

Building a Message

Framing the Issue and Reaching Your Target



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It's all about the fundamentals

- Before writing or speaking, make sure you've worked on the fundamentals of developing your message.

“Anybody can direct a picture once they know the fundamentals.”

– Film director John Ford

Seven steps to messaging heaven

- 1. Frame the message (What, generally?)
- 2. Set goals (Why?)
- 3. Determine the audience (Who?)
- 4. Determine the media being used (Where?)
- 5. Determine the timing (When?)
- 6. Determine the form of the message (How?)
- 7. Finally, create the message (What, specifically?)

(1) What (in general): Framing the Issue

- Define the basic issue
- What are the raw facts to convey, prior to putting adding any messaging (i.e. spin)
- For internal consumption only

Framing the Message

- Don't react immediately – find out more info
- Know your knowledge gaps
- Formulate the points you know you need to get across

(2) Why? - Setting Goals

- What are the goals of this communication?
 - Advocating a particular policy?
 - Broadcasting information w/o expressing an opinion?
 - Marketing for the organization?
- What result are you looking for?
 - Citizens/members active advocating for a policy
 - Better informed audience
 - Contributions to your group

(3) Who? - Determine the Audience

- Who is the intended recipient of the info
 - Public in general
 - Government
 - Members

(4)Where? - Determine the Types of Media

- What media are you going to use
 - Different media will react to different messages
 - e.g. Statewide radio vs the local paper
 - Balance your needs with what you can do
 - If time, do different messages, but often must craft message for several different media types
 - Get to know your media contacts

(5) When? - Timing the Message

- When is best time to put out the message?
 - What is too soon, too late?
 - What deadlines do the different media types have - local paper different than local TV
- How immediate is the need to get the message out?
 - If for an event, maybe plan a couple of releases highlighting different items
 - If for legislation, do you need to know the legislation before commenting?

(6) How? - Determining the Form of the Message

- What's the best vehicle to deliver the message?
 - Press release
 - E-mail blast to members, also sent to media
 - Press conference
 - Personal phone call or visit

(7) What (the specifics)

- Now you're ready to write the piece
- Things to consider:
 - Be concise
 - Assume audience knows nothing
 - Use quotes if possible
 - Be consistent across communications on the same issue
 - Say who you are!

What about the Miles Davis reference?

- Miles Davis - one of the greatest jazz trumpeters and improvisers ever
- Used silence - often quite a bit - as a feature of his solos as much as notes
- In other words: He knew when not to say too much - a good lesson in communications!