

Message Training: The Key that Unlocks the Communications Door

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Published by [Rockford Register Star](#)

Monday, July 2, 2007

Developing a corporate- or organization-wide message is absolutely critical to ensure your customers, potential clients, and/or donors clearly understand what your organization does. As is usually the case, individuals receive varying messages about your company from different sources which makes it hard for them to support or distinguish your business, products or services from competitors.

During the past few columns, I've shared how to develop a message for your company, but once the clear and concise messages – which shouldn't exceed more than five key bullet points – are identified, the next step is the most significant: training.

Here are some ideas for messaging training:

- Schedule a company-wide – or depending on the size of the organization, a department-wide – session to outline the message in five (or fewer) key points
- Ask real-world questions that your staff or board might receive about your company and/or products/services
- Schedule weekly meetings – 15 minutes in length (or incorporate into regularly scheduled meetings) to have the team leader ask questions that would come from an outside source (e.g. media, vendor, potential donor)

One client we work with actually holds a round-robin Q&A during their weekly team meeting. One person is chosen at random to ask a question and directs it to one of the other employees. Everyone evaluates the answer and the person that answers then becomes the questioner. This takes only five minutes of their weekly meeting, but it has proven extremely effective for them.

Taking some time upfront to identify your message and then train your organization on how to communicate that message has more impact than almost any other communications activity.