

AD



GETTING YOUR STORY STRAIGHT

The art of crafting
a compelling message

CRAFTING A COMPELLING MESSAGE

The essence of good communication is clarity and credibility, which is why it's so important to make sure that your message is clear before you begin to devise a campaign to bring it to life. Here is a summary of the stages to work through to give you strong foundations for your communications.

1. Know your audience(s)



Crafting a powerful message begins with having a full understanding of your target audiences and what will resonate with them. By knowing them and their business priorities,

you can communicate a value proposition that is customer-led, rather than simply describing your product or service.

While there may well be many areas of overlap, your message to different customer audiences is likely to need tailoring to each of them, to reflect the nuances of their businesses, commercial drivers and decision-making hierarchies.

In B2B, the driving force for a purchase is a blend of the emotional and the logical. You need a strong hook that speaks to what keeps the customer awake at night, but ultimately you will need to persuade them of the operational, financial or commercial benefits of an investment.

Remember too that the decision may be complex and drawn out, with extensive research and evaluation phases. So it's critical that your messages are robust and consistent across multiple channels and that you can offer clear evidence of your claims.

You also need to instil confidence in your brand beyond the individual product. That means being able to support product-specific messages with a compelling story covering your company heritage, resources, commercial success, team credentials, product track record and customer satisfaction.

2. Identify the core message



Typically, crafting your message will involve debating and distilling a broad range of technical features and performance attributes, and aligning those to your customers' needs.

This may also involve collating messages in different formats from various sources and areas of your organisation to look for areas of overlap but also to identify inconsistencies.

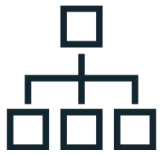
It can be useful to apply the 'So What?' Rule. When you state what your product or service can do, answer this imaginary question as if it were coming from your prospective customer. It will help you translate every aspect of your offering into a benefit that your target audiences can identify with, in language they can understand.

Ideally you will end up with a single overarching or 'umbrella' message that applies regardless of the specific customer audience, and a range of supporting messages. These will vary in significance depending on who you're talking to and will enable you to adapt your campaign narrative accordingly.

The umbrella statement should be one that differentiates you from your competition and addresses your target buyers' key problem. As a guide to whether it serves its purpose, apply four checks: Is it important? Is it believable? Is it unique? Is it usable?



3. Build out the framework



It's not unusual for R&D and product teams to come up with an extensive list of features and benefits, all of which they want to communicate. One purpose of the messaging framework exercise is to simplify these into a few persuasive **supporting messages** that serve to support the 'umbrella' message.

And each supporting message should be underpinned by specific **proof points** – examples that add credibility and depth to your story. Your claims are empty if you can't provide evidence that is relatable for your audience. The onus is on you to prove it and demonstrate why it's true. Here are some ideas for proof points:

- Statistics – ideally independently generated
- Awards and accreditations
- Analyst or media endorsement
- Customer references, testimonials or case studies

It helps to shape these messages into some simply crafted **customer-facing statements**. This doesn't have to be campaign-ready copy, but something that captures the essence of your message to each audience, using the right language and tone of voice. Think of these as 'sound bites', i.e. brief, memorable phrases that capture your message in a few words that could apply in most communication scenarios.

4. Compare, test and validate



If you're promoting a product into a competitive arena, you need to bring some awareness of your competitors' messages, to determine whether what you want to say differentiates you strongly enough. Even if you don't technically have a unique selling point (USP), you can still drill into your offering until you find the details that set you apart from your competitors and make sure that these come through strongly.

It's also important to stress-test the messages with a range of internal audiences and – if possible – some customer focus groups, so that you can see how well they resonate and whether they bear external scrutiny. There's no point devising a clever message that looks great on paper but loses credibility or impact the minute your sales team tries to bring it into a customer conversation.

5. Bring your messages to life



Once these messages are defined, documented and validated by the key internal stakeholders, you have the foundation of your campaign narrative and can start to build.

With the message captured, you can set about interpreting this creatively, through copy and visuals.

The value of the messaging framework will quickly become apparent. Well executed, it serves to focus all communication, ensuring that your story is clear, consistent, relevant and repeated. Consistency means accurate delivery of your messages in all media and through all channels, everywhere. Relevance means your messages will resonate with your target audiences. Repetition is key to drive your messages home.

Ultimately, the messaging framework also supports with measurement of communications activity, because all work can be judged on its effectiveness at conveying the message to the audience in question.

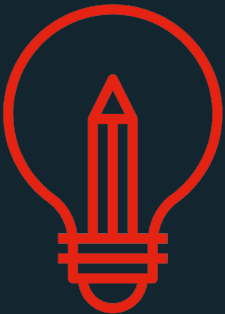
WE'RE HERE TO HELP

We've helped many of the leading brands in our speciality sectors lay the foundations for successful customer communication.

If you need support to craft strong messages that will cut through with your audiences, get in touch.

WHAT WE DO

- Internal and external stakeholder research
- Competitor messaging analysis
- Social and market listening
- Messaging workshops
- Detailed value proposition development
- Message frameworks
- Stress-testing, FAQ development
- Documentation/collation of proof material
- Messaging blueprints for campaign consistency
- Multi-channel content based on defined messages
- Sales enablement collateral
- Talk-tracks for customer facing teams
- Communications training for confident message delivery



For a more detailed exploration of how we may be able to help, get in touch.

Further guides are available to download from the AD Info Hub at
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