

# 10 Key Steps to Crafting Your Message



*Choosing and Using Language, Message  
And Methods to Market Rural-focused Endowments*

*Prepared for Aspen Institute, Community Strategies Group*

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# Introduction: Why develop a rural communications strategy?

1. To accomplish important, strategic organizational goals. (Raise money and friends)
2. Reach your target audience – the 5, 50, or 5,000 people who can help you the most.
3. Direct limited financial and staff resources effectively.



# Introduction:

## What's different about rural?

1. Importance of word of mouth
2. Your reputation
3. Target, target, target
4. The media



# 10 Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

1. Align marketing goals with organizational goals.
2. Set a good marketing goal.
3. Know your “target audience.”
4. Know what you are offering your target audience.
5. Draft a positioning statement first.



# 10 Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

6. You will need other messages, too.
7. Craft messages to use in different tactics.
8. Test your message.
9. When its right, repeat it.
10. Plan first. Then, monitor the progress



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

1. Align marketing goals with organizational goals.

How?

Set organizational goals first. Each marketing goal should relate directly to the accomplishing an organizational goal.



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

Maine CF Case: #1 Align marketing goals with organizational goals

## **3-5 year Organizational Goal:**

Build MCF's "strategic assets."

- Financial gifts
- Volunteer program
- Donor Services
- Board and Staff

**1-year goal:** New and existing donors contribute \$25 million to MCF endowment



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## 2. Set a good marketing goal.

### How?

- Identify the “target audience” to be reached
- The specific measurable outcome you want to achieve
- The timeframe for achieving that outcome





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## MCF Case: #2 Set a good marketing goal

Existing donors contribute \$15 million to existing funds by December 2002.

Professional advisors recommend MCF to new donors, who contribute \$10 million to create 30 new funds by December 2002.



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MCF case: #2 Know what you want your target audience to do:

- Donors: Contribute to existing funds or create new ones.
- Professional Advisors: Recommend clients establish funds at MCF.



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## 3. Know your “target audience.”

- The 5, 50, or 5,000 people who can help you reach your marketing goal.
- Does not = broad, general public.
- Why target? You have limited resources. It is neither strategic nor practical to spend time and money reaching audiences that can't help you. Put your dollars to work more effectively by targeting and prioritizing your audience.



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## MCF Case: #3 Know Your Target Audience

### MCF knew this about its asset growth:

Foundation assets were growing at a rate of 20- 23% annually.

60% of gifts annually came from existing donors.

Board members contributed 25% of all gifts to the foundation. Close to 50% of all gifts were solicited by or suggested by board members.



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## MCF Case: #3 Know Your Target Audience

MCF knew this about their target audience:

Existing donors:

- 52% of donors are 65 years of age or older; 22% are between the ages of 55 and 64.
- 72% are married.
- 78% have incomes of \$100,000 or more and 28% have incomes \$250,000 or more.
- They are interested in making charitable gifts for altruistic reasons:
  - 21% to improve services and help organizations
  - 21% to “give back” and share wealth.
  - 15% to support Maine youth and scholarships.



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## MCF Case: #3 Know Your Target Audience

MCF knew this about their target audience:

Existing donors: (continued)

- They chose MCF because of its reputation and its knowledge of Maine.
- They have an impressive understanding of MCF's contributions to the state.
- 93% are completely satisfied or satisfied with Maine CF.

Professional Advisors:

- Most new gifts come from professional advisors
- They are seeking information in estate planning and planned giving to better serve their clients.



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## MCF Case: #3 Know Your Target Audience

MCF gathered this information from:

- Its financial and donor records of asset growth and sources of contributions.
- Market research in the form of a written survey of all donors.
- Market research in the form of a written survey of prospective donors.
- Telephone interviews and focus groups conducted by a marketing firm.



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## 4. Know What You Are Offering Your Target Market

### ■ **Product/Services**

- What products and services are you offering to your target market? (Check-writing, designing grant programs, types of funds)
- What does your audience think about you and these offerings?

### ■ **Price**

- What are you charging for your services/products?
- Is it competitive with others offering similar services?
- Will your customer pay it?
- Will your price cover your costs? If not, how will you cover your costs?

### ■ **Promises**

- Can you deliver what you are offering? Don't promise what you can't deliver.





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## MCF Case: #4 Know What You Are Offering Your Target Market

What MCF offers its target audiences:

Donors:

Services:

- Grantmaking and processing gifts and grants
- Fund statements
- Asset management and oversight
- Connecting donors to areas of interest
- Identifying funding opportunities for donors
- Solicitation of grant applications
- Evaluating results of grants.



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## MCF Case: #4 Know What You Are Offering Your Target Market

What MCF offers its target audiences: (continued)

### Types of Funds:

- Donor advised
- Agency
- Competitive
- Designated
- Interim
- Scholarship
- Supporting organizations

### Planned Giving/Estate Planning



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

## MCF Case: #4 Know what you are offering

MCF's prices:

■ Donor advised	1%
■ Agency	.65%
■ Competitive	1.10%
■ Designated	.65%
■ Interim	Interest or 10% pass through
■ Scholarship	1%
■ Supporting organizations	.5%-1%



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## 5. Draft a positioning statement first

- It will help staff, board and volunteers “get on the same page” when communicating your distinct value to your target audience.
- It will help you craft other targeted messages to reach specific marketing goals.



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

## 5. Draft a positioning statement first.

An organization's "positioning statement" serves as the foundation and the useful companion for all your marketing messages – because it contains the core information you always want to deliver in every medium to influence perceptions of your institution and its products and services.

Think of your positioning statement as a "cheat sheet" of answers to the key questions about your organization that your customers or target market is likely to ask – when you deliver the message specified to your particular marketing goal.

It requires you to articulate in a concise and brief statement your distinct value to your staff and "customers" in comparison to others who offer similar services.



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## Your Positioning Statement Answers:

**Who:** Who are you?

**What:** What business are you in?

**For whom:** What people do you serve?

**What need:** What are the special needs of the people you serve?

**What's different:** What makes you different from those offering similar services?

**So what:** What's the benefit? What unique benefit does a client derive from your organization, product or service?



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

## MCF Case: # 5 POSITIONING STATEMENT

The Maine Community Foundation is the leading charitable resource for donors seeking to provide long-term support to strengthen Maine communities:

- It offers an unmatched range of community organizations to support.
- It combines intimate statewide knowledge of Maine communities with innovative thinking about how to strengthen them.
- It engages donors in charitable giving by working in partnership with them.
- It meets donors' financial goals through tax advantages and successful and responsible investment strategies.



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

## 6. You will need other messages, too

- A positioning statement serves as a foundation for creating other messages, but it's not the only message you will want.
- A positioning statement will serve you well when you talk to your target audience directly – as individuals and in a group.
- In general, a positioning statement is too wordy, cumbersome and complicated to communicate well in an advertisement, a tagline or a public education campaign





# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

## 7. Craft messages to use in different tactics

- Look at both your positioning statement and your marketing goal.
- Pay close attention to the specific target audience identified in your marketing goal to create a message that resonates with this group.
- Consider the medium/vehicle you will use to communicate this message. (Publication, television, radio, advertisement, event, direct mail)
- People who can boil the essence of a positioning statement down to a catch-y tagline or message are like poets. They are a rare breed. If you don't have the talent in-house. This is a good time to hire the right talent.



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MCF Case: #7 Other targeted messages:

**Tagline:**

*Fulfilling the promise of giving*

**Advertising:**

**Upscale magazine:**

*Here for Good*

**Public Radio/Television:**

*The Maine Community Foundation, working in  
Partnership with charitably minded people to improve  
the quality of life in Maine.*



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MCF case: # 7 Our message aimed to be:

- Clear, simple and concise.
- Capture hearts first, then minds.
- Bold with assertions



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

## 8. Test Your Message

The target audience is the most important critic of  
Your message and your approach.



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MCF case: #8 test your messages with its target audiences in focus groups.

MCF repeated the key points of the positioning statement and used its targeted messages repeatedly in meetings, speeches, publications, advertising, on its web site, and direct mail.



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## 9. When its right, repeat it

**Awareness** is built on recent-cy, frequency and potency. (The number of times and ways people hear about you plus the power of your message.)

### The Rule of Three

1. If they hear about it once, they may ignore it.
2. If they hear about it from another source, they may stop and think.
3. If they hear about it one more time, they may do something about it.



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

## 10. Plan first. Then, monitor the progress

MCF case:

**Plan:** MCF decided to use marketing to raise assets and visibility of the foundation among its target audience.

**Budget:** MCF borrowed \$200,000 from its endowment, with backing from the board, to fund its marketing activities for two years.

**Manage:** The Marketing Director was lead manager of the effort, with active involvement of the President, Vice President for Development and marketing committee.



# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

## 10. Plan first. Then, monitor the progress

### **MCF case:**

**Test Message:** The message was tested with the target audience in focus groups, then the marketing committee, board and then in publications and other media.

**Monitor:** MCF monitored effectiveness of effort by paying attention to gifts, whether they were new or existing donors, how new donors learned about the foundation, its endowment and the strength of the economy.

**Choose the Messenger:** Depending on the individual or group being addresses, the deliverer of the message changed from Board President, CEO, donor, staff person.





# Key Steps to Crafting Your Message

**And one more step. Evaluate the effectiveness of your chosen strategy.**

**MCF Case: #10 The proof is in the results:**

**Adjust goal:** When the market began falling, MCF adjusted its endowment-building goal from \$25 million to \$18 million. In the end, MCF assets increased by \$20 million in gifts.

**Budget:** MCF decided to cut the marketing budget when it realized it might not make its marketing goal from \$150,000 to \$100,000.

**Be Selective:** When the marketing budget was trimmed, MCF chose only to spend its dollars in ways it knew would reach its target audience: publications, selective advertising.