



Brand Messaging Starter Kit

Includes: Brand Messaging Checklist + Brand Messaging Worksheet with Analyze & Apply Section
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Brand Messaging Checklist

A quick-reference guide to ensure your brand messaging is clear, consistent, and compelling.

1. A clear, concise mission statement.
2. Your core values (3–5 keywords that define your identity).
3. A short elevator pitch (20–30 words).
4. Tone and voice guidelines (how you sound across all channels).
5. Key phrases or taglines you repeat intentionally.
6. Audience-specific adaptations (variations for donors, customers, partners).
7. Consistency across platforms (website, email, social media, print).
8. Emotional connection points (stories, values, vision).
9. Proof points or credibility markers (awards, data, testimonials).
10. Alignment with your visual brand (logo, colors, imagery).

Brand Messaging Worksheet

Your brand messaging is the foundation of how people experience your organization or business.

It's more than a tagline or logo—it's the consistent, compelling way you communicate who you are, what you do, and why it matters. Without it, your audience may feel unsure, disconnected, or overlook your value altogether.

The Brand Messaging Starter Kit walks you through ten essential elements of effective messaging, with prompts and real-world examples so you can refine your statements and apply them consistently across every channel.

Even if you've never done this before, this guided worksheet will help you identify and document your core brand message with confidence—giving you the words, tone, and clarity you need to attract the right people and inspire action.

Step 1: Crafting a Clear, One-Sentence Mission Statement

Your mission statement is more than a tagline—it's the heartbeat of your organization or business.

In one short, clear sentence, it should define your purpose and answer three key questions: Who do you serve? What do you do? Why does it matter?

The most effective mission statements are focused. Too many nonprofits unintentionally turn theirs into a “wish list” of everything they hope to do someday. That dilutes clarity, confuses supporters, and can even drift beyond what your bylaws originally outlined when you received tax-exempt status. Staying within your mission keeps you compliant and ensures your activities align with your stated purpose.

Condensing your mission into one memorable sentence makes it easier for others to remember, repeat, and rally around. It becomes the touchstone for every decision you make, every conversation you have, and every communication you create.

Example: *“We connect low-income families with healthy, affordable meals so no child goes hungry.”*

Mission Statement Editing Checklist (from *Crafting a Clear, One-Sentence Mission Statement Worksheet*)

1. Highlight the Core Purpose
 - Circle the words in your current mission statement that directly answer the “Who, What, Why” questions.
 - Remove anything that's not essential to those answers.
2. Cut the “Wish List”
 - Eliminate programs or goals that are “nice to have” but not central to your founding purpose or bylaws.

3. Replace Jargon with Plain Language
 - Swap complex terms for words that anyone—even outside your field—can understand.
4. Focus on One Main Action
 - Instead of listing every service, choose one primary verb that captures your main function (e.g., “connect,” “educate,” “protect,” “nurture”).
5. Aim for 15–20 Words Max
 - Short enough to remember, long enough to be meaningful.
6. Test It Out Loud
 - Say it to someone outside your organization and see if they can repeat it back in their own words.

Review Mission Statement

Original Mission Statement:

Highlight Who / What / Why:

Cut unnecessary words/jargon:

Final One-Sentence Version:

Step 2: Defining Your Core Values

Your core values are the 3–5 words or phrases that represent what you stand for. These values should guide how you make decisions and interact with others.

1. Identify Your True Non-Negotiables – List all potential values, then circle the 3–5 you could not operate without.

Examples: *Compassion, Transparency, Innovation, Collaboration, Empowerment.*

2. Ensure Alignment with Actions – Give one example of how you live each value.
3. Use Simple, Memorable Words – Avoid jargon unless you define it in a unique way.
4. Prioritize Consistency – Ensure these values show up in hiring, partnerships, and messaging.
5. Test for Resonance – Share with trusted supporters and ask if they feel authentic.

List your core values:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Step 3: Creating Your Short Elevator Pitch

Your elevator pitch is a brief, engaging description of what you do—something you can say in 20–30 seconds. It should spark interest and invite questions.

Format: 'I help [WHO] to [WHAT] so they can [RESULT].'

Example: *'I help small nonprofits create clear, compelling stories so they can attract more donors and grow their impact.'*

Write your pitch:

Step 4: Tone and Voice Guidelines

Your tone and voice describe how your brand 'sounds' when you communicate. Think about how you want your audience to feel when they hear from you.

Choose 2–3 adjectives that describe your ideal tone **Examples:** *Warm and encouraging, Professional and informative, Bold and inspiring.*

Describe your tone and voice:

Step 5: Key Phrases and Taglines

These are 3–4 short phrases or taglines that you use consistently across all your communications. They help people recognize and remember your brand.

Examples: *'Building Bridges, Changing Lives', 'Your Story, Well Told'.*

List your key phrases:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Step 6: Audience-Specific Adaptations

While your core message stays the same, you may adjust the wording for different audiences (donors, customers, partners). Think about what each group cares about most.

Example: *For donors—focus on impact and transparency. For customers—highlight benefits and service quality.*

Describe your adaptations:

Step 7: Ensuring Consistency Across Platforms

Check your website, emails, social media, and print materials for consistent tone, visuals, and core messaging. Consistency builds trust, improves recall and avoids confusion. Your core message, tone, and key phrases should show up across each of these – even if the *format* changes.

1. Audit your channels for mismatched language or style. Website copy, email newsletters, social media posts, printed brochures and flyers, grant applications and case statements, event presentations and speeches.
2. Create a quick-reference brand guide to keep everything aligned.

Notes:

Step 8: Creating Emotional Connection Points

Share a short, real-life story or example that shows the human side of your work. This helps people feel emotionally connected to your mission.

Example: *'When Maria first joined our program, she was struggling to find steady work. Within six months, she had a job she loved and a safe place to live.'*

Write your story:

Step 9: Proof Points and Credibility Markers

These are facts, data, awards, or testimonials that prove your work is credible and effective. Proof points back up your message with evidence.

Examples: *'Served over 5,000 meals in 2024', 'Recognized as a Top Nonprofit by*

Local Press', 'Customer satisfaction rating of 98%'.

List your proof points:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Step 10. Aligning with Your Visual Brand

Your visuals—logo, colors, imagery—should support your brand messaging, not compete with it. When words and visuals work together, they create a cohesive experience.

1. Check for consistency between your visuals and your voice.
2. Update brand assets as needed to reflect current messaging.

Notes:

Analyze & Apply Your Results

Once you've filled out each section, step back and look for alignment. Do your mission, values, tone, and proof points all reinforce the same core story? Are your audience adaptations consistent with your brand voice? The goal is to have a toolkit you can use across every channel—website, social media, email, events—so your message is unmistakably yours.

1. Look for Alignment – Do your mission, values, tone, and key phrases all point in the same direction? If something feels out of place, revise for consistency.
2. Check for Clarity – Could someone outside your field understand what you do after reading your mission and elevator pitch? If not, simplify your language.
3. Identify Gaps – Are any sections blank or weak (e.g., no proof points)? Make a plan to gather missing stories, data, or examples.
4. Refine your drafts until each section feels authentic and aligned.
5. Share with a colleague or trusted partner for feedback.
6. Create Your Brand Guide – Combine your final answers into a one-page reference that you and your team can use for writing, speaking, and marketing.
7. Begin implementing across all communications. Use this messaging in your website copy, grant applications, social media bios, event introductions, and donor letters.
8. Revisit and update at least once a year to ensure relevance or whenever your mission, audience, or programs shift.