

Guiding principles: packaging your key messages

These guiding principles should underlie your communications approach. Focus is often put on the types of communications methods to use - a policy brief, a report, a brochure, a presentation - rather than how to package a message so it sticks in the target stakeholder's mind and helps them to make decisions.

Taking the time to apply these principles will make your communications work more efficient and targeted. They cover:

- Knowing your stakeholders: What are their needs and what are your solutions?
- Getting your message to stick: Use a set of principles to make create sticky ideas Knowing your stakeholders "Not everyone will find your activity useful.

You need to know who your audience is and what information they need in order to communicate with them effectively.

To motivate, you need to tailor your message to your stakeholders so that it is as relevant as possible to their needs.

Therefore be as specific as possible when identifying your stakeholders.

Use the questions below to put yourself into the shoes of your stakeholders.

The answers will help you to target your key messages to their needs and use appropriate communications methods.

Interest and attitude

- How engaged are your stakeholders in your issue?
- Why do you think this issue is important to your stakeholders?
- How receptive will they be to your argument?
- Are they open to change?
- What, if any, political or organisational constraints do they operate in?

Knowledge

- What do they know about this issue?
- What information do they need to engage with your issue?
- What has been their exposure to this issue previously?
- How much technical knowledge do they have?

Communication methods

- How can you answer their information needs?
- Where do they normally get their information from?
- How much time do they have to listen to your key messages?

- What drives them to change their behaviour, e.g. be involved in the maker movement?
- What challenges might you face when presenting your key messages to them?
- How can you overcome these challenges?

Use this information to complete Developing a communications work plan.

Getting your message to stick

“If a message can’t be used to make predictions or decisions it is without value, no matter how accurate or comprehensive it is.” - Chip Heath and Dan Heath, authors of Made to Stick-

What are you trying to achieve when carrying out communications work?

You want to get your stakeholders to act, e.g. take part in your innovation, use your research in funding decisions etc.

We all have good ideas we want people to use, e.g. use your innovation. Sadly, a good idea is not enough to result in change on its own. You need to make your messages stick in the minds of your stakeholders.

You need your messages to be understood, remembered and have a lasting impact.

You need to change your stakeholders’ opinions or behaviour and get them to act.

“A lie can get halfway around the world before the truth can even get its boots on.” - Mark Twain, Author

The good news is, you don’t need a huge advertising budget to get your message to stick - think of the urban myths that spread without an advertising agency’s help.

Once we know something, it is hard to imagine not knowing it.

SUCCEs Luckily, there are six principles, making up the acronym “SUCCEs”, we can use to help us make our ideas stick:

1. Simple - what is the core of our message?
2. Unexpected - How do we get our audience to pay attention?
3. Concrete - How do we make our ideas clear?
4. Credible - How do we make people believe our ideas?
5. Emotional - How do we get people to care about our ideas?
6. Stories - How do we get people to act on our ideas?

These principles are the result of analysing hundreds of sticky ideas by brothers Chip Heath, Professor of Organizational Behaviour at Stanford University, and Dan Heath, Senior Fellow at Duke University.

Using SUCCEs in communications products

The SUCCEs principles are especially helpful when drafting your impact summary - a short summary of the key impacts your project has had.

Your impact summary can be used for multiple purposes:

- Elevator pitch: One to three minute speech to grab the attention of your stakeholders and get them to change their behaviour.
- Policy brief: A concise summary presenting research or project findings that address an urgent and relevant problem and can offer evidence-based recommendations for action.

Simple - What is the core of your message?

Simple messages mean stripping your ideas down to the single most important thing to say

Simple does not mean dumbing down, it means uncomplicated.

A simple message should:

- be profound and have meaning
- help people know how to act

“Simple” can be split into two parts:

1. Finding the core of the message: Prioritise your messages so that your ideas are stripped down to the most important idea. If you say ten things, but don't really say anything substantial, your stakeholders will get decision paralysis, not knowing which idea to remember and act on.
2. Making your message compact: Explaining new ideas takes attention and attention is already scarce so use what your stakeholder already knows.

Therefore, research your stakeholder so you know which analogies to use.

Example: Simple and complicated messages

Simple

- One message
- Compact, uses analogies

Complicated

- Many messages
- Explains all the detail, no analogies

Simple: If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.

Complicated : It has been shown that a person working on a business idea on their own will make progress very quickly, perhaps in a year or two. However, if that person worked with a team - of about eight - 20 people in a small business or 100-200 if it is a bigger company -they will be able to make their business grow in a way that is sustainable.

Simple: Think twice before laughing along, making is no joke!

Unexpected - How do we get our stakeholders to pay attention? And how do we keep it?

The unexpected principle helps us to grab and keep the attention of our stakeholders.

Surprise gets attention: This happens when our guessing machines fail; we expect something and then it doesn't happen or the opposite occurs. Target your stakeholder's guessing machines by asking yourself:

- What is counterintuitive about your core message?
- What are the unexpected implications of your core message? Interest keeps attention: Curiosity happens when we feel a gap in our knowledge.
- How will you make your stakeholder curious so you can fill their knowledge gaps?

Concrete - How do we make our ideas clear? How do we overcome the curse of knowledge?

Research often deals with the abstract and conceptual. Being concrete is the only way to ensure everyone has the same understanding of the concept.

- Be concrete and use sensory language: If you can imagine something with your sense - i.e. see it, feel it, hear it, touch it - it's concrete. Can you use a prop to explain your message, e.g. a mobile phone with a special app on it?
- Paint a specific mental picture: E.g. it's easier to imagine a friend who works in a fablab, rather than any person in the world with doing something you are not able to define.
- Use memory hooks: There are many different types of memories, from feelings to images to smells. Imagine them as hooks. Certain ideas will loop into more memory hooks and therefore stick better.

Credible - How do we make people believe ideas? Information comes from many sources, why should our audience believe our idea?

Understanding your stakeholders helps here. If you are communicating with a funder, they may have heard of your organisation, and citing the name of your organisation could be enough to mark credibility. If you are communicating with someone else, they may not have heard of your organisation and you may need to make sure your message is endorsed by a community leader to get credibility.

Credibility from outside: Use authorities or living proof.

Credibility from inside: Use infographic that shows a relationship, concrete:

- Infographic to illustrate relationships. Statistics are rarely meaningful in and of themselves. It's more important for people to remember the relationship than the number. Bring them to life by contextualising them in terms that are more human, more every day.
- Concrete, specific details: A person's knowledge of details is often a good proxy for expertise. An idea with tangible, concrete, specific details is more believable. Giving the exact location, the service user's name, the exact time, or the service provider's name makes the idea more credible.
- Sinatra Test: "If I can make it there, I'll make it anywhere": Frank Sinatra sang this line in his famous song, "New York, New York". Has your innovation been taken up by another funder or used in a different country? If so, someone's maybe more likely to adopt it.

Testable credentials: i.e. 'try before you buy'. Can you get your stakeholder to test the innovation you are promoting.

Emotional - How do we get people to care about our ideas?

To get people to care about our ideas, we need to make them feel something. Feelings inspire action. Instead of “What’s in it for me?” it’s more “What’s in it for my group?” People make decisions on practicalities - will this decision give me more money and security? But people are more likely to make decisions based on their ideal selves .

How do you get people to act on your idea? The story must reflect your core message, e.g. tell a success story of another country which implemented your policy objective and got results. By telling a story you engage the audience and involve people with your idea, asking them to participate with you. Stories contain wisdom. They tell you how to solve problems, like a flight simulator for the brain, so that when you are in the real situation, you can use the story to help you to solve the problem and make a decision, e.g. a story of a community leader who used your innovation to solve a problem in their village may help other community leaders do the same. Anyone can spot a story.

There are three different story plots that you can use to help you spot a story within your project.

If you find a story with one of these plots that matches your objective, they may help you to inspire your stakeholders to act in a way that you want them to:

1. **Challenge plots** inspire us by appealing to our perseverance and courage. They make us want to work harder, take on new challenges, and/or overcome obstacles. These stories are about obstacles that seem daunting to the protagonist. This is a good plot for advocating for change despite obstacles.

2. **Connection plots** inspire us in social ways. They make us want to help others, be more tolerant of others, work with others, love others. These stories are about people who develop a relationship that bridges a gap - racial, class, ethnic, religious, demographic, or otherwise.

3. **Creative plots** make us want to do something different, to be creative, and to experiment.

And Generally :“Make a stand and ask friend to help spread the word”.

We hope this document will help.

Happy European Maker Week #EMWeek16