

# Developing Your Program Message

Glenn Barnes



Image Source: Utah DEQ



UNC  
ENVIRONMENTAL FINANCE CENTER

# Developing a Program Message

- The program message is used to “**inform, educate, and often persuade**” potential funders and partners, and it is “the tool you count on to ensure that [these] target audiences know about you or your offer, believe they will experience the benefits you promise, and are inspired to act.”

# Developing a Program Message

- It's really about promoting your program to funders
- Understand why people support wetlands
- Get comfortable discussing your program
- Focus on program results, not details

If you were the funder, what information would you want to know?

Why do people support the environment in general and wetlands specifically?

# Good News, Bad News

- The vast majority of Americans support protecting the environment
- But most Americans give the environment a low priority rating when asked to rank issues at election time.

# Support for Environmental Projects

- It's not enough to make people aware of current environmental conditions
- People must believe there is a problem, and they must believe that problem can be solved

Source: Arvin Murch. "Who cares about the environment: The nature and origins of environmental concern." In *Environmental Concern: Personal attitudes and behavior toward environmental problems*. 1974

# Support for Environmental Projects

- “Without some more-or-less crystallized plan of action [to solve the problem], awareness and optimism are unlikely to produce any significant results.”

# How about for Wetlands?

- For most people, wetland preservation is a “non-threatening” issue
- The same things that motivate environmental action in hazardous situations can also motivate in non-threatening situations. Knowledge leads to increased problem assessment and emotional investment

Source: Syme et al. “Motivation for Reported Involvement in Local Wetland Preservation.” *Environment and Behavior* 25:4. 1993. p. 586.

# First Step

- Choose a project or an aspect of work that you need to finance



# Your Program Message

- Who are you, and what do you do?
- What is the problem to be solved?
- What is your solution?
- What benefits come out of the solution?
- Why does the problem have to be solved now?

# Who are you, and what do you do?



*“Hi, I'm Rachael Ray, and I make 30 minute meals. Now that means, in the time that it takes you to watch this show, I will have made a fast, delicious meal that you can do at home”*

# Who are you, and what do you do?

- Pertains to both you as an individual and your wetland program generally
- Place to mention notable past successes of your program
- Even regular funders and partners need a reminder about your program activities

# What is the problem to be solved?

- Each problem you solve deserves its own individual program message
- Problems and solutions should be described in a way that would be understood by people who do not have a technical background in wetlands

# What is your solution?

## What benefits come out of the solution?

- Description of the benefits of your work is most likely to grab the attention of potential funders and partners
- Which benefit or combination of benefits you present depends on the audience—we'll discuss targeting your message later

# Why does the problem have to be solved now?

- Includes both
  - The urgency of solving the problem
  - The potential cost of inaction

# Crafting Effective Messages

- Stress the ways in which your wetland programs are uniquely situated to solve the problem at hand
- “Why are you different and better than others?”

# Crafting Effective Messages

- Keep your message simple
  - “Clear, concise and free of ambiguity”
- Focus on citizen benefits
- Use words that create vivid images
- Make it easy to remember
- Ensure that style and tone fit the brand



# Focus on Results, Not Details

- In your folders, find the document titled “Tech vs. Business Point of View”

# Focus on Results, Not Details

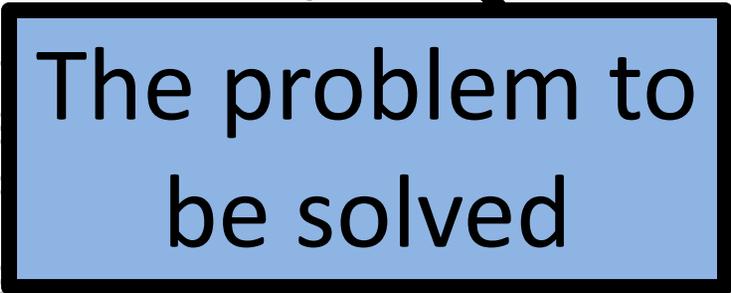
- To facilitate the transfer of information between our West Coast and Midwest offices, I recommend that we purchase Quick Link II communications software and begin to send our communications over a modem rather than by our present methodology of facsimile machines. Quick Link allows the user to emulate a teletype (TTY), a DEC VT102, VT100, or VT52 terminal. Allowable data bit options are 5, 6, 7, or 8; parity may be odd, even, or none; and stop bit allowable settings are 1, 1.5, and 2. Special VT102/VT100 considerations are given if the user is currently operating in the proper emulation modes.

# Focus on Results, Not Details

- Transmitting information between our West Coast and Midwest offices by our current fax machines is causing delays and expensive telephone bills. Just last week we lost an important client because our competitor, Innovation Communication Consultants, found supplies for her company in three days, whereas previously, due to our communications delays, we had taken five. If we switch to the use of a modem and a program such as Quick Link II, we will retain our customer base and also increase the pace of internal communications.

# Focus on Results, Not Details

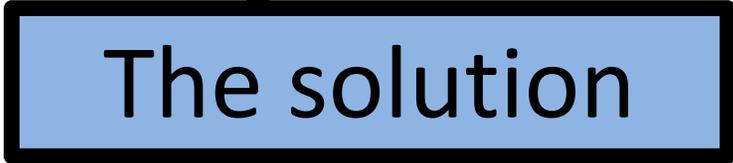
- Transmitting information between our West Coast and Midwest offices by our current fax machines is causing delays and expensive telephone bills. Just last week we lost an important client because our competitor, Innovation Communication Consultants, was able to deliver our company's information in three days, whereas our current fax machine takes three days. Due to these delays, we had taken for granted the use of a modem and a program such as Lotus SmartSuite, which would have allowed us to reach our customer base and also increase the pace of internal communications.



The problem to be solved

# Focus on Results, Not Details

- Transmitting information between our West Coast and Midwest offices by our current fax machines is causing delays and expensive telephone bills. Just last week we lost an important client because our competitor, Innovation Communication Consultants, found supplies for her company in three days, whereas previously, due to our communications delays, we had taken five. If we **switch to the use of a modem and a program such as Quick Link II,** we will retain our customer base and also increase the pace of internal communications.

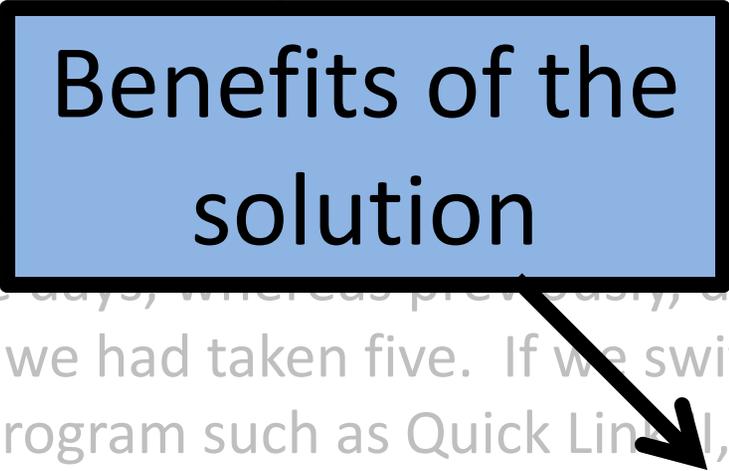


The solution

# Focus on Results, Not Details

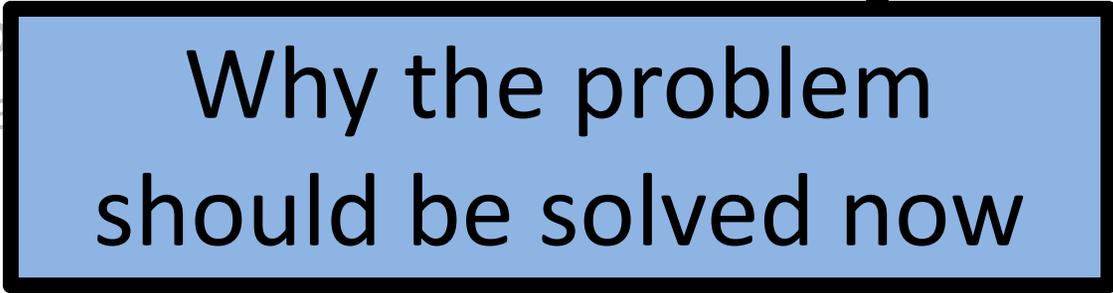
- Transmitting information between our West Coast and Midwest offices by our current fax machines is causing delays and expense. Last week we lost an important competitor, Innovation Community Supplies for her company in three days, whereas previously, due to our communications delays, we had taken five. If we switch to the use of a modem and a program such as Quick Link, we will retain our customer base and also increase the pace of internal communications.

**Benefits of the  
solution**



# Focus on Results, Not Details

- Transmitting information between our West Coast and Midwest offices by our current fax machines is causing delays and expensive telephone bills. Just last week we lost an important client because our competitor, Innovation Communication Consultants, found supplies for her company in three days, whereas previously, due to our communications delays, we had taken five. If we switch to the use of a modem and a program such as Quick Link II, we will retain our customer base and reduce our communication costs.



Why the problem  
should be solved now

# Tailor Your Program Message

- You offer different assets to different collaborators
- Your program message should reflect their needs and interests

# Why Tailor Your Message?

- Answers from public health and medical fields
- Tailored messages are
  - Intended to reach one specific person
  - Based on characteristics unique to that person
  - Related to the outcome of interest
  - Derived from individual assessment

Source: Kreuter *et al.* "One Size Does Not Fit All." *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 21:4, 1999. P. 276

# Why Tailor Your Message?

- Eliminates superfluous information
- Information that remains is personally relevant to recipient
- People pay more attention to information they perceive to be personally relevant
- Personally relevant information motivates people

Source: Kreuter *et al.* "One Size Does Not Fit All." *Annals of Behavioral Medicine* 21:4, 1999. P. 276

# Does Tailoring Work?

- Enhances notice and readership
- Better remembered, read, and perceived as relevant
- More effective for influencing behavior change

# Other Resources

- Crafting an Elevator Speech
  - <http://classes.engr.oregonstate.edu/eecs/fall2007/ece441/2007/docs/elevator.pdf>
  - <http://www.saleslinks.com/sideline/99c/11v1.htm>
  - [http://www.quintcareers.com/writing\\_elevator\\_speeches.html](http://www.quintcareers.com/writing_elevator_speeches.html)