

PITCH ANYTHING

LEARNING MODULE: FRAME CONTROL



**PITCH
ANYTHING**
OREN D. KLAFF

FRAME CONTROL 101: OWN THE FRAME, WIN THE GAME

A primer on social dynamics

THE BIG IDEA: FRAME CONTROL

Every meeting, pitch and presentation is a social encounter that is governed by frames. Frames are a point-of-view, a perspective - a position.

Frames don't combine or mix - they collide.

The strongest frame always wins.

WHAT ARE FRAMES?

by Oren Klaff

Imagine for a moment there is some kind of powerful energy field that surrounds all of us, transmitting from the depths of our subconscious.

This invisible energy field is genetically designed to protect and defend our conscious minds from sudden intrusion by ideas and perspectives that are not our own.

When this energy field is overwhelmed, it collapses and our mental defenses *fail*. When that happens we become subject to another person's ideas, desires and commands, and then that person can impose his will on us.

No one really knows if there are human energy fields or not. But for me, and perhaps you as well, it's the best way to think about the mental structures that shape the way we see the world. **I call these frames.**

What's a frame?

Imagine looking at the world through a window frame that you hold in your hands, and as you move the frame around the sounds and images that you encounter are interpreted by your brain in ways that are consistent with how you think, your intelligence, your values, your ethics. *This is your point of view.*

Your frame is your point of view. Another person can look at the same thing you are through his frame and what he sees may differ by a little or a lot. The common label people give this is perspective. *I perceive and interpret things differently than you do, even when we're looking at the same thing.*

Why do frames matter? There are millions of people in the business world and each brings a unique perspective, *a frame*, to every social encounter.

When two or more people come together to communicate in a business setting, their frames square off, then come into contact, but not in a cooperative or friendly way. **Frames are extremely competitive.**

Remember, they're rooted in survival instincts and each frame seeks to sustain dominance, so when frames come together, the first thing they do is collide. This isn't a friendly competition, it's a death match. **Frames don't merge.** They don't blend and they don't intermingle. When they collide, the stronger frame absorbs the weaker.

When your frame and another frame come together, they collide and the stronger frame absorbs the weaker. Only one frame will dominate after the exchange and the other frames will be subordinate to the winner. ***This is what happens below the surface of every business meeting you attend, every sales call you make, and every person-to-person business communication you have.***



The moment your frame makes contact with the frame of the person you're calling on or the person you're meeting with, these frames clash, battle, and grapple for dominance.

If your frame wins, you will enjoy frame control where your ideas are accepted and followed by others. If your frame loses, you will be at the mercy of the other person, your customer, or whoever you're trying to do a deal with, and your success will then depend only on their charity.

Understanding how to harness and apply the power of frames is one of the most important things you will ever learn.

In summary: a frame is the instrument you use to package your power, authority, strength, and status. Everyone uses frames, whether they realize it or not, and every social encounter brings frames together.

Frames don't exist in the same place and the same time for very long. They crash into each other and one or the other gains control. Only one frame survives. The others break and are absorbed. **Stronger frames always absorb weaker frames.**

A frame is the instrument you use to package your power, authority, strength, information, and status.

- 1** Everyone uses frames whether they realize it or not.
- 2** Every social encounter brings different frames together.
- 3** Frames do not coexist in the same time and place for long. They crash into each other, and one or the other gains control.
- 4** Only one frame survives. The others break and are absorbed. Stronger frames always absorb weaker frames.
- 5** The winning frame governs the social interaction. It is said to have frame control.

**PITCH
MASTERY**

a PITCHANYTHING production

[FRAME CONTROL] FRAMES YOU ALREADY KNOW ABOUT

- **TIME FRAME**
 - **POWER FRAME**
 - **MORAL AUTHORITY FRAME**
 - **ANALYST FRAME**
-

ALPHA STATUS

Frame Control is often seen as seeking out the Alpha status in a social group.

In the social groups of animals, the status of the alpha is often achieved by means of superior physical prowess. The individual in the alpha position usually changes when another challenges it to a fight (in some species to the death) and wins. Consequently, alphas may have to fight individuals in their own group several times to maintain their position throughout their lifetimes. In species where the fight is to the death, *alphas rarely reach old age*.

But we are not animals. As humans, have the benefit of working with language, an complex mental structures, and we have developed an excellent understanding of social dynamics. We know how to frame ideas, and control perspective, and how to become the Alpha without fighting or physical confrontation.

For this reason, in social situations, the Alpha position should never be taken and held through aggression, dominance or force.

Humans or animals who rely on brute force and strength to survive are likely to be removed from the gene pool quickly, because this way of life requires far too much energy.

FRAMES, FRAMING AND REFRAMING

Frames are cognitive shortcuts that people use to help make sense of complex information. Frames help us to interpret the world around us and represent that world to others.

Frames help us organize complex phenomena into coherent, understandable categories. When we label a phenomenon, we give meaning to some aspects of what is observed, while discounting other aspects because they appear irrelevant or counter-intuitive.

Thus, frames provide meaning through selective simplification, by filtering people's perceptions and providing them with a field of vision for a problem.

The concept of frames has been developed as a tool for analysis in various fields, including psychology and sociology, business management, artificial intelligence, decision-making, negotiation, and environmental conflict management. Relevant to understanding intractable conflict are definitions given by such scholars as Minsky, Tannen, and Gray, for whom frames are **“cognitive structures held in memory and used to guide interpretation of new experience.”** Furthermore, “parties rely on these mental structures to interpret or make sense of ongoing events.” Frames are also defined as “collections of perceptions and thoughts that people use to define a situation, organize information, and determine what is important and what is not.”

We create frames to name a situation in which we find ourselves, to identify and interpret specific aspects that seem key to us in understanding the situation, and to communicate that interpretation to others.

Power frames: Because intractable conflicts are often imbedded in struggles to alter existing institutions or decision-making procedures, disputants' conceptions of power and social control play a significant role in conflict dynamics. Power frames help the disputant determine not only which forms of power are legitimate (e.g., governmental, legal, civil disobedience) but also the forms of power that are likely to advance one's own position (e.g., authority, resources, expertise, coalition-building, threat, voice).

THE SCIENCE OF TRUST

People are wired for trust. They have the “moral instinct”. It is called oxytocin, a neurotransmitter located in the hypothalamus that rewards acts of trust and social attachment.

According to the evolutionary anthropologist, Robin Dunbar, the human brain evolved to accommodate the complexities of social interaction and that it has reached an upper limit of 150 to 200 individuals that it can keep track of. **Beyond that limit, the human brain can't compute all the debits and credits, obligations, and protocols of social exchanges, and as a result confusion, distrust, and hierarchy can set in.**

Contrary to the expectations of free market economics, evolution has wired people to feel better when they trust and help one another. In one sense trust is its own reward. But in another sense, public trust is the way a group – a species – ensures its survival. Trust in this sense creates more effective collective and coordinated action, not only by reducing transaction costs, but selecting for those joint behaviors that exploit all the resources of a group.

So strong is the survival premium of people NOT endlessly competing with one another, (though competition certainly has its place,) that human beings have evolved “mirror neurons” that enable them to understand what others are experiencing, in short, to empathize with one another. Although people have a natural propensity to trust, trust is not necessarily ‘blind’. It requires transparency, accountability and credible ways of signaling success. Even though evolution has recognized the importance of trust by encoding it in many neural mechanisms, there still have to be certain

types of “social scaffolding” in order for these innate social mechanisms of trust to function.

According to evolutionary psychologists and biologists, the human brain evolved many highly sophisticated social exchange algorithms for interpreting, signaling, and coordinating human interactions. It turns out that human beings evolved as a social species – not as atomic individuals, and hence, evolved joint innate mechanisms for shared behaviors and experiences.

The reason that markets work is not because of any individual capacity for reflecting on rational self interest, (“lucid greed”) but rather because of biologically encoded, preconscious mechanisms for joint social exchange and coordination.

THE ATTENTION PROBLEM

THE SIX COMMON PITCHING FLAWS ...

1

TOO MUCH
DETAIL- TOO
SOON TOO
FAST

2

TOO
VAGUE/
FUZZY

3

NO FRAME
TO PROVIDE
CONTEXT

4

TOO
SIMILAR
TO OTHER
PITCHES

5

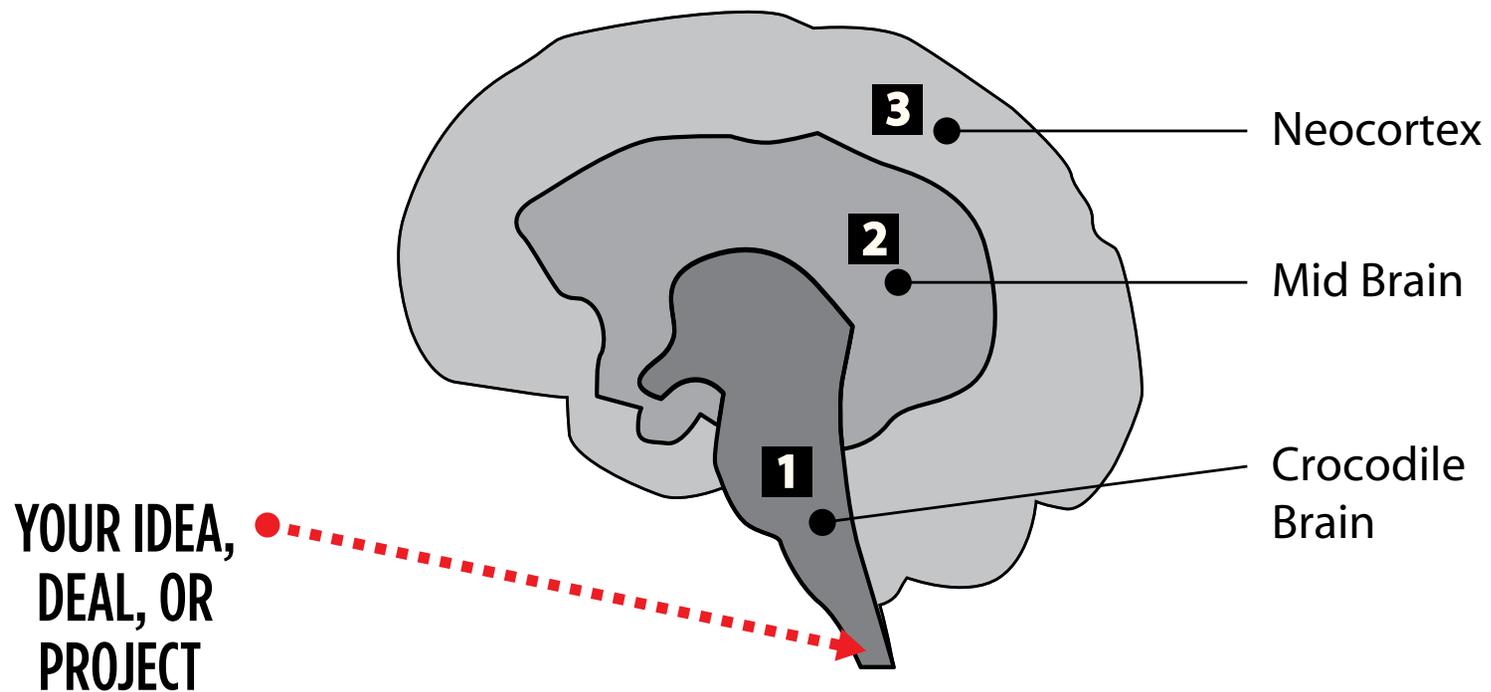
YOU SEEM
NEEDY

6

GOING TOO
SLOW

INTRODUCING THE CROCODILE BRAIN

At the crucial moment, when it is most important to be convincing, nine out of ten times we are not. Our most important messages have a surprisingly low chance of getting through.



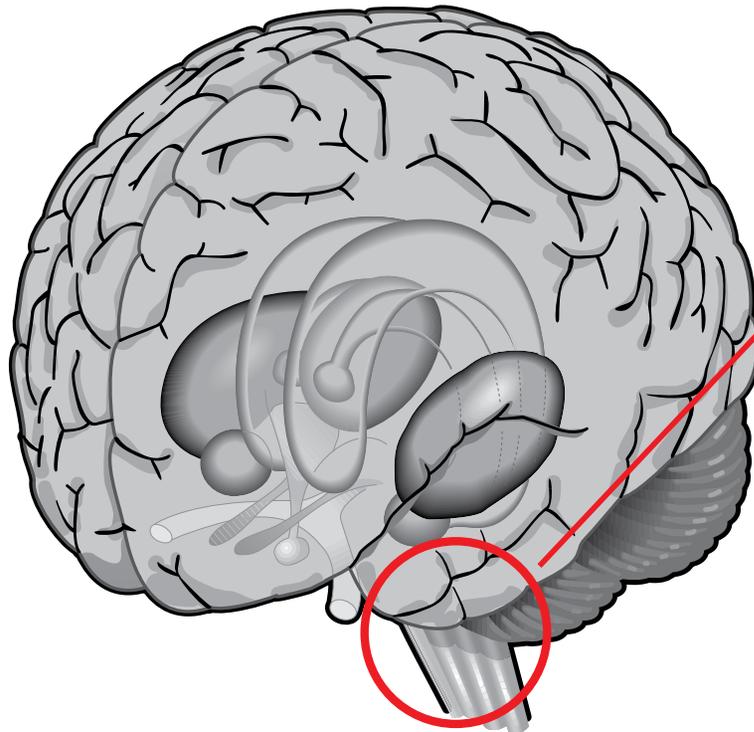
The Croc Brain is Picky and a Cognitive Miser Whose Primary Instinct is Survival

Going to ignore you if possible- and won't do a lot of work

**NOT SAFE?
RUN.**

**COMPLICATED?
RADICALLY SUMMARIZE.**

**BORING?
IGNORE IT.**

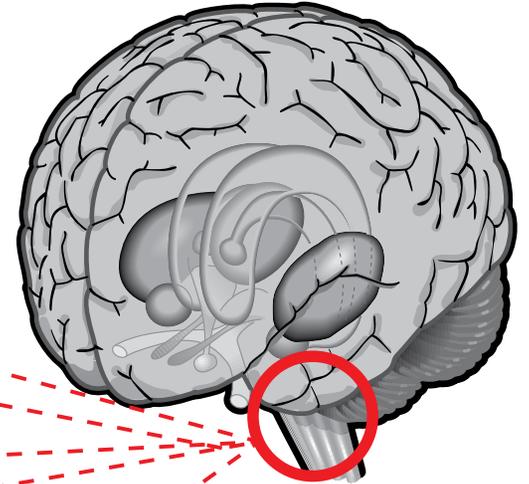


Always fearful and suspicious, the Croc brain is making decision to keep you away from danger.

THE CROC BRAIN

HOW THE CROC BRAIN FILTERS INFORMATION

- **FAST**
- **NOVEL**
- **CONCRETE**
- **VISUAL**
- **HIGH CONTRAST**



YOU CAN'T POSSIBLY PAY ATTENTION TO EVERYTHING

Frames are mental views you use that simplify complex issues. Frames contain some information and purposely exclude other information. by Oren Klaff

There is no firm agreement among neurologists as to the number of senses we have because there isn't even an agreement as to what constitutes a sense. To get a handle on how much information we absorb, it's important to know where information comes from.

Of course, there are the traditional five senses. But humans have six more senses that include: pain; balance; joint motion and acceleration; the sense of time; temperature differences; and possibly a 12th sense called weak magnetoception, or the sense of direction.

Then there are six more senses called interoceptive senses, which means they detect important things that are happening inside your body, most of which are not party topics. They include things like bladder sensors which tell you when you need to use the restroom. What's going on here is that we have eighteen senses working full time to orient ourselves in the world and you don't have to be a scientist to figure out. That's too much information to process without some kind of filters. In fact, the brain doesn't have nearly enough power to deal with all the information it receives from all these senses and sources. So it should come as no surprise, yes, there are filters. The brain has evolved to use shortcuts. And these shortcuts are called frames.

You can't possibly pay attention to everything. That would overload your mind and blow your circuits. Blown circuits? That's not just a metaphor. That's a real thing that can happen, and it's probably a good way to think about what's happening when you're getting too much information. Especially when that information is important – like it might be in a war zone, or a busy conference lobby or on the streets of a large and unfamiliar city.

You know you need to pay attention to the information.

In electronics a fuse (from the Latin “fusus” meaning to melt) is a type of sacrificial overcurrent protection device. It's essential component is a metal wire or strip that melts when too much current flows, which interrupts the circuit in which it is connected. The “sacrificial overcurrent protector” in your brain are the interneurons. If you start taking on too much information, you start blowing these fuses pretty fast.

Overcurrent protection devices are essential in electrical systems to limit property damage. In the brain, the overcurrent protection is equally as important.

But the frames are another method the brain uses to keep control over the massive flow of information coming in from the senses. In the physical world, frames do two things that help you survive -- or at least get through the day. First, frames give you the ability to focus on the most important situation around you – and not on anything else. There is so much more to frames you need to know. But this is a good starting point. Let's say you walk into a restaurant, your frame is the whole place. What that means is, you're absorbing information from everything that is happening. Waiters bustling. Dozens of tables of diners. Kitchen doors slamming open and shut. A husband and wife arguing. A table with three kids throwing food. Fifty simultaneous conversations. That's a huge visual frame and a massive auditory frame.

This scenario is a good example of too much information coming into your senses too quickly. You've experienced this before – we all have. It's hard to pick your friend out of the scene. Eventually you see your friend and join her at the table, and now your brain begins automatically shrink the frame size. After just a minute, your frame is downsampled to contain just you, your friend and the events at your table. Your frame now has new boundaries and you can manage the amount of information. All the other ruckus and commotion doesn't grab your attention anymore. Which leads us to the single most important feature of frames: once a frame is set, new information ounces off of it without bothering you. In fact, all frames have a strength, and in every social interaction, the stronger frame overrides the weaker one, and wins.

There's a technical term for this, called *belief perseverance*. It means that after information is framed, and that frame has meaning to a person -- it becomes strong.

An easy way to think about this is that is initial judgments are hard to shake. You already know a lot about frames. You know that projects have time frames, pictures have frames around them and houses are "framed up." So framing refers to how things are constrained. And how things are packaged. For example a red frame on a painting calls attention to the red in it. But let's define frames more precisely.

Frames are mental views you use that simplify complex issues. Frames contain some information and purposely exclude other information. That's what creates a viewpoint. A frame is the way an argument, issue or set of facts are presented.

And the way issues are framed, dramatically changes the meaning. Frames are literally a way other people control what information you see, and how you interpret an issue.

Dr. Itier Dror, teaches at University College London, is a man who studies framing. His entire life is dedicated to framing effects.

And he's worried about something much more serious than just a business pitch. In his publications, Dror wonders aloud, is framing just an academic issue? Are these just academic theories about the human mind and brain? He says, "Explain that to Brandon Mayfield an Oregon attorney who was arrested for killing 191 people in the March 2004 Madrid train bombings."

Brandon Mayfield was literally framed. Based on a latent fingerprint left at the crime scene by the real Madrid bomber, Ouhane Daoud, FBI fingerprint experts positively identified Mayfield as the bomber. What happened? Brandon Mayfield had once represented a terrorism defendant in a Portland, Oregon courtroom. So when the automated finger print database flagged him as a match to the Madrid fingerprint, he already had a "terroris" frame around him, and the FBI moved in. Fingerprint identification expert Allan John Bayle drily observes: "There were many discrepancies. A competent expert should have seen all the discrepancies." The FBI's contention that the misidentification of Mayfield occurred as a result of problems with the quality of the digital image has been questioned and criticized by nearly all of the forensic fingerprint experts who have reviewed the case. At the end of the ordeal, the FBI acknowledged the error and partly attributed it framing effects.

As information is received, it is processed; for example, we try to identify and make sense of it, interpret and assign it meaning, compare it to information already stored in memory, and so on.

One of the fundamental and established cornerstones of human cognition is that people do not passively receive and encode information.

The mind is not a camera.

