

Alternative Sample Grid to Create Compelling Messages

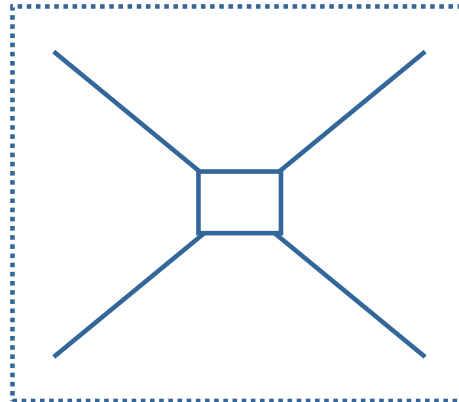


Messaging Tip Sheet: Create compelling messages

Developing Message Points

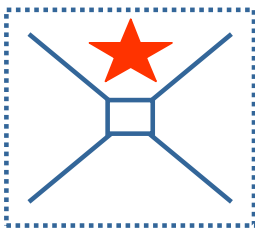
Once you know who you want to reach and have determined what they care about, you can create message points that will resonate with this audience. Good messaging has no more than four main points. These points need to be both concise and compelling. It is that easy, and that hard.

To help you think through your message points, try using a message box. The message box is in this shape for a reason. The circular nature of it reminds you that you can start at any message point and hop around to your heart's desire in a speech, during an interview, in a press release – any time you are communicating about your issue. Just stay in the message box. If the messages were presented in a linear fashion, the inclination would be to start at the top and work down. Instead, messages should remain flexible so you can deliver the ones that best fit an audience's knowledge and interest.



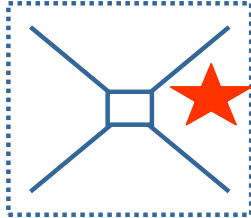
For each different target audience that you are trying to reach, you should have a different message box. This is because every audience has different values and your messages will be most effective if they are tailored to each of your target audiences. Tailoring your messages doesn't mean starting from scratch, but rather adjusting each of the points as needed for the new audience.

Once you have filled in the four core messages in your box (described below), you can develop supporting points for each message including compelling facts, stories and statistics.



The Value Message – Top (North) Section

This is where you connect with your audience and tap into a specific value that your audience has. This message point reminds them of your common ground, or says something that will get them to agree or at least nod their heads. For newcomer audiences this is a point that you may spend a great deal of time on when making a speech or preparing materials. For the choir this is more of a touch and move on point. Remind them quickly and move to other points that are more pressing.

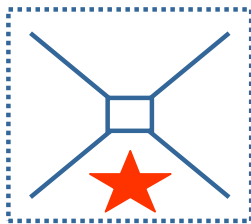


The Barrier Message – Right (East) Section

With so many different opinions out there, the chance for misconception is high. People may not realize the extent of a problem – or they may not realize they are basing all their decisions on an incorrect fact.

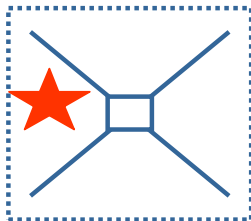
Think about all the seemingly credible stories you have heard that have ended up being urban legends. It took a lot of people passing around false information before the story made its way to you and countless others. It doesn't take long to take an incorrect fact and circulate it as the truth. The barrier message point addresses this challenge by countering your audience's key misconception about your issue.

The key to a successful barrier message is that you do not repeat your audience's misconception. Rather, you provide new or unexpected information to overcome this barrier to your audience buying in to your message.



The Ask – Bottom (South) Section

At least one message point should be focused on getting the target audience to do something. What's the point in getting their attention if you don't use it to reach your goals? This is where the ask comes in – the more doable it is the better. Asking someone to save the children isn't helpful – it's overwhelming. People have no idea how to do this. Increasing a school budget to allow for more qualified teachers, however, is something people can get behind.



The Vision Message – Left (West) Section

This message point echoes the value message point. It says to people: If you do what I ask you to do, then you get what you want.

Testing Your Message Box

Once you have finished your message box, pat yourself on the back. Then find a way to test your messages among some audience targets. This could be as simple as asking three or four members of your audience what they think, or it may mean fielding a national poll. Either way, try it out on someone who can evaluate the messages from a neutral standpoint – this rules out you and anyone who helped you complete your message box.

Creating Compelling Messages Worksheet

Who are you trying to reach with this message? *(Remember to keep your audience as narrow as possible. And only select one audience at a time – different audiences need different message boxes.)*

Brainstorm a list of values that your audience has. Circle the one that is most important that you will tap into with your message.

Now fill in the four sections of your message box.

