Message Mapping Guide

CDCynergy

A SYSTEMATIC PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING AUDIENCE-CENTERED COMMUNICATION

Process & Principles References Card

Focus On. . .	Results In . . .	Learn How . . .
Getting Started	. . . understanding why one of the most powerful tools available for communicating in high stress situations is science-based, message mapping techniques.	• [Center for Risk Communication](#) (.com) • [77 Questions Commonly Asked by Journalists During a Crisis.pdf](#) (PDF 21K) • [Pandemic Pre-Event Maps.pdf](#) (PDF 524K) • [Dr. Vincent Covello_Tutorial.htm](#)
Step 1: Identify stakeholders/target audiences	. . . a prioritized list of stakeholders who are the most important receiving audience.	• [Dr. Vincent Covello Tutorial.htm](#)
Step 2: Identify stakeholder questions and concerns	...a list of overarching and challenge questions for each stakeholder.	• [77 Questions Commonly Asked by Journalists During a Crisis.pdf](#) (PDF 21K) • [Frequently Asked Questions About Disease Outbreaks.doc](#) (PDF 34K) • [Dr. Vincent Covello Tutorial.htm](#)
Step 3: Identify common sets of concerns	. . .knowing which of the questions and concerns (from Step 2) are common and most important across stakeholder groups.	• [Dr. Vincent Covello Tutorial.htm](#)
Step 4: Develop key messages	. . . the key message(s) for each concern/question organized into a message mapping template, developed using message mapping principles.	• [CDC Plain Language Thesaurus for Health Communication.pdf](#) (PDF 225K) • [Message Mapping Template Reference Card](#) (PDF 37K) • [Templates Pocket Guide.pdf](#) (PDF 31K) • [Template Selection Wizard](#) • [Dr. Vincent Covello Tutorial.htm](#)
Step 5: Develop supporting information	. . . supporting facts, information, or proofs for each key message; developed with the same message mapping principles used in Step 4.	• [CDC Plain Language Thesaurus for Health Communication.pdf](#) (PDF 225K) • [Template Selection Wizard](#) • [Dr. Vincent Covello Tutorial.htm](#)
Step 6: Conduct testing	. . . messages that are well tested by experts, stakeholders and partner organizations.	• [Communication-Skills Checksheet for Live Events.pdf](#) (PDF 25K) • [Evaluation of Recorded Events General.pdf](#) (PDF 17K) • [Evaluation of Recorded Events.pdf](#) (PDF 17K) • [Message Mapping Checklist for Reviewers.pdf](#) (PDF 18K) • [Dr Vincent Covello Tutorial.htm](#)
Step 7: Plan for delivery	. . . a plan for making the message maps available when needed, and in whatever format needed.	• [Dr. Vincent Covello Tutorial.htm](#) • [Dr. Vincent Covello --Conclusion.htm](#)

Answers the question	Key messages must answer your problem statement/question.	**No unnecessary absolutes**	Avoid unnecessary absolutes. Eliminate use of words such as "all," "always," and "every."
No unnecessary negatives	Use positive words and phrases. Eliminate unnecessary words and phrases with negative connotations.	**Stand alone**	Make your key message stand on its own without any other messages or supporting information.

AGL-4

During times of high stress, individuals retain only key messages written 4 grade levels below the average reading grade level. Supporting information is more effective when written 2 grade levels below the average reading grade level. Write your key message at 4 reading grade levels below that of the stakeholder. In the United States, the average Reading Grade Level is 10th Grade.

Primacy/Recency

In terms of ease of recall, individuals remember the first message they hear, followed by the last message they hear. The hardest message for individuals to remember is the middle message. Key Message 3 should be your second most important message.

P=(R)+(E) (Perception = Reality + Emotion)

Perceptions of risk are equal to the reality of the situation, plus the emotional factors of the stakeholder (i.e., Perception = Reality + Emotion). Factors other than the risk can influence people's perception of the risk. Risks are more feared when perceived as: Involuntary or imposed, unfair, inescapable, unfamiliar, man-made, threatening children, or controlled by those perceived to be untrustworthy.
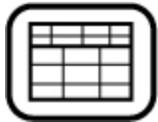
Basic 27/9/3 Template

The Basic 27/9/3 template works well in nearly all situations. The majority of templates are based on the Basic 27/9/3. Strive to limit Key Messages to 9 words. The combined word count of Key Messages 1, 2, and 3 should be 27 words. A proper name counts as 1 word.

1N=3P

When you use a negative word, phrase, or connotation, follow it with three positive messages. Negative messages carry more weight that positive messages. Thus, it takes three positive messages to equal one negative message.

27/9/3

Rule 27/9/3 states that the combination of the supporting information for a key message should equal a total of 27 words, 9 seconds spoken aloud, and 3 key messages. Each supporting information should average 9 words. Proper names count as one word.