Thinking you have that idea. And we've heard, firsthand, what is possible when people decide to apply it to their work and their lives.

For a great idea to become the center of a movement, however, it helps to have a few other key accelerants to help it catch fire:

### 1. **Money**

While Collective Enoughness is based on the idea that, together, we can pool resources to make change, the process becomes much easier when you have some resources of your own to create momentum and help bring others to the table.

You've already identified that you'd like to create a funding stream to help pay for key infrastructure. One of the key initial goals of our work with you will focus on raising your profile with potential funders and giving you the tools necessary to make the best possible pitch.

### 2. **People**

With Hildy Gottlieb and Dimitri Petropolis, you have highly engaged -- and engaging -- founders and caretakers. With your board and supporters, you have a passionate base of potential evangelists. With us, you have a motivated (and, we think, knowledgeable) communications team that is ready to help you take flight.

This core group is important for starting a movement. But it doesn't become a movement until it spreads well beyond this initial group.

We must inspire others to take notice -- and to take action. And we must transform Catalytic Thinking into something that is bigger than any one person or group of people. Indeed, we want to help you create a **passionate army of Catalytic Thinkers** who will nurture and grow the concept -- and turn it into something that outlives its founders (and their desire to keep working full-time).

### 3. **A Clear, Understandable, and Shareable Message**

What ties both of these above conditions -- money and people -- together?

A clear, understandable message that is easy for people to adapt and share on their own.

For Catalytic Thinking to become a movement, it can no longer be solely owned by any one individual or a core group. It will instead become something that is owned by everyone. In this case, it goes beyond a set of principles created by intellectuals or experts, to become a way of thinking that can be modified and adapted -- and shared easily.

As such, our communications campaign aims to spark the imagination of funders (to create the financial resources needed), while also inspiring a broad network of people to adopt Catalytic Thinking and share their experience.

You might remember the book *Made to Stick*, which talked about how to get people attached to great ideas. In our case, it's not enough to simply create a sticky idea. We must instead create a series of conditions in which people are so excited about Catalytic Thinking that they're willing to help spread the word -- using their own language and networks to do so.

## Who else cares about this?

This important question speaks to the audiences we'll need to reach.

Effective communications relies on our ability to understand our target audiences and develop messages that appeal to those audiences.

But, in your case, you're attempting something much larger. While there are certain high-value audiences who are critical to ignite the fire, to keep it burning brightly, we will need to reach nearly everyone in some way. And we will need to do so in ways that inspire them to take action.

As such, we will execute on a top down/bottom up approach that we identify, and ultimately engage our key audiences and ambassadors.

Our initial assessment identified a range of audiences that we aim to connect with to effectively promote the benefits of Catalytic Thinking. We have grouped those audiences in a way that we believe provides the best opportunity to quickly gain momentum and help Creating the Future achieve its initial goals of getting buy-in that will lead to necessary funding to move the movement forward.

But we also recognize that we cannot stop there -- and that in order to achieve our ultimate goal, we must continually expand the circle and find ways to reach larger, more diverse audiences.

Our audience groups include:

### **Tier 1 -- The gatekeepers to funding and influence**

In our first phase of outreach, our ultimate goal is to capture the attention and support of those who can accelerate awareness and adoption of Catalytic Thinking through their influence and potential to generate funding to support a successful and sustainable campaign. Within this group are:

- Foundation executives and program officers
- Board members at foundations, nonprofits and companies
- Philanthropists and donors
- Business leaders

We envision targeted outreach to this group to begin immediately and continue throughout the engagement.

## **Tier 2 -- The amplifiers and advocates for our message**

This is the audience that we will engage to help tell the Catalytic Thinking story, to build increased awareness and credibility, and specifically, to assure that the key audiences identified in Tier 1 clearly understand the value in making both influential and financial investments in forwarding catalytic thinking. As such, these audiences will be prioritized from the very beginning.

Within this group are:

- Journalists
- Influencers
- Academics/researchers
- Key supporters -- including your board members and existing ambassadors

We envision targeted outreach to this group to begin immediately and continue throughout the engagement.

## **Tier 3 -- Key beneficiaries of Catalytic Thinking**

While the universe of those who can benefit from Catalytic Thinking is infinite, there are key audiences for which it can provide transformative results while serving to accelerate greater awareness and adoption of the approach.

Within this group are:

- Nonprofit and advocacy professionals
- Community and grassroots organizers
- Business leaders
- Trade groups -- serving philanthropy/nonprofits as well as business groups such as chambers of commerce
- Politicians and government officials
- Hospitals and healthcare leaders
- Higher education leaders and academics

We expect some of our initial outreach will reach members of this group. But this is not our first priority, at least at first. As we help you secure funding, we expect to take more deliberate steps to engage folks in this group.

## **Tier 4 -- The doers**

As Catalytic Thinking grows into a movement, we'll need to move far beyond those who are in positions of authority and power. It will need grassroots adoption -- and it will need individuals from all walks of life who are using it and telling their friends, families, and networks about its power.



A number of individuals are already doing this -- bringing about change both large and small in their daily work and lives.

As this work unfolds, these doers will become critical voices -- and reaching them and inspiring them to become Catalytic Thinkers will be the ultimate measure of our success. Within this group are:

- Retirees
- Teachers
- Consultants
- Social activists
- Socially minded celebrities
- Students
- Parents and families

Ultimately, though, we don't want to limit who we reach. As time moves forward, we expect to be elevating stories of everyday people who are doing extraordinary things via Catalytic Thinking -- and to be giving them the tools to become evangelists who share their own success stories with others.

Importantly, aligning with Creating the Future's values, in every case we will be intentional and mindful to focus on and communicate with individuals and organizations in BIPOC and other currently marginalized communities (people with disabilities, LGTBQIA people, young adults and older adults, etc.).

## What resources do we have -- and what do we need to achieve this outcome?

Now that we've had a chance to identify what's possible and spell out where we're going, it's time to assess our resources -- and how we'll use them.

Over the past year or so, we have had the opportunity to take a deep dive into Catalytic Thinking to assess your current state, identify your strengths, and uncover some areas where we need to do some more work. Here's what we've found:

### **Strengths (resources in hand):**

- **Committed founders** -- In Hildy and Dimitri, you have a passionate and engaging pair of founders who have built significant trust and equity and are prime ambassadors and evangelists for Catalytic Thinking.
- **A powerful board** -- You've amassed a small but incredibly impressive board with strong networks and platforms. In Angela Eikenberry, Justin Pollock, Vu Le, and Karl Wilding, you have individuals with credibility and impressive networks who can add legitimacy and open doors.
- **An engaged and robust email list** -- You've built further trust with your email list, which measures nearly 4,000 addresses and has extraordinary engagement, despite the fact that you are somewhat inconsistent with your use of it. The open rate for messages sent to your list YTD is 44 percent, which is an incredibly high percentage for a list of this size. This suggests that you already have a strong and powerful group of supporters who not only listen to you, but are willing to take action, if prompted.
- **An established web presence** -- In addition to your email list, creatingthefuture.org draws roughly 1,700 users per month -- many of whom are coming to engage directly with your blog. Your analytics shows us that people respond to the aspirational content and stories that will likely be central to activating engagement.
- **A killer tagline** -- "Change the Questions. Change the World!" is simple, easy-to-understand and powerful. It offers us a fantastic rallying cry to use in branding, in social media conversations, and in our storytelling.
- **Raw materials for case studies** -- In our interviews, we discovered that you have an untapped and highly powerful resource: success stories. In our conversations, we've found stories of health organizations in Canada, education alliances in the United States, organizations helping the underserved in Maryland, and many others who have employed Catalytic Thinking to achieve successes large and small.

- **The light bulb factor** -- Once people understand what Catalytic Thinking is and how it works, they start to see it in unexpected places (often being used by people who aren't even aware they are using it). Peter, for instance, recently interviewed a program officer at a health foundation in North Carolina who has designed a powerful, wraparound health-care system for nearly 7,000 uninsured people in her community. As he dug deeper into how she created it, it was clear that she was using a form of Catalytic Thinking to make it happen. These connections are everywhere. We just need to make the light bulb go off in people's heads to help them recognize them more clearly.
- **Media credibility** -- Through the publication of Hildy Gottlieb's July 24 piece in Stanford Social Innovation Review, we have a current and highly relevant media placement that we can leverage both to motivate and engage supporters and to use in other media outreach. This piece comes on top of a long history of media engagement by a number of Creating the Future principals, speeches, and Ted talks.
- **Initial funding** -- Your initial funding commitment -- and a modest initial budget of \$2,000 per month -- gives us some runway to get started and create some of the key initial building blocks for success.
- **A historic opportunity** -- As noted in our introduction, our world (and especially our nation) is at an inflection point and is craving new approaches for solving persistent problems. Now is the right time to introduce this concept in a big way.
- **A guiding set of values** -- Creating the Future's values will prove to be a vital resource in guiding our work, and assuring we remain true to the mission. The values are as follows.
  1. We value thinking and actions that lead to visionary, systemic change over reactive, incremental thinking and results
  2. We value learning, experimenting, risk-taking, inquiry, and sense-making, and broadly sharing what we learn in those endeavors
  3. We value listening to understand, building trust and relationships, over speed and expediency
  4. We value decision-making by the people affected by any decision
  5. We value centering the voices and agency of those who are most impacted by injustices
  6. We value healthy people and our planet, recognizing the local and the global are intertwined
  7. We value building upon social movements and other efforts that have successfully created systemic change, seeing those efforts as strengths upon which we can build
  8. We value the collaborative work of many and the contributions of individuals to those efforts

9. We value sharing via Collective Enoughness, celebrating that together we have everything we need

### **Conditions for Success**

The strengths outlined above provide us with some incredible raw materials to build upon. Beyond that our analysis has also identified several areas of opportunity. We are confident that a strong, focused communications strategy will allow us to capture these opportunities.

#### **Condition for Success: An engaging and consistent social media presence.**

You have an opportunity to create consistency and discipline around social media. This requires determining the most-high value social media channels to promote the Catalytic Thinking message and then executing on a plan that supports scheduled posting of fresh, engaging content. Initially, priority will be placed on consistency of posting and quality of content, as opposed to high volume posting.

#### **Condition for Success: Clear distinctive branding.**

There is an opportunity to clarify the branding of this effort early in the process to assure consistency of message and limit confusion in the market. A determination should be made as to the core branding, with our initial recommendation being the focus on Catalytic Thinking as it is the vehicle necessary to create the future. One possible positioning would be to highlight how Catalytic Thinking offers a path to creating the future.

#### **Condition for Success: Consistent, compelling messaging.**

One of the initial activities we will embark on is to develop the key messaging framework that will serve as the foundation for how we talk and write about Catalytic Thinking moving forward. This certainly isn't aimed at expanding the conversation, but rather to assure that the basic tenets of Catalytic Thinking are consistently expressed by all advocates engaged in the process.

#### **Condition for Success: Concrete, real life examples of Catalytic Thinking in action.**

The key tenets of the Catalytic Thinking concept are critical and it is essential they are conveyed with consistency and clarity. To effectively achieve that requires we draw steadily from a proven staple of good engaging journalism: **Show don't tell**. To that end, there is a clear opportunity to capture and convey concrete real-life stories of Catalytic Thinking in action and the results and benefits it yielded. We expect to identify stories that highlight diverse people and experiences in order to engage those from all backgrounds and ensure that our storytelling reflects our values. This promises greater audience engagement that captures the imagination, stirs the heart, and inspires people to action.

#### **Condition for Success: Bringing people together.**

The deep partisan and ideological divides that exist today have created an environment in which ideas and concepts are too often pigeonholed into one camp or another, limiting the opportunity to reach key potential audiences and furthering the status quo we aim to break. Presenting

Catalytic Thinking in a non-ideological and bipartisan framework assures the best opportunity to connect with a range of audiences, regardless of the biases or beliefs they may bring to the process. This can be achieved in part through emphasis on demonstrating the real-life practical applications of Catalytic Thinking as well as seeking to highlight stories in which it addressed or resolved challenges across different sectors.

**Condition for Success: Promoting powerful positive stories that garner media attention.**

Media service Cision recently called the current environment “the noisiest news cycle ever.” Indeed with a crush of national news breaking daily and media outlets cutting staff, we are operating in a competitive media environment. We remain confident that there will always be a home for a good story. Yet it is essential that we draw on experience and expertise to present the most compelling media pitches possible. This will require leveraging our best stories to quickly demonstrate the value and newsworthiness of Catalytic Thinking.

**Condition for Success: Inspired supporters become doers.**

Anyone ever involved in any type of movement knows that vital importance of going beyond simply gaining a following to successfully moving those followers to action. Given the right tools and coaching, we believe that over time we can help create a legion of active advocates who are not only engaged in Catalytic Thinking but are also ready and willing to share their stories and help introduce others to the approach.

**Condition for Success: Strong and sustainable funding.**

Adequate funding is essential to support a sustained media relations outreach campaign. Obviously, the Covid-19 crisis has increased competition for funding which may present hurdles that did not exist previously. The creation, promotion, and successful early execution of this strategy aims to help capture the interest of potential investors/donors to help secure the necessary funding to be able to support a sustained and increasingly robust campaign.

**Condition for Success: Compelling, distinctive visuals and design.**

A deeper assessment of branding and visual presentation is necessary to assure consistency of brand and dynamic presentation. The opportunity exists to create dynamic and distinctive visual branding that would be supported by an updated style guide to assure consistency.

## What can we do to help create those conditions?

Now that we've answered the above questions, let's bring it home with a series of actions that will allow us to leverage our resources, overcome our challenges and barriers, mobilize our key audiences, and create the conditions necessary to reach our highest possible outcome.

We're proposing that we approach this work in three phases, which are outlined below. While each phase will include some distinct activities, they are all designed to work together and build on each other.

Additionally, to help overcome some of the challenges and obstacles outlined above and leverage your existing strengths, each tactic will be based on the following high-level principles:

- **Show, don't tell** -- People need to easily understand in concrete and actionable ways what Catalytic Thinking is, how it is activated through compelling questions, and most importantly, see real-life examples of how it works. These examples must underscore how people and organizations navigated challenges large and small and achieved results that not only conquered those challenges, but forever altered the way in which those involved approach their work and view the world. To do this, real, concrete stories are at the heart of each activity.
- **The message belongs to everyone** -- To build a movement, we need to create conditions that make it easy for people to not only understand Catalytic Thinking, but also to give them the tools to take action and the explicit permission to make the message their own. As much as possible, we should include clear calls to action that inspire people to apply what they're seeing or hearing in their own lives and work -- and delight them in such a way that they become ambassadors for the movement. Our communications need to be designed to empower bottom-up sharing.
- **Consistency matters** -- While we are gladly turning over the keys to Catalytic Thinking to the public, we must be disciplined and consistent in our own messaging. We need to reach a point where people are not only expecting to hear from us regularly -- but they are looking forward to it because we're providing them with actionable stories and information that will help them achieve change.
- **Listening is critical** -- While we must commit to regular communications, we must also be willing to course correct when the data -- or individuals -- show us that we're veering off course or missing our target. As we go, we'll find that some types of stories and messages resonate beyond our expectations and others fall flat. We might also discover that we gain traction in an unexpected place (ie. an emerging social network) or that a particular tactic is no longer worth pursuing.

With these core principles in mind, here is the three-phase plan we propose for creating our conditions for success for the Catalytic Thinking movement:

### **Phase I – October-November**

The first phase began immediately after you weighed in on the initial draft of this document.

During this phase, we embarked on the following activities:

- **Establishing buy-in from your key stakeholders** -- This included incorporating feedback from Hildy and Dimitri. It will also include discussion with the board, to ensure this strategy reflects Creating the Future's values.
- **Finalizing our foundational messaging** -- Turn Two has created a draft document outlining your foundational messaging, which is attached to this strategy. We expect this document to evolve in the months ahead as we test these messages with our key audiences and see what resonates.
- **Finalizing our initial media target list** -- As you'll see below (and as we've discussed previously), earned media is a key component of this effort. To ensure that we hit the ground running with those efforts, we have also developed a list of initial media targets.

### **Phase II -- December 2020-February 2021**

The second phase will center on building some of our foundational communications elements while concentrating on helping you achieve a critical goal -- securing the funding necessary to formally launch efforts to create systems change via Catalytic Thinking.

As a result, we recommend a series of activities that will put Catalytic Thinking in front of the Tier I audiences outlined earlier in this document, while also starting to develop the steady and consistent messaging that will begin empowering your existing network to start spreading the word.

These activities would commence once we complete the three activities outlined in Phase I (ideally by November 1, 2020).

Recommended activities would include:

- **Media outreach** -- During this initial phase, we'll concentrate on building relationships and pursuing placements in outlets that connect with our Tier 1 audiences. This would include the philanthropy/nonprofit trade press (eg. The Chronicle of Philanthropy, Nonprofit Quarterly, etc.) business outlets that focus on social good (Fast Company, Vox, etc.) and select mainstream outlets, as well as outlets that focus on audiences in

marginalized communities (BIPOC, LGBTQIA, etc.)

- **Biweekly email communications** -- Turn Two will work with the Creating the Future team to develop and execute on sending a bi-weekly newsletter devoted to Catalytic Thinking to the Creating the Future community. The content will focus on storytelling and calls to action that inspire readers to use Catalytic Thinking and share their stories.
- **Regular blog posts** -- Repurpose the content from the email newsletter into short, impactful blog posts that can be accessed and shared by those outside of your existing network. This will help introduce more people to the concept, inspire sharing and help expand the email list.
- **Social media** -- We recommend further extending the content developed for the email newsletter and blog into regular social-media posts that not only call attention to the content but include calls to action that inspire people to incorporate Catalytic Thinking into their lives and work and share what they experience with others. We expect initial efforts to focus on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn -- with expanded efforts (and more networks) to follow during the next phase.
- **Empowering your board and key supporters** -- We see value in working with some of your influential stakeholders to help them become ambassadors for the concept through their own writing, social media, and speaking.
- **Creating a pitch deck** -- As you meet with potential funders, we see tremendous value in having a story-based pitch deck to share that not only explains Catalytic Thinking, but showcases some of the foundational stories we'd develop in our early communications.
- **Influencer outreach** -- While traditional media is a crucial piece of this initial effort, we recommend tapping into the robust network of influencers in philanthropy and academia to pursue opportunities to have Hildy and others discuss Catalytic Thinking through webinars, guest blog posts, and podcast appearances. We will also work with you to get you in front of potential funders through connections at organizations such as the National Center for Family Philanthropy, the Council on Foundations, and other infrastructure groups, focusing particularly on groups that support philanthropy and capacity building in marginalized communities (BIPOC, LGBTQIA, etc.). This will create additional exposure to funders and potential amplifiers.
- **Develop a messaging toolkit** -- To help facilitate grassroots/bottom-up storytelling, we also recommend developing a storytelling and social media toolkit that provides sample messaging and images to help ambassadors spread the word.

### **Phase III - March-December 2021**

The third phase would begin once you secure the funding that will allow us to create the conditions necessary for the transformative work that lies ahead.



We expect it would include additional effort and time in many of the activities outlined above, including souped-up media and influencer outreach to connect with more of the Tier 2-4 audiences, as well as more effort placed around social media and storytelling.

Recommended additional activities would include:

- **Improvements and updates to the Creating the Future website** -- We would invest effort in updating key sections of the Creating the Future website to more strongly emphasize Catalytic Thinking and how it connects to Creating the Future's work. Alternatively, we should discuss whether and when to decouple the two -- given the brand confusion issues outlined earlier.
- **Paid social media to supplement storytelling** -- In addition to putting increased resources behind social media messaging (including putting some additional muscle into Instagram, YouTube and emerging networks, when necessary), we would also consider some paid campaigns to boost awareness and pickup -- all of which would center around driving action and sharing.
- **Video and podcasts** -- We recommend adding regular video and audio storytelling to the content mix in order to reach more audiences and provide more shareable content for social media.
- **Images and design** -- Strong, powerful images -- and a refreshed visual presence -- are ultimately necessary if we are to fully capture the imagination of mainstream audiences and inspire people to share and take action. As a result, we would enlist resources to develop shareable and engaging visual content for use on social networks, on the website, and in other channels.

## How will we know if this is working?

The true measure of success will be when catalytic thinking is being employed to *bring about change without us even knowing it*.

Together, this is the wildfire we hope to ignite.

# Foundational Messages

Below are some of the foundational messages that we should be incorporating into communications about Creating the Future and Catalytic Thinking:

- To change the world, we have to change our systems.
- Many of the current theories for systems change are ineffective and do not go far enough to bring out the best in the people in those systems.
- If we truly want to change systems, we must start with changing the questions we ask. If we can change our questions, we can change the world.
- Catalytic Thinking provides a framework for asking powerful questions that help people to re-think their assumptions and beliefs to provide a new approach to systems change.
- Through the Catalytic Thinking framework, we can create a more equitable, healthy world by focusing on what's possible, rather than our limits. Current systems change strategy focuses on solving a problem, identifying competitors and challenges, and focusing on resources. Catalytic Thinking instead focuses on envisioning the highest possible outcome, identifying others who care about that outcome as partners (vs. competitors), sharing resources to achieve those outcomes.
- Catalytic Thinking can apply to both massive social movements and individual actions. It can show us how to create more equitable communities, provide health care to everyone, or address climate change. It can also help our children do their homework, eat healthier, or adopt new habits.
- Catalytic Thinking was developed by Creating the Future, a collection of people around the world who are working to change systems and improve the world.
- Catalytic Thinking is a movement. While it started as the work of one group, it will help achieve systems change when it is no longer identified with any one person or organization.
- Promoting Catalytic Thinking isn't about promoting a particular product or program, or raising money. It's about inspiring people to adopt a new way of thinking -- and to put that thinking into action.

# Foundational Narrative Messaging:

The following is a first draft towards capturing the focus of Creating the Future in succinct narrative form.

The vast majority of humans are wired to want a better world; however we are held prisoner by the systems we have created. Systems survive on the status quo – and rely on people assuming their only option is to work within the system.

This creates an environment in which real change is incremental and fleeting at best. The same problems and barriers remain – the system sees to it.

These systems thrive on uncertainty, and tend to become even more entrenched in times of elevated turmoil and divisiveness – times like right now.

But contrary to conventional wisdom, *you can beat the system.*

Catalytic Thinking offers the keys – guiding you to ask questions that lead to more effective answers.

You *can* rewrite the future – one powerful question at a time.

Through practice, Catalytic Thinking fosters a shift in mindset – from focusing on simply reacting to problems to envisioning new possibilities and potential.

Catalytic Thinking lays bare the assumptions and beliefs that subconsciously guide decisions and actions that maintain the status quo. That is why Catalytic thinking can change any system - from your family dynamics to some of society's most powerful and entrenched organizations.

The beauty of this is that everyone -- regardless of their station within the system -- has the power to apply Catalytic Thinking to initiate system change by using Catalytic Thinking to change the questions they ask in their day-to-day lives. It works from the top down, bottom up, and everywhere in between.

Catalytic Thinking empowers those who have felt powerless by instilling the hope and possibility that systems can change. And, over time, it compels those in power to see new potential and possibilities that can benefit all – themselves included.

This framework is the catalyst for real and lasting systemic change, opening the door to creating the future, not being a prisoner of it.

Albert Einstein famously defined insanity as “doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.” He was actually defining systems. Catalytic Thinking offers a walkable path to stop that insanity – one question – and one system – at a time.

## Primary Media Targets

We've identified the following list of priority media outlets and influencers that we will focus on reaching during our first phase of. We expect this list to grow and evolve along with our work. It's worth noting that while many national outlets that cover philanthropy and business do not specifically focus on marginalized communities exclusively, we will work to identify and pitch stories and voices that speak to and connect with those in BIPOC, LGBTQ, and other communities.

We believe that by targeting our efforts on reaching these outlets during the next three months, we will help you achieve your initial goal of raising critical funding to support this effort.

These initial priority outlets will include but not be limited to:

### Philanthropy Trade

The Chronicle of Philanthropy  
Nonprofit Quarterly  
Stanford Social Innovation Review  
Philanthropy News Digest  
Alliance Magazine  
Nonprofit PRO (ghost-written piece)  
ARNOVA News  
Blue Avocado  
Community-Centric Fundraising

### Thought leaders/Influencers

Marc Gunther  
Lucy Bernholz  
Anand Giridharadas  
Edgar Villanueva  
Kerrien Suarez  
Beth Kanter  
Derrick Feldmann  
Joe Waters (Selfish Giving)  
National Center for Family Philanthropy  
Council on Foundations  
Association for Black Foundation Executives  
Hispanics in Philanthropy  
AAPIP  
Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy  
Fundors for LGBTQ Issues  
Native Americans in Philanthropy  
Young Nonprofit Professionals Network  
Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity  
Women's Funding Network

Business

The Economist

Harvard Business Review

Fast Company

Vox

Forbes

MarketWatch

Vox

Mashable

Bloomberg Urban Business Report

National mass media

The New York Times

The Wall Street Journal

USA Today

NPR

AARP The Magazine

Psychology Today