

For a comprehensive introduction to the Message House Method, it is best to read the 20-page eBook (available at www.messagehouse.org).

However, if you only have little time, you can use this three-step Quick Start Guide.

Step 1: Generate your core messages

To generate your core messages, gather your team. Now, ask yourselves: Who is your audience? Next, have a conversation to find short answers to the following four questions (with your audience in mind):

a) Big Picture Message: Why does your project matter in the larger scheme of things?

This message should ideally cause goose bumps and point to something bigger than your project. For instance, if your mission is saving animals (to use the Humane Society as an example), then your Big Picture message might be: “Our vision is a more compassionate society”.

b) Utility Message: What do we offer?

This message will often reflect the immediate benefit and value of an organization’s work, or of a project. To use the example above again, for the Humane Society that message is: We take on the biggest fights to stop large-scale cruelties against animals.

c) Critics Message: How do we pre-empt the most likely criticism?

This message needs to be positive. For instance, if the likely criticism is “It’s difficult”, then your pre-emptive critics message might be “It’s easy.”

d) Call to action

Tell your audience what you want them to do, i.e., go to a Web site, make a donation, buy a product. Be concrete, brief and precise.

Step 2: Build the Message House

Now take your four messages and put them on a sheet of paper inside the shape of a house. You can download a Word template for this at www.messagehouse.org/4xq9.

When you are done, you should have a Message House document looking similar to the image to the right.

Step 3: Inspire messaging discipline

In the final step, you distribute the Message House to your team and tell everybody: “Let’s stay inside the Message House and we’ll be safe.”

You will have created powerful messages and used the “sticky” Message House image to inspire messaging discipline.

For more information and tools, including an eBook, Message House templates in other styles and in formats such as Adobe InDesign or PowerPoint, please visit www.messagehouse.org.

