

How to Create a Core Message

FOR YOUR CAUSE

Related Cause Clarity topics:

- How to identify audiences
- How to customize your message



This worksheet is a complementary guide to help you put into practice the advice found in our "How to Create a Core Message for Your Cause" video. Each 3-minute video is packed with information and is designed to be watched multiple times—even while you are completing this worksheet.

WHAT Create a strong, clear core message for your cause

TIME REQUIRED 40 minutes

WHO IS INVOLVED We suggest brainstorming responses as a team. Alternatively, you can start this process alone and then refine with a larger group.

It's hard to stand out. Advertisers spend millions to devise ways to get you to remember their products. You may not have their budget, but you can cut through the clutter with a strong, simple core message. Many causes make the mistake of devising a dozen complex messages that even they cannot commit to memory. If those close to the issue or organization cannot remember your message, how will anyone else take notice? When creating a core message that can be easily repeated it's good to ask yourself the following question, "**What makes me unique?**"

This worksheet provides three questions that will help you formulate a core message, so you can talk about your cause in a simple, relatable way that will inspire people to learn more and support you.

1. What need or challenge do you address?
2. What is your solution or approach?
3. What benefits or results do you create?

Here is an example:

Centralized Nonprofit Services (CNS) helps nonprofits get the funding they need to succeed. Their mission statement is, "to facilitate the fiscal health of the social sector in the tri-state region." Not much of an attention-grabber. After brainstorming responses to the three questions here is the core message created:



Do you know how hard it can be for a small business to get loans from banks? Well, the same can be true for nonprofits and social ventures. CNS helps nonprofits and others working for social good get the funding they need to grow. With a repayment rate of over 95%, our program ensures the financial health of nonprofits and secures the vital services needed in our community.

➔ For more help, contact Hershey Cause Communications at CauseClarity@HersheyCause.com or visit CauseClarity.org to see other How-To's.

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Define yourself before someone else does. An effective core message will open conversations that lead to great relationships. Answering the following three questions will help you create a message for your cause that is compelling, succinct and will inspire people to learn more.

1. What need or challenge do you address?

Brainstorm for five minutes about why you exist in the big picture—why people come to you.



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2. What is your solution or approach?

Brainstorm for five minutes on what is different or unique about your work. Avoid programmatic details that get you into the weeds. Instead, think about how, where, and in what ways your organization is addressing needs and challenges.



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3. What benefits or results do you create?

Brainstorm for 10 minutes about the impacts on individual lives and on the community overall? What has changed because of your cause's work?

Now, summarize these into your core message, using just three short sentences (or no more than 75 words). Share your draft with colleagues and refine. It will be sharpened over time as it is used by you and others.



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Tips for writing a core message:

- Focus on people
- Tell a story
- Highlight benefits and results
- Keep it simple so it can be remembered and used consistently

Tips on how NOT to write a core message:

- Do not use your mission statement
- Do not list facts and figures
- Do not go into a detailed description
- Do not use jargon