



ABRACADABRA

MAKING COMMUNICATIONS MAGIC

2025 Nebraska School Communications Conference

WHAT

Abracadabra: Making Communications Magic
2025 Nebraska School Communication Conference

WHEN

November 18 & 19, 2025
(Pre-conference networking event November 17, 2025)

WHERE

Barbara Weitz Community Engagement Center
University of Nebraska at Omaha



TUESDAY KEYNOTE MAGIC WORDS

What to Say to Get Your Way
Jonah Berger, Author & Wharton School Professor



WEDNESDAY KEYNOTE & WORKSHOP COMMUNICATIONS MAGIC

Turning Everyday Challenges Into Extraordinary Connections
Melissa McConnell, Manager, Professional Development & Member Engagement, NSPRA

SIGNATURE PARTNER



CONFERENCE PARTNERS



*Please note: Speakers and times are subject to change.
This document will be updated to reflect the most up-to-date schedule.*

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2025

6:30 p.m.

Evening Social & Entertainment

Corkscrew Wine & Cheese, Blackstone District

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025

7:15 - 8:00 a.m.

Vendor Fair Set-up – VENDORS ONLY (Room 231)

8:00 - 9:00 a.m.

Breakfast & Registration, Vendor Fair (Room 231)

9:00 - 9:30 a.m.

Opening Remarks / NebSPRA Update (Room 205/209)

9:30 - 10:30 a.m.

Magic Words: What to Say to Get Your Way (Room 205/209)

Jonah Berger, Author & Wharton School Professor

From emails and PowerPoint presentations to phone calls and pitch meetings, almost everything we do involves words. Words are how we persuade, communicate, and connect. But certain words are more impactful than others. They're better at changing minds, engaging listeners, and driving action. What are these magic words, and how can we take advantage of their power?

This talk provides an inside look at the new science of language and how you can use it. Learn the words that convince clients, captivate audiences, and deepen social connection. How to ask the right questions, hold attention, speak with confidence, and design presentations, pitches, and other types of content for maximum impact. And how the words others use reveal hidden information about their interests, actions, and intent. Whether you're trying to persuade a customer, motivate a team, or get a whole organization to see things differently, this course will show you how to leverage the power of

magic words.

10:40 - 11:30 a.m.

School Social Media Analytics & Reporting Made Simple (Room 205/209)

Class Intercom

The data behind your school's communications can reveal powerful insights—if you know what to look for. In this session, we'll cut through the noise and focus on the metrics that actually matter. You'll learn simple ways to track, analyze, and share key results with your leadership team—no jargon or complicated charts, just clear guidance on what to measure, how, and why.

Broccoli & Facebook: Building Long-Term Trust & Advocating for Your District Thru Strategic Content (Room 230)

Kelli Mayhew & Mitch Roush

Politics, budgets, and social media comments—can you really build community trust and advocate for your district? Yes, with strategy and storytelling. Learn how Grand Island Public Schools turned protestors into supporters through authentic communication, sustainable multimedia tactics, and empowered voices—proving that long-term trust grows when storytelling leads the way.

11:40 - 11:55 a.m.

Presentation of the NE School Communicator of the Year Award, powered by Class Intercom (Room 205/209)

11:55 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Lunch, Vendor Fair (Room 231)

1:00 - 1:50 p.m.

Winning the Hearts & Minds of Stakeholders to Accomplish Amazing Things (Room 205/209)

Target River

Discover proven strategies to build enthusiasm and trust in your district. Target River shares how to strengthen stakeholder relationships, communicate your district's value, and inspire advocacy among parents, students, and community members—turning engagement into shared purpose and lasting support for your schools.

Bridging Human Voice + AI: Authentic Communication in an AI-Driven World (Room 230)

DeeAnn Konrad & Carly Uthe

AI is transforming how we create, communicate, and lead—but its strength lies in partnership, not replacement. Drawing on Ethan Mollick's Co-Intelligence and William Grube's work on AI in education, this session explores how intentional collaboration with AI can enhance creativity, streamline communication, and keep human authenticity at the center.

2:00 - 2:50 p.m.

On Brand: How to Create a Distinctive School District Brand (Room 230)

Apptegy

Your district's brand is its reputation—every website visit, classroom interaction, and front office greeting shapes how your schools are perceived. This hands-on session unpacks the elements of a strong, authentic brand and how to differentiate your district through consistent experiences in an era of growing school choice.

This S.U.C.K.S.: The Art of Iterative Design Feedback (Room 230)

Christopher Villarreal

Struggling to explain why a design “just doesn’t work”? This interactive session turns vague critiques into meaningful guidance using the SUCKS method—Specific, Understandable, Constructive, Kind, and Strategic. Through real examples, including a mascot redesign, learn how to give and receive feedback that sharpens ideas and moves creative projects forward.

3:00 - 3:50 p.m.

Step-by-Step Guide to Winning a Successful Election (Room 205/209)

Annette Eyman

Preparing for a school bond election? This session offers a clear, step-by-step guide to planning and executing a successful campaign. Learn how to assess communication strategies, engage your community, and use research to shape your message. Through real-world examples, explore the phases of informational and vote-yes efforts and discover practical strategies for building trust and achieving success at the polls.

RPIE Framework for Crisis Communication (Room 230)

Omaha Public Schools Team

Learn how the RPIE model (Research, Planning, Implementation, Evaluation) can guide your district's crisis communication efforts. The Omaha Public Schools team will share practical applications and lessons learned from using this framework during crisis situations.

5:30 p.m.

Presto Change-O! (Dinner & Team Building)

Abracadabra your way through Blackstone in this guided magical mystery tour. The fun starts at Nite Owl in the Blackstone District for food and drinks, and only gets better from there!

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2025

8:00 - 8:30 a.m.

Breakfast, Vendor Fair (Room 231)

8:30 - 9:20 a.m.

Goldmine Sessions (Room 205/209)

A fast-paced series of mini-sessions where attendees rotate among presenters to gather practical tips, fresh ideas, and proven strategies. Featuring insights and learning from ParentSquare, TeacherLists, Finalsity, Grackle Docs, Strawbridge, and several NebSPRA members. A full slate of offerings will be announced soon.

9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

Communications Magic: Turning Everyday Challenges Into Extraordinary Connections

Melissa McConnell, Manager, Professional Development & Member Engagement, NSPRA

How do great communicators create “magic” in their schools and districts? In this interactive keynote/workshop, you’ll pull back the curtain on common communication myths and discover practical strategies to transform everyday challenges into opportunities for trust and connection. Through hands-on group activities, peer idea-sharing, and ready-to-use tools, you’ll design your own “magic tricks” for engaging staff, parents, and the community. You’ll leave inspired, connected, and equipped with concrete resources to make communications magic back home.

11:30 a.m.

Lunch, Vendor Fair (Room 231)