Message Map Developer tool

What is a message?

A message is simple, clear, concise, and is the starting point and guide for brand communications consistency for any organization. Key messages help guide consistent communication and development of campaigns and events, advertising, brochures and collateral, speeches, web copy, blog posts, press releases, social media, and every other way an organization communicates with its audiences (internally and externally), customers, and stakeholders.

The goal of having simple, clear and concise messages is to have internal alignment so when your organization communicates externally your audiences have clarity, take note, remember and understand, and take positive action. Here are several steps to follow to ensure your messages hit the mark with your audiences.

Step 1: Ask these questions

These questions can be asked in a leadership meeting, via survey, phone calls, or in a way that will provide the most valuable feedback.

- What do we want to communicate? (TIP: What problem, frustration, opportunity exists?)
- Why do we want to communicate it? (TIP: Does it support your purpose, why you do what you do?)
- Who needs to hear it? (all internal and external audiences)
- Why do they need to hear it? (TIP: make it about them; fight the urge to make it all about your organization)
- What do we want to accomplish by communicating with them? (What's the positive action?)
- What information, data/statistics do we need to support what we want to communicate?

Step 2: Identify common themes and benefits

These are the most important themes/ideas/messages. There may be other quality ideas that support one of the three most important. If so, earmark these ideas for step 5 as potential supporting messages.

Step 3: Draft the top three core messages

Write out the top three messages. Think problem, solution, benefit.

Step 4: Refinement

Review each message and ask, can this be said in 25 words or less? Try to refine each message further into simpler (no jargon) terms without being simplistic. Keep it under two sentences.

Step 5: Identify 3-5 supporting points for each message

Look at the feedback and ideas that were developed in Step 2. Which ideas and points support one of the three core messages that have been developed? What additional online/offline research can be conducted to support the core messages?

Step 6: Fill in the message map

Key message 1 (touches on the problem/frustration)	Key message 2 (touches on the solution)	Key message 3 (touches on the benefits)
• Supporting message	• Supporting message	• Supporting message
• Supporting message	• Supporting message	• Supporting message
• Supporting message	• Supporting message	• Supporting message
• Supporting message	• Supporting message	• Supporting message
• Supporting message	• Supporting message	• Supporting message

Step 7: Test and refine further

Get it out there. Start talking and sharing your messages via conversations, through social media; see what sticks and resonates with people. The feedback will help you further refine and hone in on even clearer messages.

Note: Key messages aren't a "check off the box" activity. Messages are always evolving. Customers and audiences are always growing. Therefore, our messages must continue to evolve and align with those we're trying to reach and engage.

Development of the Message

Ask questions → Identify themes → Draft messages → Refine → Identify supporting points → Fill in map → Test/refine further