Connect for Success Symposium

The Importance of Messaging

Rob Martin, BrandSync

September 21, 2015
1:00-2:00pm
BrandSync’s Clients
Messaging Process

1. Create a Simple Message/One Thing
2. Pick Target Audiences
3. Customize the Message for Audiences
4. Inform Internal Audiences
5. Measure the Results

Key Question to be Answered:

*How do you create messaging to increase the engagement of families in their child’s educational planning?*
Parent Engagement Requires Excellent Messaging

➢ Connect
  • Examples of ways school staff can connect with parents

➢ Engage
  • Provide parenting support
  • Communicate with parents
  • Provide a variety of volunteer opportunities
  • Support learning at home
  • Encourage parents to be part of decision making at school
  • Collaborate with the community

➢ Sustain
  • Develop solutions for challenges to sustaining parent engagement

Messaging is Key is to Marketing Success

• The message is the key to all marketing communications. And the brand is the heart of the message.
• Throughout the year, you will probably have multiple messages to deliver.
• You may work on a common theme, but even if you don’t, the messages should be related to your brand and mission.
A Powerful Message Depends on Finding Your One Thing
State the Main Message in One Sentence

• Writing out the main message in a single sentence is something that happens more towards the end of the planning than the beginning.
• In the process of developing the message and supporting campaign, you’ll write many sentences.
Define the Target Audience

• Once your main message is ready, or perhaps as you plan to develop the message and campaign, pick the audiences that are to receive the message.

• The more defined the audience, the more attractive your messaging will be.

• This is also the time to begin planning to measure results.
Customize the Message for Each Audience

- The purpose for creating that one-sentence summary becomes clearer at this point. It’s time to customize the message for each audience.
- Learn everything you can about each target group. What are their values? Why should they care about your cause, your message?

*tailor your message, strengthen your brand*
Tailor The Message

- Tailor your message for each communications channel as well as each audience.
- Ignoring space limitations, styles on Facebook and Twitter, for example, are different, as are messages for radio and TV.
- Know your channels and customize your message for each one.
Inform Your Internal Audiences

• Your internal audiences are important messaging agents.
• Even if they are not the intended recipients of a particular messaging campaign, be sure they know what’s going on.
• People who receive the messages will ask them, so enable your internal audiences to support your messaging by sharing and explaining in advance.
Measure the Results

- Plan to measure the results to know if your communications are having any effect.
- Measurable results are related to your call to action.
- If you are using social media to recruit people, such as a FB event, it is easy to track.
- Trial and error helps you optimize your messaging and tactics.
Messaging Case Study:
VCU School of Education
2013 Strategic Messaging
The VCU School of Education’s Advancement Council initiated the strategic branding process.

VCU School of Education Advancement Council

- Barbara-Lyn Belcher
- Jo Lynne DeMary
- Mike Fraizer
- Bob Marchant
- Walter Robertson
- Brian White
Internal brand research revealed a number of value drivers for the school.

**VCU SOE...**

- Provides an ideal educational experience that balances research and applied learning in an urban setting that serves as the ultimate proving ground.
- Develops outstanding practice opportunities for students to learn in urban and peri-urban school settings.
- Understands the complexities of education enabling it to lead in teacher preparation, research, and policy development.
- Creates, promotes and facilitates the highest quality growth opportunities.
- Invests in serving the community and recruiting outstanding faculty.
Messaging points were prepared for “external” testing.

• **Achievement** – Investing in serving the community and recruiting outstanding faculty who are committed to publishing and attracting research grants.

• **Balance** – Providing an ideal educational experience that balances research and applied learning in an urban setting that serves as the ultimate proving ground.

• **Growth** – Placing a high value on growth by creating, promoting and facilitating the highest quality opportunities for personal, professional, and community growth.

• **Leadership** – Understanding the complex nature of education in a myriad of settings, to lead in teacher preparation, research, and policy development.
Respondents chose “Balance” as most important followed by “Leadership.”

- “Leadership” rated highest, but potential students most often chose “Balance” as the most important value driver.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Rated #1</th>
<th>Rating Ave.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Achievement (Investing in serving the community and recruiting outstanding faculty.)</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance (Providing an ideal educational experience that balances research and applied learning.)</td>
<td>39.0%</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership (Understanding the complexities of education to lead in teacher preparation, research, and policy development.)</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>4.55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Growth (Creating, promoting and facilitating the highest quality growth opportunities.)</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number answered question: 213

Source: 2013 VCU School of Education Strategic Branding Survey
Strategic branding direction was determined from the branding research.

EDUCATION SHAPERS

It's on the news, and in every state of the union address. America needs to reform its education system, improve test scores, and equip our children with 21st-century skills. To do this, we must put a greater emphasis on advancing the field of education as a whole. VCU School of Education is doing that every day — but we need to grow and expand if we are to shape the future of our country’s schools. This approach would constantly express the importance of the issue at hand, taking our School to a higher level — one that supports the quest for a better world.
Visual branding direction was the next step.

Photographic apple mnemonic device.

SYMBOLIZING OUR PRESENCE

The presence of VCU’s School of Education creates change for the better. We can symbolize our presence through a green apple, placed in the scene in various concepts. Shown here, the green apple in a school’s lab shows that our presence is the inspiration behind new ways of teaching. In another concept, a child holds up the apple, as our presence is furthering education in general. And our presence on an empty stool in a classroom tells the reader that America’s classrooms need the innovations and skills taught by VCU.
America’s schools and communities need our graduates.

You’re part of a school that’s shaping the future. Welcome.

VCU School of Education

Make it real.
Brochures

For innovation in education. More innovators.
Messaging Campaign: Case #1

- **Goal:** Coalition’s support of vital environmental strategies and public health and wellness-related initiatives.

- **Key Message:** “Be a catalyst for promoting wellness in the City of Richmond.”

- **Tactics:** Planning process, development messaging, branding, and production of monthly productive meetings.

- **Outcomes:** Successfully recruited membership of required sectors, and organized and advocated for an unprecedented Youth Risk Behavioral Survey in Richmond Public Schools.
Messaging Campaign: Case #2

• **Goal:** Recruit a diverse groups of focus group participants.

• **Key Message:** “Guide the future diversification of the Richmond Ballet.”

• **Tactics:** Phone/email invitation, networking, incentives, database development, Craig’s list advertising and incentives.

• **Outcomes:** Successfully highly diverse group of participants to inform marketing of Richmond Ballet’s Nutcracker.
Messaging Campaign: Case #3

• **Goal:** Make the local chapter become relevant and grow.
• **Key Message:** “Lead and organize with others to make your policy priorities happen in Richmond and Virginia.”
• **Tactics:** Campaign leader cultivation, development of messaging, branding, networking and hosted activities.
• **Outcomes:** Successfully recruiting diverse and active membership who are collaborating on initiatives.
Messaging Campaign: Case #4

- **Goal:** Recruit a full complement of Management Committee members, including parents, for RCEEA.

- **Key Message:** “Make the school a better place for your child.”

- **Tactics:** Networking, leadership, scheduling, definition of expectations, roles & responsibilities, partnerships, and productive meetings.

- **Outcomes:** Successfully recruited Management Committee membership.
Thank you!

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