

Using a Message Wheel to Keep Your Messaging on Track

A message wheel is a simple visual format for organizing the messages that are key to your issue. Your most important message – that one thing you always want to share – is placed in the middle of the wheel. Supporting statements – which would likely include the problem, solution, and one or two other key statements – are placed around the wheel like spokes. Points that explain or expound on your supporting statements are added under each heading.

You will want to use the central message every time you communicate about your issue, whether you are writing a letter to the editor or Op-Ed, speaking to a neighborhood group about your issue, answering questions about your cause, or being interviewed in the media. Sounds simple, right? When you are the one in control of the message, like writing a letter to the editor or preparing a presentation, it should be. You don't have to use every point every time. Just select the supporting messages that are most likely to resonate with your audience, add examples, stories, and descriptive language to paint the picture for the audience. Make it your own!

However, in situations where you are responding to questions, such as during an interview, following a presentation, or when meeting with a decision maker about your issue, making sure you are coming back to your central message can become a little more tricky. This is when the visual layout of the message wheel can be an especially helpful tool for you and your spokespeople. The message wheel helps show the connections between your

supporting messages and your central message. When you are asked a question, find that thread that can take you back to a point under a supporting statement and bridge to that. Once you have made it to your supporting statement, you can link back to your central message.

To use this tool most effectively, spend some time digging into it and thinking about examples from your school, your neighborhood, or your family that you could share to personalize your messages. When you are writing, use those examples to make your cause more relatable to others. When you are preparing for an interview, think about the arguments that those who disagree with your position might bring up and plan a response that can bring you back to your central message – and then practice your response.

By bringing the most important points for your issue into one place and using it, you'll be sure to keep your messaging on track.

Restock Our Future™

Many public places lack healthy food and beverage options.

- There is increasing consumer demand for healthy options.
- People want more healthy food and beverage options in public places.
- Businesses are offering healthier food and drink options; public places should do the same.

Providing healthy food and beverages can be good for business.

- Seventy-one percent of consumers are trying to eat healthier, so providing healthy food increases potential customer base.*
- Some restaurants, supermarkets, and other businesses are listening to their customers and making healthier food and beverages more available. States and localities should do the same.

**National Restaurant Association. On the Menu: Restaurant Nutrition Initiatives. 2013.*

There are few, if any, healthy food and beverage options in many public places, like parks, recreation centers, libraries, and other state and city facilities and buildings.

Millions of kids and families visit and work in public places and many of them are trying to eat healthier. They should have healthier food and drink options.

Decision makers should ensure that healthy food and beverages are available in public places.

- To help all kids grow up at a healthy weight, we must offer them healthy food and beverage options in the places they spend time.
- When kids and families eat healthier, it decreases their risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- States, cities, and counties should lead by example. They spend money on wellness programs, so they should complement these programs by offering healthier food and drinks in public places. This can help save money and improve community health in the long run.

What we eat and drink impacts our health, but we tend to eat what is easily available.

- Eating and drinking healthy food and beverages decreases the risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
- If healthy food and drinks are available in public places, people have the option to make healthy choices and build healthy habits.
- Offering healthy food and beverage options in public places is a sensible strategy because many families are trying to eat healthier.