

## From Questions to Messages

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Now that your organization has asked the appropriate questions to develop your message as we discussed in the previous column, the next step is forming those answers into the actual message. But where do you begin?

Remember that the key questions to ask are about 1) the current perceptions about the organization from both internal and external sources, 2) the ideal perspective you'd like others to identify with your company, 3) your organization's overall business goals, and 4) the audiences and sub-audiences with which you communicate.

If you allow for a free-flow of conversation during your questioning session(s), you'll recognize consistent themes and ideas bubble up. You may not initially observe it during the session(s), but take the time to carefully review all the notes and you'll find patterns of information.

Pay attention as these themes and patterns will influence your key messages. Next, write out three to five bullet points containing this information. You should not have more than five key message points because to make a message memorable, it must be consistent. And for a message to be consistent, it must be easy to repeat. Individuals cannot usually remember more than five key points so streamline to this number or fewer.

Within the bulleted sentences you've identified as key messages, highlight or underline the absolute critical details. This allows individuals to easily catch onto the critical words for better recall. The goal is not to have people state the messages verbatim, but rather be able to communicate them with the critical information shared.

In the next column I'll provide some insight on how to effectively conduct message training.