

What is your core message?

Your messages have to be clear and effective with an identifiable target audience. The media is a cost effective conduit to get your message across. These messages are very useful when you are doing media interviews such as for a local radio station or a local newspaper journalist who isn't really aware of who you are, what you do and what your priorities are.

Core or 'primary' messages

These messages represent the 'primary' views that you want to represent you in the public domain, be it your organisation, an issue or a campaign. They must have your primary target audience in mind.

It is good to start with three core messages. Message one is the beginning, message two the middle, and message three the conclusion that is 'forward looking'.

They need to be written as if you are 'talking' to somebody. For example, as if you are answering a question during a radio interview. Always put the name of your organisation or the plural pronoun 'We...' to indicate the 'connection' to what you are talking about; personalising it. **(An example of core messages is further down.)**

Here are the three initial steps to take to develop your core messages:

Message 1

What is the issue/area of topical concern that you want to raise awareness of?

Messages 2

Why is the issue/area of topical concern relevant and/or important at this time?

Message 3

What is the future impact of the issue/area of topical concern? For example if what you raise is taken seriously the outcome will be [positive/explain why]. However, if what you raise isn't taken serious the outcome will be [negative/explain why].

Word count for each message: 25-35 words long.

Core messages should be:

- topical
- show an awareness of current trends and developments
- be relevant to your work

Tips

The best core messages are memorable and express your organisation's personality and ethos. You will have to look at this as a work in progress as it takes a few attempts to get it right.

Secondary or 'reinforcement messages'

These back up your core messages and also have your secondary target audience in mind. This is where you go into greater detail. They add weight to your core messages by providing examples to reinforce what you are promoting and saying.

Secondary messages will always link back, in some way, to your core messages, and should indicate what your future plans are.

Word count: 25-30 words.

Tip

Your secondary messages are not set in stone. They will be refined and may change once you use them publicly and in line with the key policy issues that are relevant to what you want to promote.

Brief exercise

Below is an example of core messages and secondary messages. From the language used and topics featured, who do you think the primary and secondary target audiences are?

Core messages – an example

Organisation – UPG

'UPG is a community regeneration agency that pioneers sustainable development, inspires innovative partnerships and encourages social enterprise in West London.'

Core messages

ONE

We believe that by engaging with diverse communities and enabling them to gain life skills, they can compete fairly and effectively to become self-dependent and valued participants in society.

TWO

UPG promotes social inclusion for everyone on an equal basis, from sharing in investments and rewards to the sustainable use of physical resources to achieve personal and professional goals.

THREE

We know we have made progress when communities are doing it for themselves and are no longer reliant on external assistance.

Five secondary ‘reinforcement’ messages (without examples)

ONE

Sustainable communities cannot exist without sustainable partnerships, which is why UPG doesn’t work in isolation.

TWO

Inclusion and diversity are signs of hope and are pillars of strength in a forward-looking community.

THREE

Social enterprise and a business and entrepreneurial spirit are at the heart of sustainable growth.

FOUR

We aim to bring creative and enterprising ideas to life in partnership with the community.


FIVE

Quality standards such as Customer First and Investors in People are essential for the effective delivery of education, training and advice.

Exercise: Your messages

(Use the core messages example above as a guide.)

What are your three primary core messages?


One

Two

Three

What are your five secondary or 'reinforcement' messages?



One (write your secondary message immediately below)

Give an example to back up your message (e.g. statistics, project outcome.)



Two

Give an example to back up your message (e.g. statistics, project outcome.)



Three

Give an example to back up your message (e.g. statistics, project outcome.)



Four

Give an example to back up your message (e.g. statistics, project outcome...)



Five

Give an example to back up your message (e.g. statistics, project outcome...)