



Developing a Message that Works

Understanding the Ins and Outs of Effective Messaging

Workshop Exercises

Message
Takeaways

What to know:

What to think:

What to do:

Understanding
Your Audience

What makes them unique:

Why they will care:

The barriers to success:

Defining the
Basics

Who & What:

When & Where:

Why & How:

Refine Your
Message

Simple & Unexpected:

Concrete & Credible:

Emotions & Story:

Step #1: Define Your Communication Takeaways

Communications Topic:					
Target Audience (<i>choose ONE to focus on</i>):					
Cognitive		Affective		Behavioral	
What do you want the audience to know ?	What existing schemas or frameworks can you use to help them understand?	What do you want the audience to think ?	What misconceptions or negative perceptions do you need to overcome?	What do you want the audience to do ?	What risks or obstacles might dissuade or prevent them from acting?

Sources: Kotler, Heath & Heath

Step #2: Understanding Your Audience

Communications Topic #1:			
A.) Who are the most essential audiences to focus on?	B.) What makes them unique?	C.) Why will they care?	D.) What are the unique challenges they present?
<i>Think Return on Investment</i>	<i>Think Attitudes, Beliefs, & Values</i>	<i>Think Benefits & Solutions</i>	<i>Think Barriers & Obstacles</i>
Priority #1			
Priority #2			
Priority #3			
E.) What are the key commonalities among the audiences?		F.) What are the insurmountable differences among the audiences?	

Step #3: Group Exercise—Getting to the Core Basics of Your Message

You have been selected by your school's principal to serve as the editor of a school newsletter conveying school happenings to students and parents. Next Thursday, all teachers and counselors will participate in a training to assist them in integrating college-planning activities into their core curricula.

Who: all teachers and counselors at Happy Vista High

What: a training to help teachers and counselors integrate college-planning activities into their day-to-day work with students and families.

Where: the campus of a local college partner, Happy Vista University; administration building

When: Thursday, February 11 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Why: integrating college-planning exercises and messaging into curricular activities has been shown to increase students' understanding of college options and processes

How: a panel of experts including curriculum development specialists and college access providers will provide an intensive training workshop for staff sharing their knowledge and expertise

Instructions: Using the information above, draft either a **summary** or **anecdotal** lead for a story for your newsletter in the following table.

Step #3: Group Exercise—Getting to the Core of Your Message

Using your communications takeaways and audience worksheets, begin developing talking points for your message.

Who:	
What:	
Where:	
When:	
Why:	
How:	
Any additional essential details?	
Instructions: Using your talking points, draft either a summary or anecdotal lead for a story on your topic. <i>If you have extra time, begin using your talking points to build out a story or ad copy, following the inverted pyramid structure.</i>	

Step #4: Individual Exercise—Getting to the Core of Your Message

Using your communications takeaways and audience worksheets, begin developing talking points for your unique Communication Topic.

Who:	
What:	
Where:	
When:	
Why:	
How:	
Any additional essential details?	
Instructions: Using your talking points, draft either a summary or anecdotal lead for a story on your topic. <i>If you have extra time, begin using your talking points to build out a story or ad copy, following the inverted pyramid structure.</i>	

Step #5: Refining Your Message

Restate Your Draft Message from Step #4:		
Use the cells below to brainstorm ways you can apply the six different aspects of “stickiness” to make your message more effective.		
Simplicity: What steps can you take to prioritize the core takeaway from the message?	Unexpectedness: What steps can you take to make the message more surprising?	Concreteness: What steps can you take to define your message more specific and easily understood?
Credibility: What sources, facts, or details can bring authority to your message?	Emotional: What steps can you take to appeal to people’s emotions, identity, or values?	Stories: What steps can you take to convey a story to help people understand and care?
Refine Your Message		

Adapted from “Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die,” By Chip Heath and Dan Heath