

Using a Message Wheel to Keep Your Messaging on Track

A **message wheel** is simply a visual format for organizing the messages that are key to your issue. Your most important message – that one thing you always want to share – is placed in the middle of the wheel. Supporting statements – which would likely include the problem, solution, and one or two other key statements - are placed around the wheel like spokes. Points that explain or expound on your supporting statements are added under each heading.

You will want to use the central message every time you communicate about your issue, whether you are writing a letter to the editor or Op-Ed, speaking to a neighborhood group about your issue, answering questions about your cause, or being interviewed in the media. Sounds simple, right? When you are the one in control of the message, like writing a letter to the editor or preparing a presentation, it should be. You don't have to use every point every time. Just select the supporting messages that are most likely to resonate with your audience, add examples, stories and descriptive language to paint the picture for the audience. Make it your own!

However, in situations where you are responding to questions, such as during an interview, following a presentation, or when meeting with a decision maker about your issue, making sure you are coming back to your central message can become a little more tricky. This is when the visual layout of the message wheel can be an especially helpful tool for you and your spokespeople. **The message wheel helps show the connections between your supporting messages and your central message.** When you are asked a question, find that thread that can take you back to a point under a supporting statement and bridge to that. Once you have made it to your supporting statement, you can link back to your central message.

To use this tool most effectively, spend some time digging into it and thinking about examples from your school, your neighborhood, or your family that you could share to personalize your messages. When you are writing, use those examples to make your cause more relatable to others. When you are preparing for an interview, think about the arguments that those who disagree with your position might bring up and plan a response that can bring you back to your central message – and then practice your response. By bringing the most important points for your issue into one place and using it, you'll be sure to keep your messaging on track.

STREETS BUILT TO SHARE™

The Problem:

- Getting around by walking or biking has been increasingly difficult for children and families due to a lack of safety features such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and crosswalks.
- Communities with a few or no sidewalks experience more crashes.
- Neighborhoods are becoming increasingly clogged by traffic.
- Children are less active today and get less physical activity, which could lead to health-related conditions such as diabetes.

*Complete streets increase safety for all users.

- It's not enough for streets to be safe for drivers – whether walking, running, riding a bike, or driving a car, we all deserve the right to access routes that keep us safe.
- When streets are designed and built to share with sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks and curb ramps, there are fewer car crashes - drivers, and people walking and riding bicycles are all safer.
- With *complete streets children and their families have safer routes to school, recreation areas, after-school programs and work.

Communities with streets that include bike lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks, and curb ramps improve everyone's health by making it easier and safer to be active.

These *complete streets are proven to increase physical activity and reduce crashes.

*Complete streets are good for communities of all sizes.

- *Complete streets help create a Culture of Health – a community where the healthy choice to be active every day is made available to all residents.
- Bike lanes and sidewalks strengthen communities and keep everyone safer.
- When people can walk and bicycle in their communities, more people are out on the streets and neighbors are better able to keep an eye on one another.
- Sidewalks, curb ramps and crosswalks increase accessibility to parks and playgrounds for children and families.
- Sidewalks and bike lanes support small businesses by increasing foot traffic and customers.

*Complete streets improve health.

- Children and families become more active with access to *complete streets and sidewalks.
- Children and their families will walk and bike to school more often.
- Families have access to more ways to be active.
- Encourage families to walk and bicycle and be more active, and therefore prevent heart disease, diabetes and strokes.
- More people walking and bicycling can lead to reduced traffic and improved air quality.

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*Be sure to use the term that is most relevant for your city/state i.e. complete street, bike lanes, smart streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.

Updated 02/12/16