

THE 5 M'S OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATIONS

Communications include anything you say, write and show people about your issue or cause.

It includes internal and external communications and can be as simple as how you structure a meeting or as dynamic as podcasts and email blasts.

With strategic communications being both a process and a product, it can be difficult to know where to begin. Having an understanding of **THE 5 M'S OF SUCCESSFUL COMMUNICATIONS** is a great place to start.

MARKET

MESSAGES

MESSENGER

MEDIUM

MATERIALS

MARKET :

Your market means the people you want to reach. Identifying, understanding and prioritizing your market will help you determine the rest of the 5 M's. Markets are specific. Your *entire* community is not a strategic market. Break them down into smaller groups by identifying specific characteristics.

MESSAGES :

Messages are what you want to communicate to your market. Messages should be clear, consistent and geared to the group you want to reach. They should also be compelling and resonate with your identified market.

MESSENGER :

The messenger is the person you want to communicate your message. Choosing the right messenger means identifying who is influential with your market. The messenger heavily influences the market's ability to hear the message. It's OK to have multiple messengers. For instance, a doctor in your community may have credibility with a group of parents, but a local sports star may be more compelling to a group of youth.

MEDIUM :

Medium is the mode of getting the messages across. It is the bucket that holds the specific materials used to communicate a message. Because messages can be delivered in a variety of ways, choosing the right medium for delivering your message is critical.

MATERIALS :

Materials are tools that reinforce your messages. They exist in all mediums and vary in appeal, reach and cost. Depending on which medium you choose to deliver your message, there are a variety of materials from which to choose.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE 5 M'S:

MARKET

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KEY QUESTIONS :

- Who are the people you want to reach?
- Who's already engaged in the conversation around this issue?
- Who's missing from the conversation?
- Why are you reaching out to these audiences?
- What do they care about?
- What values or perceptions do they hold?
- What do they already know about the issue?
- Can they be segmented into smaller groups based on common interests?

CHALLENGES :

- Segmenting your markets into distinct target groups takes time and effort.
- Learning about your markets takes time and effort.
- Different markets have different values and concerns.

BENEFITS :

- A thoughtful approach will increase the success of your outreach.
- It helps ensure you successfully share information, cultivate support or increase engagement in your collaborative.

MESSAGES

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KEY QUESTIONS :

- What is your primary objective? (E.g., share information, cultivate support or get people involved in your collaborative?)
- What issues will most resonate with your market? (E.g., concerns about the food system, childhood obesity, social justice or neighborhood safety?)
- What is their perspective on the issues?
- What values or perceptions do they hold?
- What assumptions or associations do they have about the issue?
- What's in it for them? Do not assume people will care because it's the right thing to do.
- How can you make the issue more personal and compelling?
- When people talk about your issue, what do you want them to say?
- What are the top three things you want your market to know about your issue? How do you prioritize your messages?

CHALLENGES :

- Prioritizing messages.
- Customizing messages.
- Speaking plainly without jargon.
- Creating messaging that everyone is comfortable not simply writing, but speaking.

BENEFITS :

- Segmenting your audiences helps you to create more effective messaging.
- Messaging can help contextualize data and evaluation statistics into compelling and memorable stories.
- Prioritizing your messages can help prioritize the work that needs to be done in your community action plan.
- All collaborative members are Food & Fitness ambassadors. Message training workshops set them up for success.

MESSENGER

The messenger is the person you want to communicate your message.

Choosing the right messenger means identifying who is influential with your market. The messenger heavily influences the market's ability to hear the message. It's OK to have multiple messengers. For instance, a doctor in your community may have credibility with a group of parents, but a local sports star may be more compelling to a group of youth.

KEY QUESTIONS:

- Who has the ear of the people you want to reach?
- Who does your market trust?
- Who will add credibility to your message?
- Is this the best person to deliver the message?
- Is there someone in your collaborative or whose support you already have that could deliver your message?

CHALLENGES:

- Sometimes the person who has the ear of your market isn't the best person to deliver your message.
- A desired messenger may not understand or be invested in the issue.
- Training messengers to use the message framework takes time and effort.

BENEFITS:

- Engaging people of influence for your market will increase the number of people who are active ambassadors of Food & Fitness.
- Many times messengers are already engaged in the issue; they just haven't been strategically engaged as ambassadors.

MEDIUM

Medium is the mode of getting the messages across. It is the bucket that holds the specific materials used to communicate a message. Because messages can be delivered in a variety of ways, choosing the right medium for delivering your message is critical.

KEY QUESTIONS :

- What medium will be best for reaching your market/target audience?
- What other information about your market would help you successfully communicate with them?
- Do the people you want to reach already use, or have access to, the medium you selected?
- Does the medium give you enough room or time to make your point?
- Is it the most cost-effective way to reach your target audience?

CHALLENGES :

- While each has its value, one medium may be more appropriate than another for the message being delivered and for the people you want to reach.
- Remember to consider medium before deciding on specific materials.
- Some mediums may be effective but cost prohibitive.

BENEFITS :

- Selecting a medium that your market is already using increases the likelihood that your message will be heard.
- Each medium has associated best practices, which you can reference as you develop yours.
- Thinking about medium helps to ensure you don't limit your market's opportunities to encounter your message.

MATERIALS

Materials are tools that reinforce your messages. They exist in all mediums and vary in appeal, reach and cost. Depending on which medium you choose to deliver your message, there are a variety of materials from which to choose.

KEY QUESTIONS :

- What materials are most appropriate for your message?
- What materials would be compelling to your market/target audience?
- What type of materials would work with the type of message and information you want to convey?
- What materials would be most effective with which messenger?
- While there might be a variety of effective materials, how would you prioritize them to have the greatest impact and/or within the resources available?

CHALLENGES :

- Prioritizing the development of materials can be difficult.
- It is easy to get stuck in a rut and redo the same material.
- Developing materials takes time, skill and resources.

BENEFITS :

- This can be fun, creative work.
- Developing materials is a great way to engage youth, community members and media partners.
- Each medium and material has associated best practices, which you can reference as you develop yours.

MEDIUM & MATERIALS

PRINT MATERIALS

- Brochure
- Case study
- Annual report
- Flyers
- One-pagers
- Postcards
- Bookmarks
- Business collateral (e.g. letterhead, envelopes, business cards, etc.)
- Newspaper/magazine advertisements
- Event materials (e.g. invitations, table tents, thank you notes, etc.)

ONLINE

- Email (e.g. standard, HTML, e-newsletter, e-alerts)
- RSS feed
- Instant messages/text chains
- Google Map
- Podcast
- Video
- MP3 audio files
- Blogs
- Social bookmarks (e.g. Del.icio.us, Digg, ReddIt)
- Website (e.g. brochure site, open source site, etc.)
- Social networks (e.g. LinkedIn, MySpace, Facebook, YouTube)
- Online advertisements

IN PERSON

- Meetings
- Conferences
- Presentations (e.g. multimedia, PowerPoint, etc.)
- Retreats
- Field trips
- Workshops
- Trainings
- Festivals
- Special Events
- Community gatherings

TELEVISION

- Public service announcements (PSAs)
- Paid advertisements
- Interviews
- News spots

RADIO

- Public service announcements (PSAs)
- Paid advertisements
- Talk radio
- News spots
- Interviews