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EFFECTIVE MESSAGING

*Green Vision Workshop & Training
Friends of Harbors, Beaches, &
Parks*

March 2, 2007

Balearic Community Center, Costa Mesa

Creativity in Communications

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Green Vision Workshop and
Communications Strategy Training
Agenda
March 2, 2007

2:30 – 2:45 Using Messages that Resonate

- Understanding the Climate
- Using effective Messengers
- Group Messaging Exercises

2:45 - 3:30 Review Training Manual

1. Objectives of a Strong Messaging Platform
2. Defining Your Audience & Targeting Your Message
3. Policy Speak vs. Public Speak
4. Developing & Communicating Your Key Message Points
5. Sample Messaging/Talking Points
6. Helpful Hints for Dealing with the Media
7. Group Discussion Exercise

3:30 - 4:00 Final Questions



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OBJECTIVES OF A STRONG MESSAGING PLATFORM

Developing a focused message and delivering the message in an effective, credible manner is not easy. If your message is compelling but not effectively delivered, you will lose the opportunity to inform and engage your audience.

On the other hand, you may have the means and opportunity to deliver a message perfectly, but the message may be weak, too long, or complicated. If so, it risks being misused or not listened to.

An effective Messaging Platform can achieve the following objectives:

1. Support Policy or Legislative Action.
2. Support Ballot Box Action.
3. Educate, Inform and Engage Key Audiences (Legislators, Policymakers, Stakeholders, Media, and the Public).

An effective Messaging Strategy should utilize the following tactics:

1. Earned (nonpaid) Media: Letters to Editor, OpEds, Press Coverage
2. Grassroots and Guerilla Organizing: Calls to Action
3. Targeted Communications: Phone Calls, Emails, Letters
4. Paid Media: Direct Mail, Advertising, Electronic Media

DEFINE YOUR AUDIENCE, TARGET YOUR MESSAGE



Define Your Audience

Understand who it is that you are directing your message to. Is your Audience:

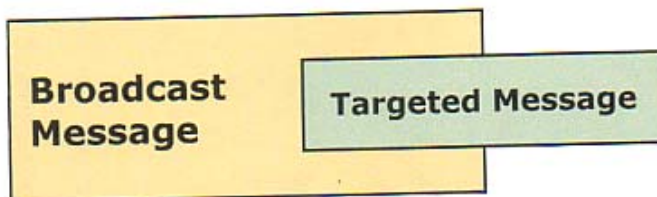
- A Legislative or Political Body?
- Policymakers?
- Stakeholders?
- Media?
- The Public at Large?
- Some or all of the above?

Determine the Most Effective Message for your Target Audience

"Broadcast Messages" are themes that appeal to broad-based audiences across demographic groups. These messages are themes/headlines that should be utilized when talking to the media, in media releases, letters to the editor, and broad-based paid media.

"Targeted Messages" are narrowcast. These are distinct messages that push certain audience groups more effectively, or are used to compel a specific response from a specific audience.

Message Consistency is critical. For example, if you are using a targeted message to compel action from a targeted audience, such as legislative action or a grassroots mobilization, your call to action may be targeted, but the theme should intersect or be consistent with your broad-based messaging.



Helpful Hint:

By its definition, effective messaging should be simple and clear-cut. If you are targeting 10 or 12 different messages for 10 or 12 different audiences, something's wrong. Think in terms of one thematic broadcast message and 1-3 targeted or submessages.



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Policy Speak vs. Public Speak

What a policy wonk might say to fellow policy wonks	Public Speak ("say it in shorthand")
Currently, we are not structured to provide focused delivery of park services and open space benefits. There is no organizational plan for access to parks and open space. An Open Space District will provide a management structure to crease and increase access to our open space areas.	An Open Space District will create more opportunities for residents, children, and families to enjoy parks and open space.
An Open Space District, working in voluntary and cooperative partnership with cities, public agencies, and the private sector, will conserve and protect our open space. The District will not have any land use regulatory power over land it does not own and will create a comprehensive system of parks and asset management.	Our plan allows families to enjoy existing public lands, and property rights will be protected.
The District will have an annual base funding of approximately \$xxx,xxx using TOT funds. This level of funding is sufficient to develop specific plans and implement projects which have minimal net operating costs. The current measure does not request any public funding at this time.	Measure X protects our parks and open space with NO increase in taxes.

HOW TO DEVELOP & COMMUNICATE YOUR KEY MESSAGE POINTS—"LESS IS MORE"



For effective messaging, it is critical that you communicate a short list (ideally one, no more than three) of your key messages effectively and clearly, **with repetition**. **Focus and repetition is key.**

The Headline Statement

Identify a "headline statement".* Eliminate unnecessary explanations, details or facts. Highlight one "eye-catching" phrase, action item or goals. If you have a sole theme, your Audience(s) will pick up on/repeat it.

If working with a community coalition, **consensus and message discipline are critical. Your **messengers should be prepared/trained to stay "on message" to maximize the consistency** of your message dissemination.*

The Messengers & Message Discipline

Broadcasting a **select number** of messages – **ideally only one, and no more than two or three** – and **maintaining message discipline** -- is essential. Though it is useful to have a large group behind your effort, your audience should hear a single, consistent and clear message, not several different sound bites. **Designate one or two consistent spokespeople** to whom you can point your audience(s) to, when questions arise.

Prepare these messengers by:

- Assigning a message point to each speaker.
- Providing them with a "Key Messages" sheet and "Q & A" with possible questions your Audience(s) may have.
- Role-play interviews or community QA with your messengers.

For clarity, choose spokespeople who are prepared and confident in delivering a message. **Repeat, repeat, repeat selected messages for message clarity and discipline.**

Identifying/Training Key Messengers

- **Designate one or two spokespeople** to whom you can point the media when questions arise.
- **Prepare these messengers by:**
 - Assigning a message point to every speaker
 - Giving them a "Key Messages" sheet or talking points with possible questions the Media may have
 - Role-play interviews with your messengers – once is not enough!!
- **Choose spokespeople who are:**
 - Prepared and confident in delivering your news to the media.
- **Control your supporters by:**
 - Informing them of the goal – all should be prepared to pass questions from the media along to the designated spokesperson(s).
- **Include community partners** who can help deliver your messages to key constituencies such as:
 - Affordable Housing Advocates
 - Other Conservationists
 - Civic or Business Leaders
 - Potential Convert Messengers
 - Public Safety (Fire, Nurses, Doctors, Paramedics)
 - Community Organizations
 - Classroom Teachers

SAMPLE MESSAGE & TALKING POINTS "LESS IS MORE"



Headline/Broadcast Messages

- ✓ "The Open Space District will protect and improve our unique natural resources for future generation."

Sub-Messages

- ✓ "The Open Space District creates more opportunities for residents, children and families to access and enjoy parks and open space."
- ✓ "The Open Space District maximizes community use of existing public lands."
- ✓ "Property rights will be protected. The new Open Space District cannot exercise eminent domain."

Helpful Hint: Match messengers to sub-messages. Include community partners such as Affordable Housing Advocates, Educators, Labor Leaders, Public Safety Members, and Ethnic Leaders in your messaging strategy.

****Where resources permit, all messages are tested first in public opinion research (polling) or focus groups to ensure that they are effective, credible themes that persuade and resonate with your audience.**



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Helpful Hints for Dealing with the Media

Getting strong media coverage is a challenge - no matter what your event, story or issue. Effective preparation, organization, focusing on a clear message, and follow-up are the keys to maximizing your media coverage.

Words to the wise:

- ❑ Find out what the reporter wants.
 - *In the words of Fats Waller, "find out what they like, and how they like it, and give it to them just like that..."*
- ❑ Try to anticipate the questions the reporter will ask.
- ❑ Determine your message in advance, and stick to it.
- ❑ Repeat your message. Repeat your message. Repeat your message.
- ❑ Keep it simple.
- ❑ Keep it brief.
- ❑ Don't criticize the media to reporters.
- ❑ Correct misinformation in a question before answering the question.
- ❑ Don't get hostile. *Be falsely cheerful*
- ❑ Don't say anything before, during, or after an interview that you wouldn't want to see in the media.

Tips for Interviews

- 1) Participate in setting the agenda with the reporter. Determine the reason for the interview, the tone of it and the types of questions that will be asked.
- 2) Have your 3-7 points written out in soundbite form.
- 3) Anticipate tough questions.
- 4) Have questions for the reporter.
- 5) Don't use jargon or get too technical.
- 6) Don't speculate. When you don't know the answer, volunteer to get it.
- 7) Don't lie.
- 8) Establish how you will be identified.
- 9) There are no guarantees with "off the record."
- 10) Feel free to ask for clarification if there is any uncertainty.
- 11) If you are not prepared to answer a question defer it till you can.
- 12) Be positive.
- 13) Establish eye contact.
- 14) Don't look at the camera.



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GROUP DISCUSSION EXERCISE

1. You receive a telephone call from the *Orange County Register* asking about your perspectives on last week's Planning Commission meeting, where the Green Vision map was discussed. You:
 - (a) ask the reporter why their coverage is so one-sided, and hang up
 - (b) respond with your opinion
 - (c) say that your proposal is necessary to protect the region's unique treasures
 - (d) refer the reporter to your organization's dedicated spokesperson
 - (e) All of items b - d
2. With regard to media coverage, the best situation is to have:
 - (a) as much media coverage as possible
 - (b) as little media coverage as possible
 - (c) balanced media coverage
 - (d) all of the above
3. Broadcast messages to the public at large should be updated:
 - (a) every week
 - (b) once every few months
 - (c) annually
 - (d) when circumstances change
 - (e) never
4. Targeted messages to activists/stakeholders should be updated:
 - (a) every week
 - (b) once every few months
 - (c) annually
 - (d) when circumstances change
 - (e) never
5. Messages should be contained in the following communications:
 - (a) Letters to the Editor
 - (b) Phone calls to fellow activists
 - (c) Emails/Letters to public agencies considering your Plan
 - (d) For Press Conferences or Press Events
 - (e) In Public Testimony or EIR Letters
 - (f) All of the Above