Message Mapping:
Creating a Communications Roadmap

Gelb
An Endeavor Management Company

Message Mapping:
Creating a Communications Roadmap

**With message mapping, you can plan what to say and when to say it**

Today's marketing environment is crowded with communication. Messages are delivered by different stakeholders who do not deliver the same message. Instead, they end up "winging it" when addressing common questions or concerns, resulting in messages that are inconsistent, do not align with the brand, or that set unrealistic customer expectations.

In addition, marketing departments, mainly driven by "creatives," try to reinvent every ad so that it reflects the latest idea. In almost all cases, this is poor strategic marketing. It typically takes a consumer several times before a message actually starts to resonate. Changing such too repetitively creates confusion and undermines recall.

Compared to most marketing communications planning tools, the message map has the unique advantage of visually representing your key messages in a concise format (see example under step 2 of the message mapping process). Thus, it can be used quickly and is easily understood. It becomes a template for advertising, website copy, and conversations. And message mapping can be used for all types of audiences.

Message maps can also be created for specific circumstances, such as communication during a crisis or organizational change. Message maps are effective for these purposes, but are also fundamental for everyday situations, such as answering common questions, setting expectations, or clearly communicating differentiation and managing expectations.

We have found that message mapping is most effective when it is a link in the strategic marketing process.
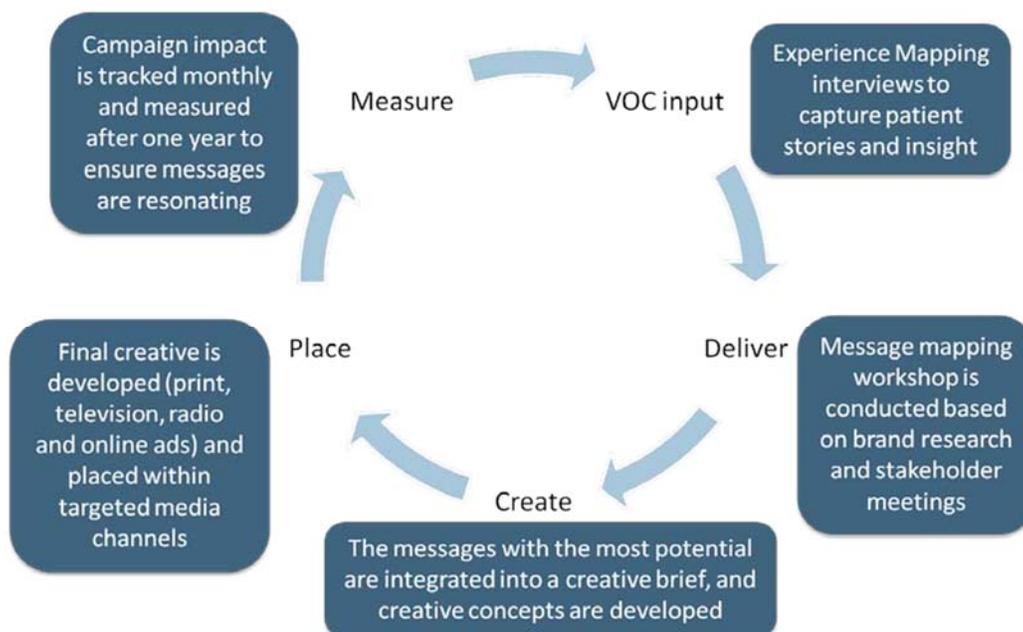
Message Mapping:
Creating a Communications Roadmap

Creating a message map is an interactive process with your team

Step 1: Research Review

Our message mapping process begins an analysis and understanding of the brand promise and pillars. This includes making use of marketing research to understand the key decision drivers, attitudes to reinforce and attitudes to overcome.

The core of our approach is ensuring that message mapping is a research-driven creative process. We use existing information/research and conduct additional research when needed. Our experience indicates that a message map supported by research is best suited to encouraging behavior and delivering ROI.

> How do they see us today?
> - How they make decisions
> - Attitudes to overcome
> - Attitudes to reinforce

Step 2: Message Development

Armed with information from the research review, your team members collectively brainstorm key elements to include in the message map. The discussion should be led by an experienced facilitator who can guide the team to think about how messages will align with the brand and address the needs of each audience (as identified in the research).

> How do we want them to see us?
> - Primary messages
> - Differentiating messages
> - Reasons to believe

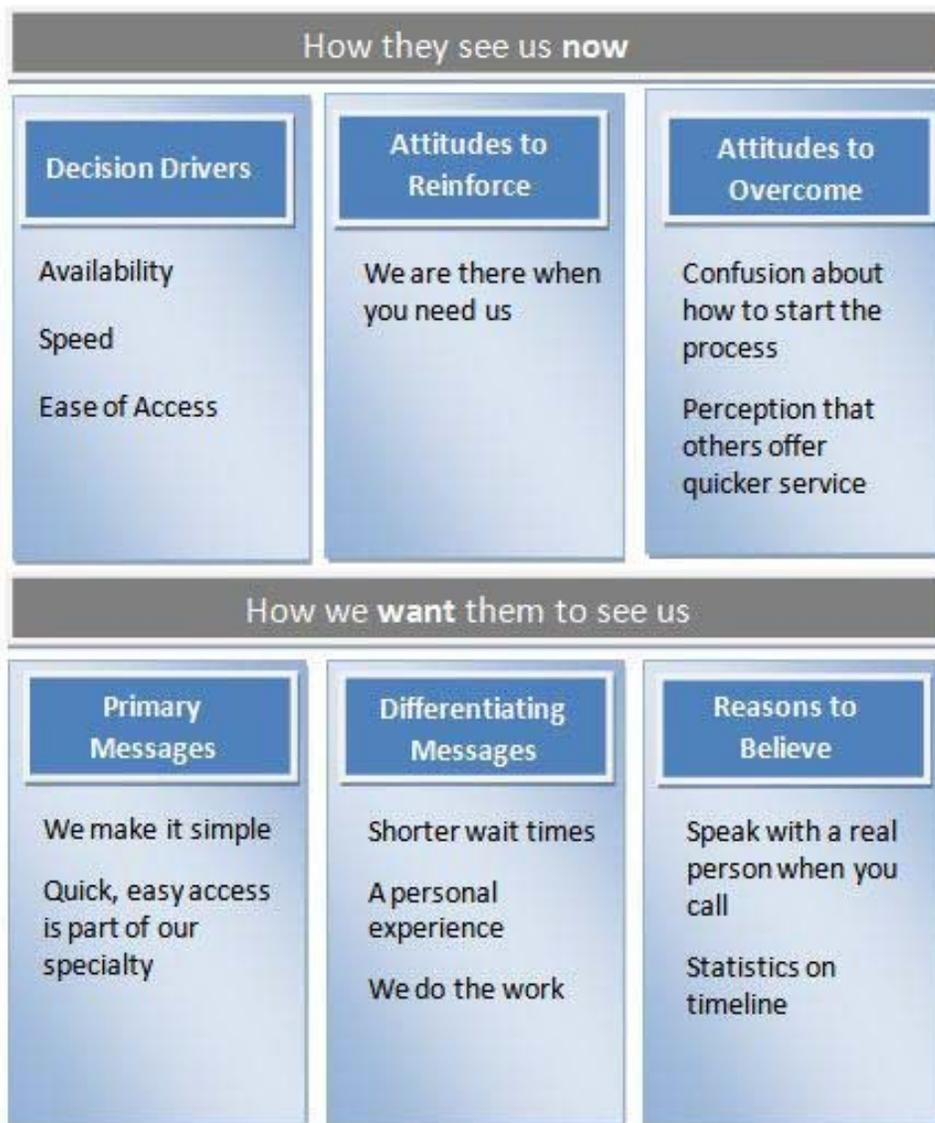When developing messages, it is helpful to remember these tips:

- ➢ Keep them brief and simple (think headlines)
- ➢ Make sure they are easy to understand
- ➢ Think long-term (are they flexible for future changes or issues that may arise?)
- ➢ Consider how you will support these messages (research, narratives, photos, etc.)
- ➢ Confirm the message addresses the needs identified by the research

And while you might not include all of these points in an ad, it will become important in other touchpoints like conversations and website content.

Message Mapping:
Creating a Communications Roadmap

Message maps are created for each key audience, such as customers and prospective customers of a particular product or service line. Other times, marketers may need to implement message mapping for internal audiences. This is often the case during organizational change or development of brand strategy.

Example of a Partial Message Map

How they see us **now**

Decision Drivers	Attitudes to Reinforce	Attitudes to Overcome
Availability Speed Ease of Access	We are there when you need us	Confusion about how to start the process Perception that others offer quicker service

How we **want** them to see us

Primary Messages	Differentiating Messages	Reasons to Believe
We make it simple Quick, easy access is part of our specialty	Shorter wait times A personal experience We do the work	Speak with a real person when you call Statistics on timeline

Message Mapping:
Creating a Communications Roadmap

Stakeholder Analysis and Planning

Delivering on the messages created often requires internal change. Obtaining support for necessary changes will allow your message map to deliver on its promises. Stakeholder analysis and planning is tool to help with this. Stakeholder analysis requires you to answer key questions about changes required.

1. Who is affected?
2. How might they be affected?
3. Where are they now? (present beliefs/reactions to the changes)
4. Where do we want them to be? (how to get to the desired state)

To help answer these questions, consider the following:

- How the changes affect them
- Their anticipated attitudes or beliefs about the changes
- Resources or support they will need to make the changes successful
- Which changes will require the most effort?
- Which changes will deliver the greatest outcome?
- How changes will be prioritized

Developing strategies to support the changes will bring to life the promises in the message map. Examples of strategies to build support for change include:

- Communicating with stakeholders about the potential impact of any necessary changes
- Developing incentives for desired behaviors
- Increasing decision-making opportunities to develop shared responsibility for the changes
- Identifying people, techniques or events that can influence attitudes about the change.

Building support for changes may also require training, education or problem-solving workshops.

Step 3: Implementation

Once the message map has been approved and internal processes are in place to deliver on promises made, the team can determine the most appropriate media to convey the messages (i.e., touchpoints such as advertising, executive messaging, events, articles, website and forums).

> How will we convince them?
> - Touchpoint prioritization
> Message templates

Message Mapping:
Creating a Communications Roadmap

The outcomes of this message mapping process include:

➢ A message map specifically created for and by your team to communicate key messages that are founded in research
➢ A tool for ensuring communication is consistent throughout the system (and that the experience lives up to what is promised)
➢ A basis to introduce this same method to other departments or segments as needed
➢ An adaptable, long-term catalyst for creating specific messaging

Taking Action

Armed with an understanding of how your stakeholders perceive your brand today, you can envision how you want them to view your brand – and how you will use consistent messaging to get there. Although a message map is a great tool, even the best planned messaging will not be successful if it does not deliver on the promises made. A well-planned message map that matches the experience delivered is a great tool for the entire organization and will help marketing departments match their creative advertising with consistent messages that resonate with consumers.

Message Mapping:
Creating a Communications Roadmap

About Endeavor

Endeavor Management, is an international management consulting firm that collaboratively works with their clients to achieve greater value from their transformational business initiatives. Endeavor serves as a catalyst by providing pragmatic methodologies and industry expertise in Transformational Strategies, Operational Excellence, Organizational Effectiveness, and Transformational Leadership.

Our clients include those responsible for:
- Business Strategy
- Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Operations
- Technology Deployment
- Strategic Human Capital
- Corporate Finance

The firm's 40 year heritage has produced a substantial portfolio of proven methodologies, deep operational insight and broad industry experience. This experience enables our team to quickly understand the dynamics of client companies and markets. Endeavor's clients span the globe and are typically leaders in their industry.

Gelb Consulting, a wholly owned subsidiary, monitors organizational performance and designs winning marketing strategies. Gelb helps organizations focus their marketing initiatives by fully understanding customer needs through proven strategic frameworks to guide marketing strategies, build trusted brands, deliver exceptional experiences and launch new products.

Our websites:
www.endeavormgmt.com
www.gelbconsulting.com
www.gulfresearch.com