

Ethical Influencer Quick Start Guide

A Framework for Persuasive and Transparent Library Outreach

Identify Your Shortcut

When designing your next campaign, choose a psychological “short-cut” that aligns with your goal.

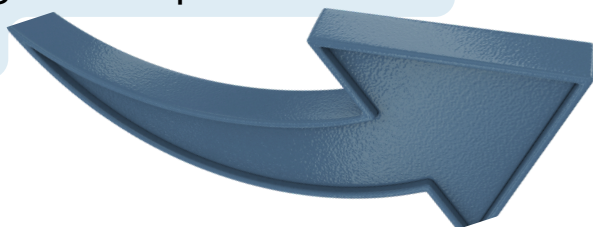
Radical Transparency

Turn your marketing into a literacy tool for information consumption. Include a “How This Works” Element in your campaign.

How this works:

- **The "Meta" Caption:** On social media, add captions to explain how you are using a specific strategy to capture attention "Notice how using bright colors draws your attention?"
- **The Annotate Poster:** Use a physical flyer with "pull-out" text boxes that point to specific design choices (e.g., "We used the color red here to create a sense of urgency").

This graphic is a classic example of "Warning Design," utilizing specific cognitive triggers to bypass a user's impulse to click and engage the analytical brain instead. By breaking down the D.E.V.I.C.E. acronym, we can see how the design forces a psychological "stop-and-think" moment.



The D.E.V.I.C.E. Pledge

"I am a D.E.V.I.C.E. Detective. I don't click for prizes, I don't act on fear, and I always check with a trusted adult when things get weird."

Step	Action Item	The Critical Question
Danger	The "Sus" Check: Look for things that seem "off." Weird spelling, a prize you didn't enter for, or a link that looks like a jumble of random letters.	Is this 'Sus'? Does this look like something a real friend or a real company would actually send? Is the risk worth the potential reward?
Emotion	Heart-Rate Check: Notice if the message is trying to make you scared, super excited, or feel like you have to hurry.	Am I clicking because I'm curious, or because the message is trying to freak me out? Am I reacting to the content or the pressure?
Visualize	Imagine the screen after you click. Does your screen lock up? Does your account get hacked?	If I click this, what's the worst thing that could happen to my chromebook, phone, or my game account?
Intent	Think about what the person sending this actually wants. Do they want to help you, or do they want your password?	Why is this person asking me for this? What's in it for them?
Consequences	Consider the "Blast Radius" Think about who else gets in trouble. Will your friends get hacked too? Will your parents be upset?	If I mess up here, who else am I taking down with me? Who else gets hurt if I make a mistake here?
Evaluate	The "Pause & Post" Rule: Before you click, "post" the question to a real person.	Should I show this to a teacher, parent, or trusted adult first?

Ethical Check-In

Use these five questions to ensure your persuasion remains a service, not a manipulation.

1 - Intent

Am I using this technique to help the patron find a resource that genuinely benefits them, or simply to boost my own department's "vanity metrics"?

2 - Accuracy

Does the emotional weight of my message match the reality of the service? (e.g., Are you promising a "life-changing" event that is actually just a standard lecture?)

3 - Vulnerability

Does this tactic target a specific insecurity or fear in a way that might be harmful to a marginalized group?

4 - The "Sunlight" Test

If I explained the exact psychological tactic I am using to the patron, would they feel enlightened or would they feel tricked?

5 - Educational Value

Could this piece of marketing stand alone as a classroom example of media literacy?

"The difference between education and propaganda is that education teaches you how to think, while propaganda tells you what to think." - Noam Chomsky

Deconstruction Lab

Instructions: Look at the following marketing pitches and Identify:

1. The Primary Tactic Used
2. The Psychological Trigger
3. The Red Flag for Information Literacy

Example 1: The "Glittering Generality"

The Pitch: "Step into the Library: The Heart of Democracy, the Beacon of Freedom, and the Gateway to Your Infinite Future."

Example 2: The False Dilemma

The Pitch: "In an age of AI misinformation, you can either learn to use our verified databases or stay trapped in a bubble of fake news. The choice is yours."

Example 3: The "Plain Folks" Appeal

The Pitch: (A photo of a local parent in a messy kitchen) "I'm not a tech genius; I'm just a busy mom. If I can learn to 3D print a science project at the library, anyone can."

Stretch Challenge

Can you spot the "Appeal to Authority"? Look at this mock-up: "Ranked #1 for Community Impact: The Gold Standard of Public Service."

Library Scaffold & Tactics

Elementary Level (Grades K–5)

Focus on: "The Fair Play Rules." Keep it concrete and related to feelings.

- The "Everyone's Doing It" Trick (Bandwagon): Telling you that because all your friends like a toy, you should too. Lesson: It's okay to like different things!
- The "One or the Other" Choice (False Dilemma): Saying you can only be a bookworm or a sports fan. Lesson: You can be both! Real life has lots of choices, not just two.
- Shiny Words (Glittering Generalities): Using words like "Best," "Super," or "Magic" without explaining why. Lesson: Ask "What makes it 'super'?"

Middle School Level (Grades 6–8)

Focus on: Peer influence and the "Why" behind the message.

- The "Just Like You" Vibe (Plain Folks): Using an influencer or a student who looks "normal" to sell an idea. Question: Are they sharing a real opinion, or are they being paid to look relatable?
- The "Either/Or" Trap (False Dilemma): "Either you support this new school rule, or you don't care about safety." Lesson: This ignores the middle ground where we can care about safety and dislike the rule.
- The "Expert" Flex (Appeal to Authority): Using a celebrity to sell a sports drink. Question: Is this person actually an expert in this specific thing?

High School Level (Grades 9–12)

Focus on: Systematic manipulation and rhetorical analysis.

- Glittering Generalities: Using "virtue words" like Liberty, Justice, or Innovation to demand support without a specific plan. Analysis: Deconstruct the lack of evidence behind the "glitter."
- Ad Hominem (Attacking the Person): Instead of arguing against an idea, you attack the person's character. Analysis: Does the speaker's personal life actually change the facts of their argument?
- The Slippery Slope: Claiming that one small step will inevitably lead to a disaster. Analysis: Check for the missing links in the "chain reaction."

Professional Development (Staff & Faculty)

Focus on: Pedagogy and the ethics of communication.

- The Affective Heuristic: Relying on a "gut feeling" or emotional response to make a decision rather than data. Application: Do our school's marketing materials bypass faculty logic?
- Confirmation Bias: Seeking out only the "Testimonials" that agree with our existing goals. Application: How do we provide diverse perspectives in library acquisitions?
- The Burden of Proof: Making a claim and then demanding the "other side" prove it wrong. Application: Reminding students that the person making the claim is responsible for the evidence.

Scaffold Scavenger Hunt

Elementary Level (Grades K–5)

"Feeling Detective" Search

- The Task: Find three pictures on the library website.
- The Question: "Does this picture want me to feel excited, smart, or left out?"
- The Take-Away: A "Detective Badge" sticker for every student who identifies a "Shiny Word."

Middle School Level (Grades 6–8)

The "Peer Pressure" Audit

- The Task: Look at the library's website and/or social media posts.
- The Question: "Are they using a student to sell this because the student likes it, or because they want me to think it's cool?"
- The Take-Away: A "Behind the Scenes" template for students to create their own "honest" library ads.

High School Level (Grades 9–12)

The "Rhetorical Analysis" Deep Dive

- The Task: Analyze a library press release or a "Statement of Values."
- The Question: "Which 'Virtue Words' are used to bypass critical questioning? How many logical fallacies are present in the 'Call to Action'?"
- The Take-Away: A rubric for "Ethical Persuasion" they can use when writing their own essays or speeches.

Professional Development (Staff & Faculty)

The "Professional Alignment" Review

- The Task: Review the Library's Newsletter, Collection and/or Challenge Policy.
- The Question: "Are we using 'Appeal to Authority' to justify our viewpoint? How can we model information literacy to the intended audience? Do we need to be more transparent in our data?"
- The Take-Away: A "Style Guide" for the department on how to write persuasive copy that includes literacy "footnoting."

Scavenger Hunt

Goal: Audit your library's digital footprint (Website, LibGuide, Social Media Accounts) to find where you've used these tactics—and decide if they are Transparent or Manipulative (Sneaky).

Find this...	🔍 Where did you find it?	Transparent or Sneaky
A "Shiny Word" Glittering Generality	(e.g., "The ultimate resource for success")	<input type="checkbox"/> Transparent <input type="checkbox"/> Sneaky
A "Join the Crowd" Bandwagon	(e.g., "Don't miss what everyone's reading")	<input type="checkbox"/> Transparent <input type="checkbox"/> Sneaky
A "Just Like You" Plain Folks	(e.g., A photo of a local dad in the makerspace)	<input type="checkbox"/> Transparent <input type="checkbox"/> Sneaky
An "Either/Or" Trap False Dilemma	(e.g., "Come to the library or be bored")	<input type="checkbox"/> Transparent <input type="checkbox"/> Sneaky
The "Big Name" Appeal to Authority	(e.g., "The ALA-award winning list")	<input type="checkbox"/> Transparent <input type="checkbox"/> Sneaky

Is it possible to integrate literacy lessons?

The Flip Challenge

Goal: Choose one "Sneaky" post found and rewrite the caption or design to make it a literacy lesson.

Original Pitch:

Identify the Trigger:

Draft a "How This Works" element. Explain the Design Choice.

Practice applying the D.E.V.I.C.E. Framework to your Flipped ad

- D — Danger:** Is there a "Sus" check for weird links or spelling?
- E — Emotion:** Are we triggering a "Heart-Rate Spike" (Fear/Excitement)?
- V — Visualize:** What happens after the click?
- I — Intent:** Why is the sender really asking for this?
- C — Consequences:** What is the "Blast Radius" of an impulse click?
- E — Evaluate:** Who is the trusted adult or peer you should check with?

Sunlight Test: If you explained this tactic to a patron, would they feel enlightened or tricked? If they feel enlightened, you've passed the Sunlight Test!!