

How to Lead a Messaging Session

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Introduction:

Recommended Time: 5 Minutes

Recommended Format: Easel

Review the goals, desired outcomes (e.g., structure our website and our communications), overall run of show, and ground rules (we need everyone's participation, narrow focus to concepts instead of individual words, and place the challenges into the critics' corner).

***In Advance:** Write "Critic's Corner" on a sheet of paper such as a separate easel or a section of the wall.

Ice Breaker:

Recommended Time: 5 Minutes

Recommended Format: Easel

This should be a fun activity to get the group used to speaking up (e.g., Prompt: "if our org were an animal, who would we be and why?" and collect responses).

***In Advance:** Have the ice breaker prompt written on a sheet of paper with room for responses.

Definition:

Recommended Time: 10 Minutes

Recommended Format: Post-It

Open ended brainstorm to understand the functions of the team.

- List all of the team's functional activities and tasks, each on its own large Post-It note.
- It can be helpful to contain the conversation; i.e., brainstorm tasks that an external audience is most interested in.

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Audience:

Recommended Time: 15 Minutes

Recommended Format: Easel

Two part exercise - audience identification and analysis of audience needs.

- List the different audiences. If the list gets long, guide the group to cluster similarities.
- Explore what motivates your audience (e.g., convenience) and the challenges they face (e.g., lack of knowledge). You can use different colored markers to avoid rewriting the needs. Help the group identify the patterns.

***In Advance:** Write “Key Audiences” on a sheet of paper.

Feel/Think/Do:

Recommended Time: 10 Minutes

Recommended Format: Easel & Post-it

Guide the team to think through what they want the target audience to feel, to think, and to do after coming to their websites, reading the brochure, and/or engaging on social media. Go through each step individually but be flexible - *an action oriented group may focus on “do”*.

Use a well-known brand as an example. For instance, the Red Cross wants donors to **feel** compassion towards those in distress, **think** “I can make a difference,” and then **do** something about it by donating funds via website, text, mail or onsite drop off.

***In Advance:** Write “Feel”, “Think”, and “Do” on three separate sheets of paper on separate easels or sections of the wall.

Relevance:

Recommended Time: 15 Minutes

Recommended Format: Post-it

Explore why your audience would come to your organization - what gives you credibility? What differentiates you from others? What are your core strengths? You can reference existing items or draft new ones.

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Elevator Pitch: Value Prop Narrative:

Recommended Time: 15 Minutes

Recommended Format: Easel & Post-It

Identify the key concepts that resonate with everyone (having everyone vote on their top 5-7 items works well). Take some of those Post-It notes that resonate with the group and try to string them together to form a sentence (there will be gaps). The purpose of the exercise is not to focus on the individual words but instead the overall concept.

***In Advance:** Write “The [Name of Org]...” on a sheet of paper such as a separate easel or a section of the wall. Leave space to complete the sentence.

You can stop here if you run out of time - it is a satisfying conclusion.

Supporting Messages:

Recommended Time: 15 Minutes

Recommended Format: Post-It

Leverage additional unused Post-It notes to form sub-messages that support the overall elevator pitch.

Proof Points:

Recommended Time: 10 Minutes

Recommended Format: Easel

Identify data, statistics, information, anecdotes, and/or stories that you have or should collect to support the existing message and supporting messages.

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