Message Matters

Using Communications to Amplify Your Foundation’s Vision and Impact

GIA Annual Meeting

October 2014
Message Matters

- Why messaging?
- Messaging in a strategic context
- Messaging in the field
- Building a message
Why Messaging?
Information overload...
Breaking Through
Good, (multi-faceted) things in small packages
Distillation:
If you don’t boil it down, someone else will
Messaging in a Strategic Context
A good message rests within a strategic context

- What does success look like (objective)?
- Who needs to know (audience)?
- What's out there (environment)?
- What am I going to say (message)?
- How do I reach my audience/objectives (strategy)?
Start with the end in mind

“I want the whole package—the little bowl, the colored pebbles, the plastic castle.”
Audience, environment matters
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<tr>
<th>Vehicle</th>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
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<td>E-mails to leaders, colleagues</td>
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<td>Symposia</td>
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<td>Meetings, conferences</td>
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<td>Committees, Guidelines efforts</td>
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<td>Traditional media outreach</td>
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<td>Op-eds, Letters to the Editor</td>
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<td>Web sites (yours, others)</td>
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Medium affects the message

Which tactics make the most sense, given your strategy?
Messaging 101
A message is a clear, concise statement or set of statements that describes a position, opinion or point of view.
“If you were to boil your book down to a few words, what would be its message?”
Think like a beginner
Speak from the head (logos) and the heart (pathos)
Benefits not attributes

(What’s in it for the them)
Language matters
Examples from the Field
Messaging in Practice

Your Turn
Creating a message

A good message* completes the following four statements:

• The one thing your audience needs to know is...
• The reason this is important to this audience is...
• What this audience should do is...
• It is urgent for this audience to act now because...

*Courtesy of Valerie Denney, Denney Communications
My target audience is:
General practitioners

The One Thing this audience needs to know is:

The reason this is important to this audience is:

What this audience should do is:

It is important (urgent) for this audience to act now because:
Climate change is triggering disease epidemics.

Or

A warmer world is a sicker world.
GRACE is a tested, team model for providing high quality primary care.

Or

GRACE is better care all together.
In studies of humans and other animals, [scientists] have discovered that sleep plays a critical role in immune function, metabolism, memory, learning, and other vital functions.*

or

Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.

*From the Division of Sleep Medicine at Harvard Medical School
Guided Care provides coordinated team care for the toughest patients – older adults with multiple chronic conditions.

Or

Guided Care is like having a nurse in the family.
Sticky Messages

What are the messages that stick with you?
Sticky Messages

• Review your message
  – Can it be shorter, simpler?
  – Can it feel more surprising? Is there an unusual data point you might use?
  – Can you use an example, analogy or metaphor to make it more concrete?
  – Is it credible?
  – Can it connect with your audience’s emotions, values, belief systems more effectively?
  – What is a single powerful story to tell that brings this to life?

   ▪ Write a 140-character Tweet