

Using a Message Wheel to Keep Your Messaging on Track

A message wheel is a simple 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.

Serve Kids Better™

Our lives are busy, and more and more, we're grabbing a meal on the run or eating out.

- Children consume almost twice as many calories at restaurants compared to a typical meal at home.
- The majority of children's meals at the most popular restaurants are packed with calories, salt, sugar, and saturated fat.
- Sugary drinks, which are too high in sugar for kids and are harmful to their health, are often served as the automatic drink with kids' meals.

Major chain restaurants around the country are making changes proving healthier options are possible.

- Milk, water, or 100 percent juice should be served with kids' meals, not sugary drinks such as soda or fruit drinks. In fact, McDonald's, Wendy's, Dairy Queen, Burger King, Jack in the Box, IHOP, and Applebee's have chosen to remove sugary drinks from their kids' menus.
- Kids' meals should include more fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Kids' meals should not be too high in calories or sodium.

To help parents, decision makers can ensure that restaurants are making kids' meals healthier by providing water, milk, and 100 percent juice instead of soda and other sugary drinks and by offering meals that include more fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.

These small changes will help kids see these healthy options as the norm.

Decision makers should ensure that meals marketed to kids are healthy.

- When the healthy option is the automatic option, most parents will stick with it.
- These changes can help reduce kids' risk of diet-related diseases, like type 2 diabetes and heart disease by providing nutrition more like the meals kids would eat at home.
- Marketing healthy foods will help enable kids to grow up at a healthy weight.

Parents want more healthy choices for kids.

- It is important that restaurants offer healthy food and beverage options – especially for kids.
- Parents want restaurant menus expanded to include more healthy options.
- Parents are trying to do the right thing. When parents have better options for their children at restaurants, it cuts down on kids' requests for sugary drinks and junk food, which every parent appreciates.
- Kids will order meals that come with fruits and vegetables instead of french fries.