Developing Your Talking Points: Using a Message Map

DRINKING WATER RISK COMMUNICATION TOOLKIT

Use message maps to develop talking points that are focused and concise. When messages are mapped, everyone within an organization and any potential communication partners are working from the same key messages.


The process used to generate message maps can be as important as the end product. Message mapping exercises – involving teams of technical experts, communication specialists, and policy experts – often reveal a diversity of viewpoints within an organization for the same question, issue, or concern. The process can bring everyone to a common understanding of an issue and develop buy in for using the messages that are developed.¹

Developing and using message maps achieves several important risk communication goals:

▪ identifying stakeholders early in the communication process
▪ anticipating stakeholder questions and concerns before they are raised
▪ organizing our thinking and developing prepared messages in response to anticipated stakeholder questions and concerns
▪ developing key messages and supporting information within a clear, concise, transparent, and accessible framework
▪ promoting open dialogue about messages both inside and outside the organization
▪ providing user friendly guidance to spokespersons
▪ ensuring that the organization has a central repository of consistent messages
▪ encouraging the organization to speak with one voice

Steps to Use a Message Map

1. Identify list of stakeholders.
2. Identify stakeholder questions and concerns.
3. Analyze question to identify common sets of underlying concerns.
4. Develop key messages in response to the stakeholder concerns and questions.
5. Develop supporting facts and proofs for each key message.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Message</th>
<th>Supporting Fact #1</th>
<th>Supporting Fact #2</th>
<th>Supporting Fact #3</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are the main 3 messages for this issue/topic?</td>
<td>Fact that supports the main message.</td>
<td>Fact that supports the main message.</td>
<td>Fact that supports the main message.</td>
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<tr>
<td>#1</td>
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