

# Refining Your **Message**

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**What** is “messaging”?

# Messaging **Defined**

**It is what an entity says about itself to reinforce its value promise.**

- Set of convincing “key message” statements
  - Informs wide array of entity’s marketing materials: event themes, brochure copy, social media posts, news releases, presentation scripts, blogs, website copy, etc.
  - Clear and concise
- Audience-centric
  - Written for the intended audience
  - Deployed on the audience’s preferred platform(s)
- Complements branding efforts
  - Must be consistent to be effective, regardless of audience or platform
  - Repeats key words, phrases and vocabulary
- Natural outgrowth of organizational mission and goal(s)

# Messaging **Approach**

## Seven “Must-Haves” of Compelling Messages

**Bespoke** Written for the audience *and* the platform, reflecting the audience’s decisionmaking factors

**Concise** A single sentence; at minimum, a single idea

**Strategic** Articulates context to your value proposition – what you are *and* why you matter

**Simple** Easy verbiage and grammar for audiences to understand; no acronyms, jargon, and flowery or bureaucratic language

**Convincing** Believable information to stimulate action; active voice (vs. passive voice)

**Relevant** Appealing to the audience – both emotionally and rationally

**Memorable** Catchy but not kitschy; easily recalled



# Messaging **Purpose**

- Messaging ensures that everyone in an organization who needs to communicate something can do it with **common key points** and **understanding** of what **audiences should hear**.
- While messaging is usually created by the communications team, it should be **used by individuals and teams across an entity**, from executive leaders to grant and program managers, education and outreach, human resources, etc.
- The primary purpose of messaging is to ensure that everything you communicate ultimately **ties back to the major points** you want audiences to **know and believe** about you.

**What** should you consider when developing messaging?

# Messaging **Considerations**

- **Who? The audience.** To whom is your communications intended?
- **What? The proposition.** What is the value to the audience? What is the impact (benefit) you're trying to achieve? How are you different from the competition? Does it reflect both your reality and their interests?
- **When? The timing.** Are you maximizing the available and unique “marketing moments,” or aligned with granting calendars, or leveraging what’s happening out in the world?
- **Where? The platform.** Where should your communications be delivered? And, is it customized for that platform?
- **Why? The desired outcome.** What are you trying to achieve by communicating?
- **How? The anatomy.** Is it on-brand? Are the vocabulary and tone/manner appealing to your audience?

“Meaning exists at the intersection  
of a text, a context  
and a receiving audience.”

Kathleen Hall Jamieson

“Communicating the Value and Values of Science,” 2015



# Messaging: Audience Persona



# Audience Persona: **Philanthropic Donors**

## Personality Type: The “Creator”

- Desires to create something of enduring value, to impact a culture
- Is a strategic thinker, visionary, problem-solver
- Has an analytical mindset and ability to see patterns and connections
- Is focused on long-term goals
- Are often authentic, creative, driven, imaginative, intelligent, passionate, non-conforming
- Pushes boundaries, blazes trails
- Avoids repeating or recreating
- Can also be practical
- Motto: “If it can be imagined, it can be created.”



# Audience Persona: CEOs

## Personality Type: The “Ruler”

- Demonstrates leadership
- Has authority; takes control; has and retains power
- Provides and values structure
- Gives guidance
- Establishes order
- Is reliable, confident and commanding, polished, successful
- Exudes self-assurance
- Is a stickler for policy
- Strives for excellence
- Showcases success
- Motto: “We’ll take it from here.”



Adapted from Ariel Hudnall

# Audience Persona: **Academic Leaders**

## Personality Type: The “Sage”

- Professors, researchers, scholars embody the archetype
- Places emphasis on knowledge, learning, intellectual exploration
- Explores in analytical ways, processing reality with logic
- Has a thirst for wisdom, understanding
- Devotes themselves to teaching others, expanding the boundaries of human understanding
- Is most comfortable in libraries, lecture halls, laboratories
- Not easily corrupted, is more easily adapted to changed
- Motto: “The truth will set you free”



# Audience Platforms

## Philanthropic Donor

The Chronicle of Philanthropy  
Stanford Social Innovation Review  
Philanthropy News Digest  
The Economist  
Harvard Business Review  
The New York Times  
The Wall Street Journal  
Forbes  
Fortune  
Podcasts (various)  
Financial Times  
Bloomberg Businessweek  
Associated Press  
Reuters  
LinkedIn  
CNN  
ABC News  
CBS News

## CEOs

The Wall Street Journal  
Fox News  
The National Review  
The Federalist  
Talk Radio (various)  
CNN  
ABC News  
CBS News  
Financial Times  
Bloomberg Businessweek  
Forbes  
The New York Times  
Associated Press  
Reuters  
Washington Post  
New Scientist  
Podcasts (various)  
LinkedIn  
X (formerly Twitter)

# Audience **Platforms**

## Owned Media

**Your Content,  
Your Channels**

Website & Social Content  
Blogs  
eBooks, White Papers  
Thought Leadership  
Commentary  
Reports & Assets  
E-newsletter  
Board Meetings  
Video Storytelling  
Webinars & Seminars

## Loaned Media

**Your Content,  
Their Channels**

Harnesses the collective reach of your employees, Board members, and your professional networks to distribute your content. Includes speaking engagements.

## Shared Media

**Their Content,  
Social Channels**

Includes any and all content posted to social media *about* you that isn't created by you. Includes paid influencer content. Includes online word-of-mouth, such as reviews, shares, tagging, reactions, comments, and hashtagging.

## Earned Media

**Your Story,  
News Channels**

Earns the attention of the news media to relay your story to audiences. Includes proactive pitching, newsjacking, backlinks and published content. Includes others' blogs and pods. Includes awards.

## Paid Media

**Your Story,  
Ad Channels**

Publishes your content in a space you've purchased. Such space can be in print, video, audio and digital spaces. Allows for controlled storytelling with precise targeting and timing.

# Message Framing

## Storylines that make your message pertinent to the audience

- **Framing a message = putting it in a context to which the audience can relate (or, how you construct the narrative)**
  - Taps into the human brain's way of sorting/managing information
  - Enables the audience to determine the importance and accuracy of a message
  - Acknowledges the mental filters (personal beliefs, values, cultural influences, etc.) through which the audience will accept and respond to information
- **Audiences will receive your message through the lens of their own experiences**
  - How and why people come to different conclusions and make different choices, even when exposed to the exact same data
  - “That’s how I see it.”



# Effective **Message Frames**

## Values within a culture shape perception and understanding

Values are ideas about what is right and wrong, desirable and undesirable, normal and abnormal, proper and improper. People in a particular culture share certain values, which shape the way they interact with, understand and process information. When considering how to frame your entity's message, consider doing so within these recognized values of American society:

**Freedom and Independence**

Individuality/Individualism

**Loyalty and Patriotism**

**Order and Control**

Privacy

**Egalitarianism (vs. Elitism)**

**Family**

Time and Its Value/Efficiency

**Informality**

**Transparency**

Competition and Achievement

**Confidence and Directness**

**Practicality**

Work, Ingenuity and Innovation

**Acquisition and Materialism**

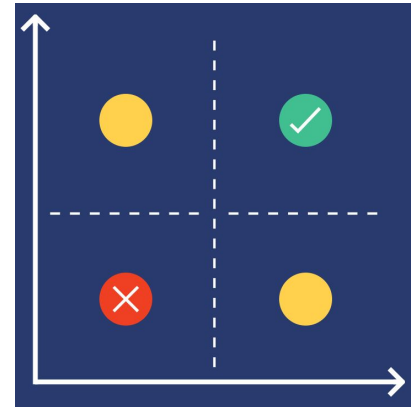


# Messaging **Tone & Manner**

- Create a brand vocabulary (literally, a “dictionary” of endorsed words and phrases)
- Be authentic and genuine to your brand
- Remember your audience when choosing tone
  - Rulers appreciate tones that convey respect, authority and professionalism

# What to Say: **Messaging Matrix**

- Structured way of **defining the value** you bring to your audiences/stakeholders
- Establishes messages by topic, creating a **roadmap** to keep the story on point and relevant
- Summarizes your brand narrative so your content can better **align with your brand promise**
- Envisions, formulate and articulates the core message, empowering internal users with a **well-formed framework** to better understand and communicate **purpose, opportunity and need**
- Is a **starting point** for marketing campaigns, education materials, news releases, website content, social media content, etc.



WHAT WE DO		WHAT WE DELIVER		WHY WE MATTER	
Teaching materials Workshops Lectures & programs Technical assistance	Network of experts Personalized support Connect magazine Podcast	Local engagement Partnerships/alliances Relationship building PD/continuing ed	Books & publications Donor relationships Membership network Social media	Holistic view/approach Local engagement Partnerships/alliances Community forums	Teacher engagement Technical assistance Grant-writing help
<b>Provide funding, technical support and programming</b>		<b>Enable historic perspective and context for modern-day relevance</b>		<b>Empower Arkansans to understand and know each other</b>	

**Attributes**  
(What we offer)

At AHC, we ....

**Connect and engage Arkansans in the humanities**

**Benefits**  
(What they get)

So that they...

**Can discover and appreciate our diverse lived experiences**

**Core Message**

Access to resources, experts, education and information			Engage in collaboration, ideation and meaning-making			Strengthen local economies and quality of life		
Teaching aids distributed	Events hosted	Events attendance	Partnerships realized	Communities engaged	Website insights	Grants awarded	Projects funded	People impacted
Magazine downloads	Podcast subscribers	Network size/impact	Grant applications	Funding streams	Social media insights	Jobs created/retained	Places impacted	Local dollars/revenue

**PROOF POINTS**

# Your Unique Proposition

**Impact #1**

**Impact #2**

**Impact #3**

Proof

Proof

Proof

Proof

Proof

Proof

Proof

Proof

Proof

**Desired Action**

# BRAND MESSAGING FRAMEWORK

Customer profiles with specific benefits	What specific problems do you solve for each of them?
Positioning statement	For [target audience], [product name] provides a way to [do something that solves their problem], so they can [get key benefit.]
Mission statement	Our mission is to [your reason for doing what you do].
Unique value proposition	Get [unique benefit] with [product name + category].
Headline + subheading	Turn your value proposition into a catchy headline and an informative subheading that complements it.
Elevator pitch	Start with a problem, agitate it in your customer's words, and present yourself as a solution. In 30 seconds max.
Brand voice guidelines	Add details on wording, grammar, formatting, etc.

# Brand Messaging Matrix

Create your core brand story



# When to Say It: **Messaging Opportunities**

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
Financial Wellness Mo	Black History Mo	Women's History Mo	Financial Literacy Mo	AAPI Heritage Mo	Juneteenth	Nat'l Independent Retailer Mo	Back to School	Internat'l Literacy Day	Hispanic Heritage Mo	Nat'l Career Development Mo	Giving Tuesday
Nat'l Mentoring Mo	Digital Learning Day	World Language Mo	Math Awareness Mo	Graduation	National Safety Month		Nat'l Nonprofit Day	Internat'l Day of Charity	World Teachers Day	Small Business Saturday	Internat'l Volunteer Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service	Library Lover's Mo	National Nutrition Mo	School Library Mo	Mental Health Awareness Mo	National Logistics Day		Internat'l Youth Day	Self-improvement Mo	Nat'l Arts & Humanities Mo		
Community Engagement Day	Internat'l Day of Women and Girls in Science	Music in Our Schools Mo	Nat'l Internship Awareness Mo	Physical Fitness Mo				American Business Women's Day	Nat'l Bullying Prevention Mo		
	Random Acts of Kindness Day	Read Across America Day		Nat'l Skilled Trades Day					Nat'l Manufacturing Day		
	Nat'l Leadership Day	Pi Day		Nat'l Creativity Day					Red Ribbon Wk		
									Nat'l Disability Awareness Mo		
									Nat'l Techies Day		