



Ten Tips for an Effective Communication Approach

We all know the importance of a good message. An effective messaging should also be part of a communication approach that gives long-term structure for the creation and deployment of your messages. This allows you to focus your communication efforts in a way that best reinforces your overall goals. Below are ten points to keep in mind as you create or modify your communication approach.

1 —————> **Support the big goal.**

The communication plan and messages should be an integrated part of your larger organization or campaign plan. Otherwise, you could be spending a great deal of time and effort on messaging that does not move you toward your goal.

2 —————> **Refresh.**

Plan to review and revamp your messages every two to three years. Messaging research can help determine which messages and messengers are most effective for your community. The issues in your community will change, the players will change, and so the messages and how you deliver them have to be flexible. In some cases messaging can become stale and stop working, while in others the concept will still work with different words. The message focus depends on the community and the audience—and that can change from year to year.

3 —————> **Keep it local.**

Local or regional evidenced-based, data-driven messaging is most persuasive. Stay on top of local data and developments to keep messaging focused to your own backyard and the issues affecting your community.

4 —————> **Bring together strange bedfellows.**

Some issues have the ability to bring together partners who do not often work with one another. By bringing together different partners (veterans, parents, workforce, community colleges, etc.) it shows how important infant and toddler issues are to EVERYONE.

5 —————> **Practice.**

Provide communication training for all partners, staff, volunteers, and clients/families to keep the messaging consistent and ensure everyone is speaking with one voice.

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Make it easy to communicate.

Provide templates and downloads to promote consistency in messaging. If your partners have to search for the messages, they probably will not use them.

7



Engage the media.

Engaging in media advocacy is one of the most effective ways to promote your messages.

8



Paint a picture.

Stay on the hunt for real-life success stories so that you can give tangible, local examples in your communication.

9



Stay positive.

No matter what the current attitude in your community, look for the upside in every argument, and pivot to positive messages. For example, if the community is currently focused on sagging high school graduation rates, say children are “more likely to graduate with early childhood support” instead of “more like to drop out of school.” Or say: “kids who start behind stay behind, but if we work with them early, they will have great success in school.”

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Integrate social media when needed.

Be thoughtful about how you integrate social media and e-advocacy into your plan. Just because others use it, do not feel pressure. Social media works best when it has a strategic purpose. Otherwise, it can appear forced and ultimately backfire.

