



# Make Sure Your Core Message Gets Through

These cost-effective steps will assure that your message reaches your target audiences.

*By Paul Lemberg*

**H**ow much of your marketing is reaching your prospects where it counts? Are they acting on your call to action? Are they thinking about your message? Are they even reading it, at all?

A lot of what passes for marketing today bounces off your prospects because the messaging is weak. “Messaging” is a fancy marketing term for the guts of what you’re trying to tell people.

Your core message announces to the world all the wonderful things your organization can do for them, why it’s a great thing they can’t live without, and why they absolutely must choose you instead of someone else. The following seven cost-effective steps will help insure that yours hits your target.

**1. Personally revisit your core message** with fresh eyes and ears. Do this even if you’ve done it recently. Think about what you’re saying and make sure it’s the message you want to communicate. Read it out loud to be certain it sounds the way you want it to.

**2. Test your message** on real live people. Have them feed it back to you, in their own words. Is it something they care about? Something they have a passion for? A need for? A desire for? Do this with a mix of existing customers and not-yet customers in your target market.

**3. Look at the methods you’re using** to communicate that core message. Focus on the benefits, and the benefits of the benefits. Often a lot of good communication gets lost in superfluous details. Clarify and eliminate all the distractions.

Use this tactic: Examine your website, promotional materials, and fundraising letters: Print them out, and use yellow markers to highlight the words that speak to your core message. Most people are shocked to see they don’t communicate their core message very well – or they do it almost as an afterthought, perhaps with a little phrase under the logo or something like that.

Your core message has to permeate your documents. Don’t be too subtle.

**4. Launch an assault** on your marketing materials. Don’t change them all: Focus on those that most frequently get used. The marketing idiots who say “We have to redo all our literature!”? Fire them. Replace them with someone who says, “You know, I think that we can get our message across if we just re-work this one and that one and leave the rest alone.”

**5. Set up a system that gives feedback** to let you know if your message is reaching home. The simplest way to tell is to check whether people are acting on your call to action.

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(If they aren't pursuing you, you know you're not getting through to them.)

**6. Create an e-mail capability** that lets you communicate with your clientele on a continual basis in a way they'll value. And just as in “off-line,” don't send them self-aggrandizing garbage. Send only meaningful communications that provide something real for your donors, clients, and prospects.

**7. Develop a customer communications calendar – a mixed media marketing calendar** that ensures your audience is receiving your message often enough to keep you in mind. If your goal is to touch people monthly, every six weeks, quarterly, or weekly, put it on your calendar. When the reminder pops up on your calendar, be ready to do something – call, e-mail, visit, mail, throw a party for, send flowers to, or otherwise engage with the people on your list. That's how you'll assure they won't forget you. **S**

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*Paul Lemberg (paul@lemborg.com) is the author of numerous books about communication, including Faster Than the Speed of Change and Be Unreasonable. He consults with organizations to help them attain sustainable, long-term growth.*

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