

TEN TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

Our workspaces and personal places are increasingly bombarded with information.

A myriad of organisations compete for our attention in our roles as customers, clients, citizens, patients, guests, employees, voters etc. The information onslaught starts when the clock radio wakes us in the morning and lasts until we turn off the light at night.

We face such an ever present media, advertising and on-line overload that often, the only way to survive is to “zone out” most of the material headed our way.

“Ah, that’s what happens to other people’s messages, not ours”, you say. But how confident are you that your information cuts through the clutter?

We have 15 years communications experience and we think there are 10 things that can help you craft and deliver more effective messages.

#1 Boil down your information

Distil the great volume of information you have into core messages that represent the very essence of what you want to say.

For most projects, limit the number of core messages to between three to five essential pieces of information. Why? Because multiple messages become unmanageable. They get distorted as they travel through many hands (journalists, editors, salespeople, teachers etc) before they reach your audience.

#2 Write your core messages very simply

Use everyday language when you write your core messages. Try to write like you would normally speak.

Avoid tech-speak and trade jargon and phrase your messages in the active not the passive voice.

#3 Limit each core message to 20 - 25 words

It requires discipline to get all your information into a couple of well-constructed sentences. But it is marvellous what you can achieve with a few well-chosen words. Simplicity equals elegance in communications.

#4 Muscle up each message

You must provide proof for each core message. Otherwise it remains forever a mere assertion and why should people believe either it or you? Bolster each message with appropriate testimonials, statistics, case studies, quotes, contrasts, comparisons

but most importantly with stories of people whose experience can bring your issue to life.

#5 Use the B word

Use the word “*because*” to link your core message with this evidence. *Trade is good for Australia because 1 in 5 jobs rely on exports.* When you make a statement and directly link it up to evidence, you are helping your audience to suspend their disbelief.

#6 Pinpoint your message

These days many organisations fall into the trap of trying to tell everyone everything. That’s because technology gives us the capacity to deliver volumes of material cheaply.

Only tell people either what they should know or want to know. Help them get additional material if and when they want it by pointing them to a website, telephone number or some other access point.

#7 Time your Contact

We are all busy so respect other people’s time. Give them the opportunity to process your information, seek additional details if they need to and then act on it.

#8 Use Trusted Sources

Use a personal touch. People are more likely to respond to information from someone they know like a friend, a family member, a fellow worker, another club member, etc.

Technology makes it very easy to fire off an email as your first response. An email may give you immediacy but personal contact gives you credibility.

#9 Multi-touch and Multi-time Communications

Use “multi-touch” communications or different ways to get your message to people, so if one way fails, another may succeed. (Redundancy)

Decades of mass advertising experience suggest that the more people hear or see your message, the more likely they will respond to it. Aim for a “multi-time” dimension in your communications so you get your messages before people in different ways as often as your budget and time constraints allow. (Repetition)

#10 Messages are not like Diamonds

They do not last forever. Every 3 – 6 months review each core message and the associated evidence. Make sure that what you continue to say is what your organisation needs to say but more importantly, what your audience needs to hear.

Contact Maine Street Marketing for an assessment of your message needs.

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