

Strengthen your conversations with powerful messages.

Your association's future is created in language — specifically the conversations you have and the possibilities you create with retired educators and the community. How are you communicating with your target audiences? What is working well and what is not working well?

How do you get your audience's attention? Whether it is a new retiree or current member, you are competing with many other demands on their time, their attention and the noise of every-day-life. You know that your message must clearly illustrate your value and benefits to your audience, but you must also engage them in a conversation that will leave them touched, moved and inspired to take action. And that action may include enrolling, renewing, attending a meeting or stepping up to a leadership position.

This fact sheet includes exercises to refine your current messages and create new conversations that mobilize your audiences and create possibilities for a better life in retirement. You can use the exercises to generate new messages for recruiting, member retention, mentoring and community outreach.

Member recruitment & retention starts with conversations!

Know your audience inside and out.

Remember, it's all about the member.

WIIFM (what's in it for me?)

Develop powerful messages.

Get clear on the value that you offer.

Create clear, consistent messages.

Address and overcome the barriers to action.

Five Steps to Powerful Message

Step 1: Get clear on your organization's value. Discuss these questions with your leadership team. Brainstor Type to enter text m and post your notes on a flip chart or a white board. Take note of common words and identify repeating themes.

- What does your organization stand for?
- What does your organization believe in?
- Why do people appreciate your association?
- What are the association's strengths?
- What makes your association unique?
- What do you do better than any other organization around?
- What do you want to be known for? And why?

Step 2: Declare what your organization is and what it is not. Sometimes it is easier to first claim what/who you are not in order to generate a clearer picture of what/who you are. Examples: Examples: (lazy, quiet, complacent...) (fun, committed, has vision...)

Our REA is not _____
Our REA is _____

Step 3: Know your target audience. As you engage your target audiences in conversation, know as much about them as possible. Craft your message to speak directly to them. Put yourself in their shoes as you answer these questions:

- Who is your target audience and what do they value? Get specific.
- What might they think of your REA? What do you want them to think ?
- What is in it for them?
- What would be the value of membership and what does it (will it) mean to them, their families and their future?
- How will you invite them to become members?
- Where will you find your target audience and how can you reach them?
- How might membership make their retirement more enjoyable?

List the barriers to joining and an idea to help overcome that challenge.

Challenges: _____

How to Overcome: _____

Step 4: Know the competition.

- Who else is competing for the loyalty of your target audience?
- How does your message differ from theirs? (Review websites, marketing materials, etc.)

Step 5: Create powerful messages.

- Why should a new retiree join your REA?
- What are the promises or claims you can make as they decide?
- What attributes set you apart from your competition?
- What are the supporting statements to defend those claims? (Example: we've been protecting benefits for more than 500,000 retirees during the last 30 years.)
Quantify with numbers and dollars where possible.

What are your REA's Messages?

The first step is to write your specific messages. You have identified your association's best qualities and accumulated a list of descriptive words and phrases, and recognized the value you deliver in Steps 1 - 5. Read through your answers, compile statements and write the top three powerful messages that support your promises and claims.

Message 1:

Message 2:

Message 3:

A Few Message Tips and Examples

Keep your powerful messages visible. Print out your messages. Post them near your desk. Carry them in your planners. Include them in your board meeting agendas. Make copies for your leaders. Post banners around the office and meeting spaces. Use a message guide — a visual depiction (below) — as an easy way to organize, prioritize and share your messages with your REA leaders and volunteers. This tool will help everyone stay on message and use clear, concise and consistent messages in their conversations.

Start with your REA’s overall promise or claim. From your brainstorming, list the overall promise or claim. You can do this exercise to compile messages for member recruitment, member retention and/or to encourage new leaders to step up to the plate. Pick one target and proceed. For example, if you were brainstorming recruiting messages, your overall promise might be: “REA membership provides you with a better quality of life in retirement.” If you were brainstorming leadership succession messages, your overall promise might be: “We need you (your leadership, skills, etc.) to lead our organization over the next 12 months!”

List the three main reasons that support the claim. Plot out this graph on paper: jot down your three reasons under the overall promise. For example, three main reasons could be: 1) safeguard your pension, 2) connection and fun in retirement and 3) continued service to the community.

Under each reason, list points to support your claim. For example, for “connection and fun in retirement,” you may list “join a dynamic group of leaders in monthly meetings, social events and keep abreast of the latest developments for retirees.”

Example of message guide for recruitment:

<u>Promise or Claim</u> We are committed to providing you with a better life in retirement.		
Reason 1 <u>supporting promise</u> We fight every day to protect your pension and safeguard your benefits so you can spend your retirement in dignity. Financial security is an essential factor in enjoying your retirement years, and we are working for you.	Reason 2 <u>supporting promise</u> Connect and have fun! Join a dynamic group of leaders in monthly meetings, social events and keep informed of the latest developments regarding your retirement.	Reason 3 <u>supporting promise</u> Give back to your community, shape the future of education in your hometown and continue to serve in meaningful ways. We stand for a better future for everyone in the education community.
<u>Conclude with a call to action:</u> JOIN REA TODAY!		