



RG MESSAGING: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT WE KNOW

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ABOUT ME

“Recovering Academic”

Focus on Knowledge Mobilization

- Shortening the gap between what is know, and what is done
- Putting knowledge into the hands of the people that can use it to drive policy, programs or initiatives or otherwise influence attitudes, beliefs or knowledge.
- Asks the “so what?” and “now what?” questions of research

THE ROLE OF MESSAGING

A large part of knowledge mobilization is dissemination, which includes communication and messaging (often as the first step)

The
Harvard
Gazette

NEWS +

News from Harvard schools, offices, and affiliates

Findings in science, health reporting often overstated on social media

A Chan School study found that 58 percent of media articles inaccurately reported the question, results, intervention, or population of academic studies. Credit: pixabay.com



EFFECTIVE MESSAGES

- **Concise & Limited:** Under 30 seconds when spoken.
- **Relevant & User-focused:** Understand what your audience needs/wants to know.
- **Compelling & Action-Oriented:** Meaningful information designed to stimulate action.
- **Simple & Using Plain-Language:** Easy-to-understand language; minimal jargon and acronyms.
- **Memorable & Relatable:** Easy to recall and repeat; Active rather than passive voice.
- **Tailored:** Adaptable to different target audiences.

EXAMPLE

EFFECTIVE

- Thirsty after your workout? Don't drink energy drinks; drink water instead.

INEFFECTIVE

- Avoid post-workout energy drinks, as they often contain caffeine which is a central nervous system stimulant of the methylxanthine class, which consumption can lead to negative side effects, such as increased blood pressure, impaired sleep, and anxiety.

MESSAGING AIN'T EASY

In the 1980s, A&W tried to compete with the McDonald's Quarter Pounder by selling a $\frac{1}{3}$ pound burger at a lower cost. The product failed, because most customers thought $\frac{1}{4}$ pound was bigger.



0| sj @sjlxe · 7h

...

It's true, the $\frac{1}{3}$ pounder burger failed in america cuz they thought quarter pounders were bigger



4



18



616



Amarion @Minmarion · 6h

...

Yeah cause they are????



7



1



38



0| sj @sjlxe · 6h

...

$\frac{1}{3} > \frac{1}{4}$
.33 > .25



3



634



Amarion @Minmarion · 6h

...

What are those signs



9



2



281



3/9 LB.

BURGER



IT'S **BIGGER/**GENIUS



Prices and participation may vary. Limited time only. Tax extra. © 2021 A&W Restaurants, Inc. 46625-FTT-CO

FOUR REASONS PEOPLE DON'T UPTAKE KNOWLEDGE



01

DON'T KNOW

that the information exists, or what action to take



02

DON'T UNDERSTAND

the information, what it means, why it is important



03

DON'T CARE

see the information as irrelevant, not beneficial to their agenda



04





DON'T AGREE

think the information is misguided or false

KNOWLEDGE IS LIKE AN E-MAIL

1. **receiving it**
2. receiving and **reading it**
3. receiving, reading, and **understanding it**
4. receiving, reading, understanding, and **believing it is credible**
5. receiving, reading, understanding, believing, and **appreciating that it applies**
6. receiving, reading, understanding, believing, appreciating, and **making it the basis of a decision**
7. receiving, reading, understanding, believing, appreciating, making a decision, and **determining what action is required**
8. receiving, reading, understanding, believing, appreciating, making a decision, determining actions, and **determining if actions are feasible**
9. receiving, reading, understanding, believing, appreciating, making a decision, determining actions, assessing feasibility, and **taking an action (or refusing to act) in line with the decision reached**

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OTHER BEHAVIOR-CHANGE BARRIERS

Friction & Cognitive Overload

- Competing messages and limited attention
- Low personal relevance or contextual fit
- Generic slogans ignore stage of change

Stigma & Reactance

- Moralizing or shaming tones trigger resistance
- Fear-based framing undermines engagement

Ambiguity & Effort Perception

- Unclear or missing “next step”
- Change perceived as high effort

Habits & Self-Efficacy

- Difficulty breaking established routines
- Low confidence in ability to apply new behaviors

Skills & Practical Barriers

- Lack of training or capability to implement
- Need for new tools, equipment, or scheduling changes

Outcome Expectancy & External Factors

- Doubts about benefits of change
- Financial, institutional, or incentive barriers

RG MESSAGING, WHAT WORKS?

Specific, actionable prompts

- Provide concrete steps such as set a deposit limit, take a 24h cooldown

Gain framing and positive tone

- Promote benefits of control and balance rather than fear appeals

Self-appraisal questions

- Prompt reflection, for example have you spent more than you intended?

Personalized and timely delivery

- In-the-moment prompts tied to data on time and spend

CUSTOMIZED MESSAGES BEAT ONE-SIZE-FITS-ALL

Different segments prefer different themes:

- Seniors → limits
- Young and frequent gamblers → play feedback
- Skill bettors → odds and personal outcomes

Non-judgmental language preferred across groups

Actionable, specific instructions outperform abstract education

POP-UPS, MODERATE SHORT-TERM EFFECTS

Meta-analyses and RCTs show pop-ups can reduce session length and distorted cognitions in the short term

Effects vary by game and gambler status

- Irritation increases with high frequency or intrusive designs

Self-appraisal (i.e., reflection) content tends to outperform informative content

SPORTS/RACE BETTING: 5-WEEK FIELD EXPERIMENT

Norm-based and positive-emotion messages more promising than control messages

- Positive-emotion and norm-based messages reduced time and money spent

Most effective when paired with self-monitoring cues

Consistent exposure over weeks showed measurable shifts on target behaviors

ATTENTION IS SCARCE

Eye-tracking studies find RG tags get minimal visual attention within ads

Placement, size, contrast, and congruent tone needed to be noticed and processed

- Matters more than frequency

Integration with ad content increases salience

PUBLIC MESSAGING, 2024 SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Overall, limited evidence of behavior change at population level

Messaging can raise awareness and intentions

- Format and placement matter

Recommendations:

- Clearer product warnings
- Improved label design
- Test with experiments

ONLINE LOTTERY, EVIDENCE-INFORMED OPTIONS

Informed decision making

- Correct myths, present realistic odds at point of play

Action cues

- Pre-commitment, deposit limits, time reminders with user input

Marketing communications

- Avoid false expectations, target responsibly, align ad copy with RG goals

PITFALLS TO AVOID

Generic slogans

- Gamble responsibly alone rarely changes behavior

Descriptive norms that normalize harm

- Poorly framed norms can backfire
- E.g., many teen use their parents mobile account to gamble

Shaming tones

- Increase stigma and reduce help-seeking

DESIGN CHECKLIST

Define the proximal behavior to shift

- E.g., set a limit before next session

A positive, non-judgmental, autonomy-supportive tone

Pick message type

- Self-appraisal, gain-framed, or norm-based

Test!

- A/B with behavioral outcomes (not just attitudes)

BRIDGE TO SCREENING AND BRIEF INTERVENTION

Messaging as gateway

- Prompts can route to brief screens, for example 1-3 items in health and digital settings

Evidence base

- Brief interventions reduce gambling in RCTs,
- SBIRT is feasible in primary care and youth services

Practical link

- Pair in-product messages with offers to take a 1-minute screen
 - If positive, a brief MI-style intervention or referral

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THANK YOU!



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