



Keeping Out the Wonks: Message Development

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#CMPA13

ProActive Communications

Keeping Out the Wonks: Message Development

Founded in 1996

Full service strategic communications firm

Public affairs/digital PR/video productions



Fortune 500 companies

Federal/state experience in all 50 states

Differentiators:

Agile

Accountable

Digital solutions

Verifiable ROI

Presentation purpose

Help communicators and public affairs teams
work together
Strategies for crafting a winning message



**Messaging for policy issues, reputation
and visibility can be hard**

Effective messaging requires...

Data gathering

Resource development

Compelling, inspiring words

Collaborative review processes

Selling your message internally

Plans for rapid response

Adapting to changing dynamics

...and more

Wonks come from all corners

Content experts
Lawyers
Engineers
Regulatory
Marketing
Finance
Executives
...and others

10 tips to keep out the wonks

Tip #1 – Hunt and gather

Hunt externally

Gather internally

Tip #2 – Lay the groundwork

Define objectives for your company

Identify all internal decision makers

Envision possible risks and threats

Abide by the golden rule: do no harm

Tip #3 – Words matter

Style by F.L. Lucas (1955)

Brevity

Clarity

Honesty

Passion and control

Revision

Sophistication and simplicity

Tip #3 – Words matter

Find and study thought leaders

Be your own worst critic

Step back, take breaks, return

Tip #4 – Apply quality control

Put yourself in audiences' shoes: would you care?

Two sets of eyes before final

Internal: upward management

Online tools:

storytoolz.com

surveymonkey.com

thesaurus.com

Google keywords tool

Tip #5 – It takes one to know one... don't be a wonk

Be a wonk interpreter

process and synthesize their vast knowledge

scrub industry terms and lingo

Assume your audience knows nothing

Point to the destination point card

Tip #6 – Write a lot

Draft master talking points, define themes

Build a portfolio of multi-purpose fact sheets

Identify your negatives

Stay current on all related issues

Tip #7 – Write a little

Restrain your inner wonk

Synthesize issue resources

Shrink the change

- Limit to 140 characters

- Brainstorm taglines

Tip #8 – Test Granny and clear the path

Sell your message to the uninformed

Gauge the ask: awareness/action?

Limit the clicks to access information

Streamline text to enable action

Tip #9 – Unify around your message

Brief and train senior leadership

Disseminate messages internally

Establish system of ongoing approvals

Limit approvers to as few as possible

Tip #10 – Visualize your message

Infographics are growing

Who has time to read anymore?

Technology supports visual messaging

Show them, don't tell them

10 tips to keep out the wonks

- 1 – Hunt and gather
- 2 – Lay the groundwork
- 3 – Compelling words work for you
- 4 – Apply quality control
- 5 – It takes one to know one... don't be a wonk
- 6 – Write a lot
- 7 – Write a little
- 8 – Test Granny and clear the path
- 9 – Unify around your message
- 10 – Visualize your message

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