

The importance of stress testing your key messages

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When was the last time you reviewed your association's key messages, put them through a stress test, and made sure your team had them ready to go?

If you haven't done it in a while, it's worth the time. Whether it's a conference, networking opportunity or last-minute media interview, the chance to advance your association's goals through great communication can pop up at anytime. It's crucial that you and your team are ready, that your messages reflect your latest positions, and that your audience can relate.

Where to start? Say it out loud! Listen to yourself saying your key messages to ensure they sound strong, natural, and confident.

If your messages aren't strong, here are a few things to consider:

- What's the one thing you want someone to remember?
- Who's the audience, and what do they care about?
- Strip it down to its core – get rid of any unnecessary details or jargon.
- Is there a benefit the audience would want to know about?
- Make it specific and think of a concrete example to back it up.
- Say it out loud again and again until you're happy with it.

Sometimes it helps to have an outside expert navigate the process and provide clarity. Why?

1. **You're too close to it** – You know all the details and context which makes it hard to distill complexity into clarity.
2. **It's tough to cut through the noise** – Different stakeholders with their unique agendas, politics and goals can make it hard to nail down a clear and concise message.
3. **You're not putting the audience first** – What's important to you may not matter to the person receiving your message, or your audience might come with its own perspective which you're not giving enough weight.

A good key message is one that is clear, sharp, and short. It gets your point across and doesn't leave any doubt. Don't leave an opportunity for great communication to chance!

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