

Tool: Designing your messages



What can I do with this tool?

Designing your communication messages will help you translate your communication objectives for a specific audience into visual and or verbal language This language reflects what you want your target audience to know, feel and do.

For whom is this tool meant?

For professionals who help implement international agreements on biodiversity, climate change and sustainable development

What knowledge is presumed for using this tool?

To effectively use this tool, it is required to understand Key subjects 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the course [Storytelling](#) on [Frogleaps.org](#)

When can I use it?

This tool is best used after you understand your target audience and stakeholders. Without understanding, your messages miss target.

How do I design my messages?

What makes a message effective?

- First you need to understand your audiences & stakeholders. Without understanding, your messages will miss target. The message must connect to the knowledge, attitude and behavior of the audiences. It must be significant for them.
- Your messages need to be easy to understand. Use the wording of the target audience and keep it simple, direct and to the point.
- Your messages need to be credible. They must connect to the identity of the sender. The sender should have a good image with the target audience.
- The message should connect to the communication strategy: do you want to inform, involve, persuade or get people into action? Do you want to trigger emotions or do you choose a cool informative approach?
- The tone of voice should also reflect the strategy: humorous, alarming, fact giving & expert perspective, popular & informal.

Exercise 1: Getting the ingredients for your messages

Designing messages is a creative process

It is most effective to design messages not alone behind your desk, but to do so jointly with your colleagues and with opinion leaders from your stakeholder groups.

Choose a quiet place with a flip chart and markers.

Explain your colleagues your Big Goal, your first doable step, your target audience and your communication objectives (see tool Communication objectives).

Prepare a flipchart in advance like the diagram below or fill in the form below and print it .

| Identifying the ingredients to design your messages: | |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Your Big Goal and first doable sub goal: | |
| Your target audiences: | |
| Current Knowledge: | Desired Knowledge: |
| Current Attitude: | Desired Attitude: |
| Current behavior: | Desired Behavior: |

Exercise 2: Defining messages and visuals

Designing messages is a creative process

Next, ask your colleagues and stakeholders to help you define messages that will change current knowledge, attitudes and behavior to desired knowledge, attitudes and behavior.

Write down the wording of your messages in one column, explain possible visual support in the next column (maps, cartoons, photos, sign boards etc.). Then invite your colleagues and stakeholders to brainstorm and fill in the two columns at the right together. You can use the example of Our case of Simona on page 6 for inspiration.

When you work with partners and you discuss their responsibilities to communicate to their constituencies, it could be part of your briefing to fill in this table together.

| Defining messages and visuals | | | |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Your Big Goal and first doable sub goal: | | | |
| Your target audiences: | | | |
| Current Knowledge: | Desired Knowledge: | Message elements: words: | Supporting visuals: |
| Current Attitude: | Desired Attitude: | Message elements: | Supporting visuals: |
| Current behavior: | Desired Behavior: | Message elements: | Supporting visuals: |

Create your Key message

On the basis of this analysis, you can now create your key message.

If you want to support behavior change, make sure your message contains a call for action.

Key message for: (define your specific target audience)

Key message for Target audience 1:

Key message for Target audience 2:

Key message for Target audience 3:

WARNING!

Once you have drafted your message always pretest it with the target audience and where necessary adapt and improve the formulation of the message.

Checklist: Pre-testing your messages

| Variable pointing to effectiveness | Questions to assess effectiveness | Your answers |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Comprehension | Does the target group comprehend the messages? Are there unexpected interpretations of your message? | |
| Relevance | Does the target group feel that the materials are tailored for them? | |
| Noticeable | Do the materials attract attention of the target group? | |
| Memorable | Does the target group remember the message after a few exposures? | |
| Credibility | Does the target group trust the message/sender/source? | |
| Acceptability | Do the materials and messages connect to the values and culture of the target group? Can you detect mistakes that you can now avoid? | |
| Attractiveness | Would the target group pick up the flyer, stop to read the poster or watch the TV commercial that was prepared? | |
| 'KAP' changes | After being exposed to the materials, did the target group increase its knowledge about the subject or change its attitudes, beliefs or behavioral intentions? | |

Example from Our case of Simona

Defining messages and visuals

Big Goal and first doable sub goal:

Simona's Big Goal: all park visitors should care about biodiversity and protect it.

Her first doable sub goal: develop and implement joint event management for the 1st May celebrations

Simona's target audience:

Opinion leaders from protected area management, municipality, police, local pub, hunters and mountaineering club

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <p>Current Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowing Natura 2000 and Pulsatilla. Knowledge of event management. | <p>Desired Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working together will create a win win situation for all. Basics of event management. | <p>Message elements: words:</p> <p><i>Round table to jointly explore how to make the event a feast for people and nature.</i></p> | <p>Supporting visuals:</p> |
| <p>Current Attitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeing each other as opponents. | <p>Desired Attitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeing each others as partners. | <p>Message elements:</p> <p><i>We all love our Boč mountain meadows, we are all dissatisfied about the current practice of the 1st of May festivities.</i></p> | <p>Supporting visuals:</p> |
| <p>Current behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blaming each other instead of talking to each other. | <p>Desired Behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend round table to explore the problem and jointly develop Solutions. | <p>Message elements:</p> <p><i>Join our round table to discuss how to make the upcoming 1st of May festivities a real feast for people and nature.</i></p> | <p>Supporting visuals:</p> |

Key messages for Simona's specific target audiences

Key message for opinion leaders from protected area management, municipality, police, local pub, hunters and mountaineering club: *'We all love our Boč mountain meadows, we are all dissatisfied about the current practice of the 1st of May festivities, let's explore how we can make the upcoming 1st of May festivities a real feast for people and nature – join our round table to discuss how to make that happen'.*

Key message for the visitors of the 1st of May festivities (the constituencies of protected area management, municipality, police, local pub, hunters and mountaineering club): *'We all love our Boč mountain meadows, that's why the 1st of May all mountain roads are closed; so please park your car and use our free bus service to the park's inn where you can drink, eat, camp safely, play games, enjoy nature and have fun!'* (see next page)

Defining messages and visuals

Big Goal and first doable sub goal:

Simona's Big Goal: all park visitors should care about biodiversity and protect it.

Her first doable sub goal: develop and implement joint event management for the 1st May celebrations

Simona's target audience:

Opinion leaders from protected area management, municipality, police, local pub, hunters and mountaineering club

| | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Current Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not knowing Natura 2000 and Pulsatilla. • Everything is allowed. | <p>Desired Knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowing about Natura 2000 and Pulsatilla • They need to know what they can expect | <p>Message elements: words:</p> <p><i>All mountain roads are closed this year, there is a parking, a free bus service and more facilities to make your stay comfortable.</i></p> | <p>Supporting visuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exhibition on Natura 2000 and the Pulsatilla near the local in non the mountain • Map showing facilities" |
| <p>Current Attitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature conservation is not of my concern, if nature is harmed that is sad, but let's move on. | <p>Desired Attitude:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is good to be careful in nature, especially in protected areas, I want and can contribute to protect our park | <p>Message elements:</p> <p><i>We all love our Boč mountain meadows.</i></p> | <p>Supporting visuals:</p> |
| <p>Current behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Driving cars, riding motorbikes and camping everywhere on the mountain meadows. | <p>Desired Behavior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop driving and camping on the mountain meadows and start using the new facilities | <p>Message elements:</p> <p><i>Park your car and use our free bus service to the park's inn where you can drink, eat, camp safely, play games, enjoy nature and have fun.</i></p> | <p>Supporting visuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Road signs, signs for camping and other designated areas |