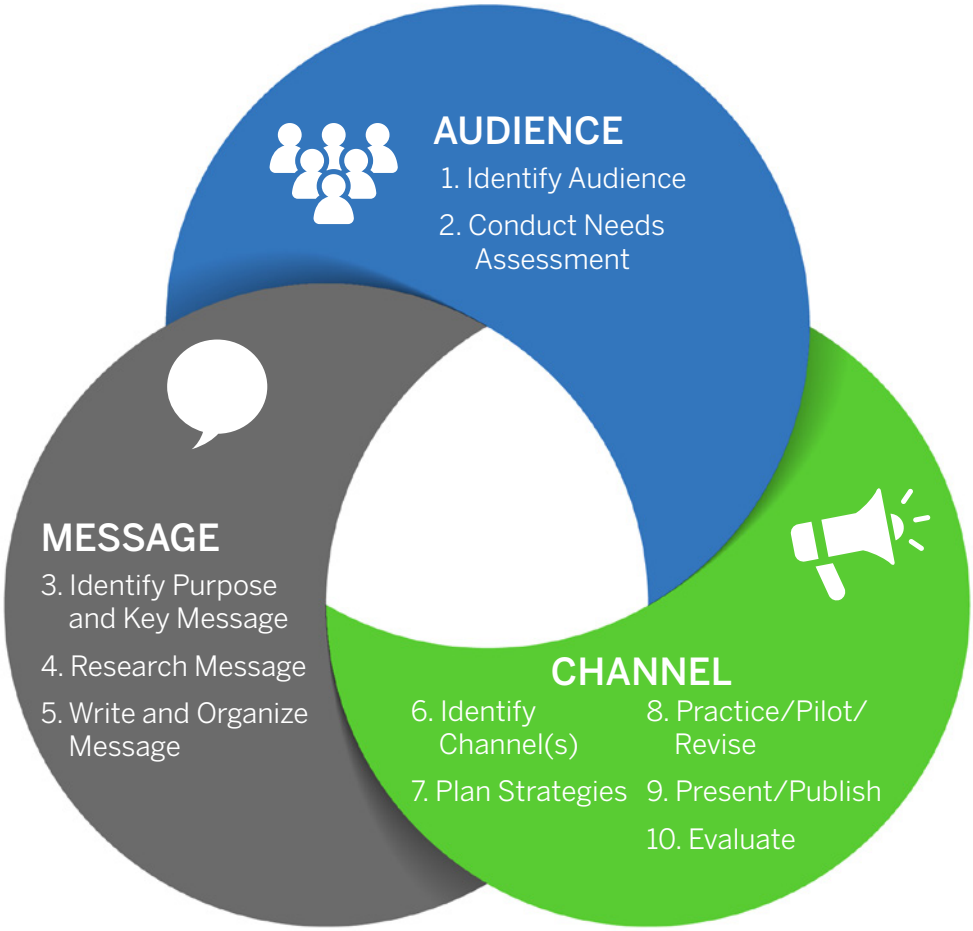
nutrition COMMUNICATOR
educate . inspire . motivate

10 STEPS
to Creating Compelling Communication

Effective nutrition communication is well planned and executed.

Planning and preparation won't guarantee success, but a lack thereof almost always spells disaster. **Follow these 10 proven steps to develop nutrition communication –** writing, speaking, demonstrations, video, podcasts, and more – **that compels your audience to notice, engage, and take action.** Your entry point may be the audience, the message, or the channel, depending on the situation. Many steps are undertaken simultaneously. Make it a rule not to proceed past identifying the message or the channel without also identifying the audience.



STEP 1

Identify the Audience (To whom are you communicating?)

The 9 steps that follow are dependent on who will receive the message. The audience may be familiar or new to you. The invitation to communicate may be initiated by you or the audience. To complete this step, describe your audience and the setting in which communication will occur.

Audience/Setting: _____

Audience description:
Size of audience: _____

Gender, age: _____

Education level, occupation(s):_____

Other:_____

STEP 2

Step 2: Conduct Needs Assessment:

This is a process to learn about an audience so the communication provided meets their needs and preferences. It includes both primary and secondary data collection. Begin with data that has previously been collected (secondary) before collecting new, audience-specific data (primary).

Secondary Data Collection: Description of need(s), problem(s), goal(s) known prior to collecting more data. List sources of information.

Primary Data Collection: Information to obtain - not an exhaustive list but will get you started:

1. What does the audience already know about potential topic(s)?
2. What are misconceptions and gaps in knowledge?
   What do they find confusing and would like clarification about?
   Would they like to learn something new about this topic?
3. What do members of the audience care about related to potential topic(s)?
   What is relevant to them? What are their interests? What concerns them?
   What are their problems to solve and their pain points?
4. What are their current practices related to potential topic(s)?
5. What are motivators and/or barriers to change behaviors? What is their interest level and degree of readiness to change?
6. What are their learning styles and preferences?

Primary Data collection strategies:

☐ Survey ☐ Interview ☐ Focus group ☐ Observation/on-site visit

Summarize results:

STEP 3

Identify your Purpose & Message

(What & why are you communicating?)

Purpose/Goal: (The overall purpose or goal of your communication.)

Focused Topic:_____

Topic selection checklist:

- ☐ Selected based on needs assessment, meets identified needs. (What problems or concerns exist in the target audience? Helps teach/reach recommendations and goals. Audience has expressed an interest in learning.)
- ☐ Current, based on latest findings in nutrition and food science. (What information is new and therefore potentially unknown/confusing?)
- ☐ Matches communicator's interests and knowledge; will be able to demonstrate understanding. A topic that communicator can demonstrate enthusiasm for sharing.
- ☐ Topic has been focused to fit the time or space available and can be presented at an appropriate depth for the audience.

SOCO (Single Overriding Communication Objective):
(Written as a simple and memorable statement, it is the audience's take-home message.)

Objectives:
(Include learning outcomes related to both the cognitive domain (knowledge and application of knowledge) and affective domain (values, attitudes and related practices), strive for at least one objective that goes beyond the most basic levels to higher level learning in at least one domain.)

1.
2.
3.

Key Message Points:
(Memorable statements that could be used directly in your communication.)

1.
2.
3.

A common error is attempting to cover too much content and have objectives/key message points that are too broad and not focused enough to cover in the time and/or space allotted for your communication. It is better to cover less material in more depth and/or with more emphasis, repetition, and review than to cover more.

Note: Complete step 3 along with 4, as your research will help determine the content of your message.

STEP 4

Research your Message:

This step occurs simultaneously with step 3. Seek current and accurate information about the topic to provide the evidence base for your message.

1. Read and collect information on topic. Include general background and review articles as well as in-depth scientific journal articles. Make copies, read, take notes, file. Keep resource files on potential topics.
2. Outline information based on outcome objectives, obtain more information narrowed to the focus of your presentation.
3. Study the information to gain understanding, obtain assistance from experts as needed.
4. Obtain more information where gaps are identified.
5. Consider how to communicate the information to your audience based on what they know and understand and what they want and need to learn.

General background information obtained from:

- Review of literature for subject background:
- In-depth, focused research articles referenced:
- Expert(s) contacted:

Include in file: List of references. Copies of resources obtained.

STEP 5

Step 5: Write and Organize your Message:

This step determines the message to be communicated. The order in which information is presented begins with what the audience already knows and cares about, and follows a logical sequence.

Outline of material to be presented: (Make sure you begin where the audience is, address what you identified in the needs assessment, consider what to present to bring their knowledge level up to meet your objectives, and what they need to be told/shown to motivate them to adopt the desired attitudes and behaviors.)

Use an outline form and insert key message points to indicate where each one is covered:

Title: _____

Introduction	☑ Gain attention ☑ Build credibility and rapport ☑ Overview of key points/questions to be answered
Body	☑ Structure using key points ☑ Tell a "story" with smooth transitions ☑ Provide ample illustrations and evidence
Conclusion	☑ Summarize key points ☑ Provide a call to action ☑ Use a memorable ending

STEP 6

Step 6: Identify Communication Channel
(How will you communicate?)

Communication Channel(s) Used _____

You may have identified your primary channel even before conducting your needs assessment, but it is critical that you confirm your choice based on the steps you have completed.

Reason/justification for this choice of medium:

STEP 7

Plan Effective Communication Strategies

This is a BIG step with many essential parts. All prior steps lead up to this one.

Introduction/Pre-instructional Activities: Brainstorm potential approaches to gain interest/attention, establish relevance to audience, develop rapport, inform the audience of your overall goal and your key points, stimulate recall of prerequisites, and motivate your audience to listen, learn and act. Create a connection.

Presentation of the Information: For each objective/message point (see content outline), describe how the information will be presented verbally and visually in a way that matches the audience's abilities, learning styles and preferences, interests and needs. More than one strategy may be used for presenting each message point. Incorporate a variety of strategies. Involve the audience!

1st objective or message point: _____

_____

Information Presentation Strategy:

Information Presentation Strategy:

2nd objective or message point: _____ _____

_____

Information Presentation Strategy:

Information Presentation Strategy:

3rd objective or message point: _____

_____

Information Presentation Strategy:

Information Presentation Strategy:

Summary/Review: How will you tie it all together? Can you summarize key points in a meaningful and memorable way? What is the take-home message? Will the audience leave with a feeling of benefit? Can they apply the information learned in their lives? Have you called them to action? Have you given information about future directions related to this topic?

Questions: Will you allow for questions? Anticipated questions, concerns, and potential arguments, and how you will respond:

Testing/Evaluation: How will you measure if your objectives were met? How will you evaluate the communication approach?

Marketing: How will you promote the program or initiative? Plan this along with the entire communication process. Select marketing channels that best reach the target audience.

STEP 8

Practice! Pilot test! Revise! Practice! Pilot test! Revise again!

Now you are ready to put everything together! Have it finished with time to pilot test, revise and practice. It is impossible to practice too much. Get feedback and make changes.

STEP 9

Present, Produce, or Publish!!

If presenting, sleep well the night before, take care of logistical details, make sure everything is set up and working well before you begin. Relax and enjoy! If producing or publishing, go over all of the required elements, then go over them again.

STEP 10

Evaluate

This may be listed as the final step but it actually occurs throughout the process and helps inform future communication projects. It involves formative as well as summative evaluation to determine how well objectives were met. Be sure to evaluate both how well you met your objectives and how well the audience perceived your communication (see end of Step 7 above). Save your work for future use.

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765.414.4376

barb@nutritioncommunicator.com

NutritionCommunicator.com

NutritionCommunicator

BarbMayfield or NCommunicator

Barbara Mayfield