

MESSAGING TIPS: WHAT IS A MESSAGE?

The messages you develop must answer the questions: Why? Why care? Why act? A message must explain what's valued, what's at risk and it must align you with others who share your values and concerns. A message must be short, simple and repeated to be heard. To be effective, a message must be included in every communication - written and oral - and used in all your free and paid media. A message must clearly state the issue/organization/campaign's values and align itself with the concerns of the majority of citizens.

Effective Messages

- Messages come from campaign strategies and goals. Clearly define your goals and the audiences you want to engage.
- Messages have a firm foundation in the issues.
- Your messages are a road map, but you must know where you want to go. Begin messages where people are and then take them where you want them to go.
- Use your messages as the foundation of all campaigns or projects. They may have their own sub-messages, but they should support the main message.
- Your messages should not always be delivered by you. Different spokespeople may have more credibility and be more persuasive, depending on the audience.

Developing Your Message: 8 Rules for Success

Rule 1	Have one main message with a maximum of three underlying themes to support it.
Rule 2	All messages should support the campaign's main goals.
Rule 3	Messages are the ideas you are trying to communicate to the public. Messages are reinforced by sound bites, phrases, statistics and anecdotes.
Rule 4	Messages don't change frequently. For messages to have impact they have to be repeated over and over and over again.
Rule 5	Messages should be tailored for specific audiences, while still remaining constant.
Rule 6	Consistent messages should permeate all of your communications efforts, not just contact with the media.
Rule 7	Messages must be simple. They are ideas that can be explained in a sentence or two – if it requires a paragraph or two, keep working to refine and simplify it.
Rule 8	Remember: messages take time to create. Don't rush the process.