



The Art of Developing Key Messages

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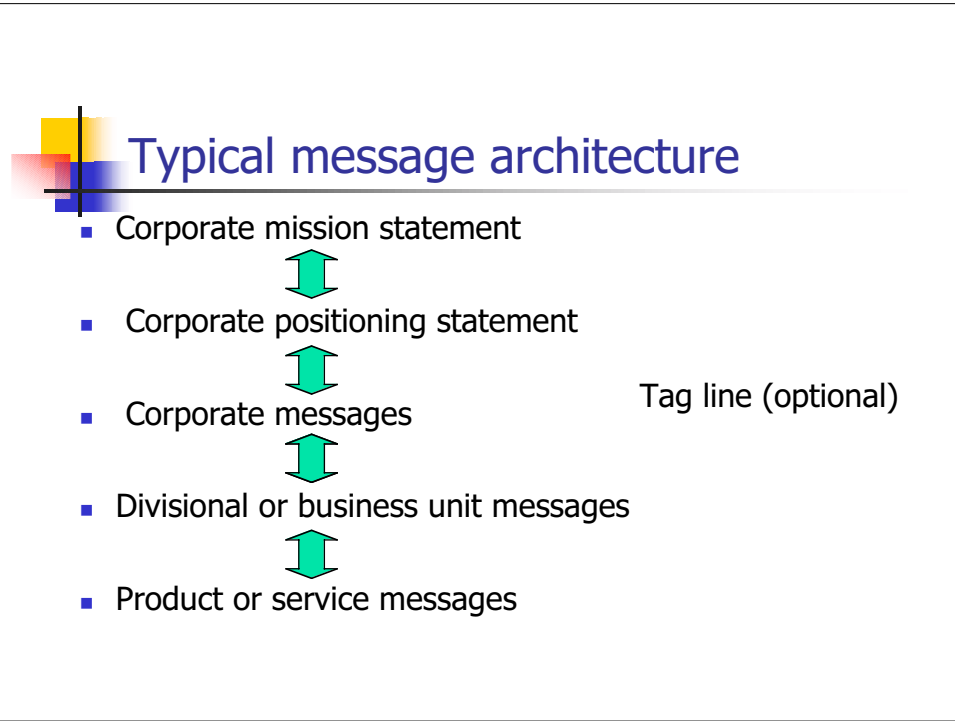
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What is a messaging architecture?

- A way to describe the soul of a company or organization
- A formal structure
- Unifies an organization's messages
- Strengthens brand identity/positioning




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- ## Messages target constituents
- Address needs and concerns of:
 - Investors/potential investors/shareholders
 - Customers and prospects
 - Competitors
 - Employees
 - Political, industry or governmental organizations
 - The general community
 - Media
 - Suppliers/vendors/partners



Message classifications

- Business
- Financial
- Positioning
- Technology
- Product or service
- Strategy



When should a messaging architecture be developed?

- Always, but especially when the company is facing change, heightened competition, financial difficulty, etc.
- If the organization is sitting upon a strategic cusp, it needs new/revised messaging



Examples--Company or organization:

- Not growing or changing
- Entering major new markets
- Reaching out to new donors, contributors or partners
- Beginning a capital campaign, or creating an endowment
- Facing a crisis
- Facing new or stronger competition



Messaging source materials

- 1) Understand where the company or organization is headed and how it plans to get there
- 2) Learn what constituents think of the company or organization
Can one set of messages serve all these constituencies?
- 3) Determine what brand values the company represents



Messaging source materials (cont'd.)

- 4) Factor in the fundamental values of the organization (purpose, mission, vision)
- 5) Review corporate, divisional and product marcom materials



Materials to review

- Business plans and strategy documents
- Market/competitor research
- Marketing communications plans--advtg. & PR
- Development plans
- Employee or staff perceptions
- Investor or donor perceptions
- Customer, client and prospect perceptions (former or lost)



Materials to review (cont'd.)

- General community perceptions of the company or organization
- Corporate vision (purpose, mission, vision)
- Leadership team perceptions
- Media perceptions
- **And, if you are very lucky, branding agency research—(commission it, if necessary)**



Branding agency research

- Gives deep insight into the personality of the company or organization
- Values--positive or negative
- Tone
- Style
- Format



Getting started

- 1) Start by developing a positioning statement for the corporation/organization, and then one for each major division or group
- 2) Develop the messaging umbrella for the entire platform--three key messages for the corporation or organization, plus supporting points for each.
- 3) Develop key messages for each group or division, plus supporting points



Be creative—use what works for you

- Remember, you are developing:
 - a tag line
 - a positioning paragraph
 - perhaps a positioning page
 - messages for corporate, and each division
- I usually begin with the tag line first
 - a single phrase that captures the essence of the organization



Tapping your creative powers

- Think as though you're preparing the CEO for an interview
- Read everything, and highlight key phrases
- Write down ideas as they come to you
- Do not censor yourself
- Develop your best ideas, not just what you think you can "sell"



Creative messaging output

- Positioning paragraph
- Positioning statements for corporate, divisions
- Key messages for corporate & divisions, plus supporting points
- A tag line (often optional)



Process: more important than the words?

- Messaging deals with the heart and soul of an organization
- Major constituencies need to feel they've had full input
- Preview drafts with an inner circle of reviewers
- Take feedback, make changes, get approval
- Then review messaging with a wider set of reviewers (executive staff?)



Case studies

- Tektronix, Inc.
- SSMO
- Friends of Hoyt Arboretum