

Persuasion

TESTING PERSUASIVE MESSAGES

This worksheet is designed to help you answer the key question that you will encounter during the fourth phase of your narrative change project:

- **What narrative interventions (specific messages, stories, and messengers) are most effective in changing your audience's mindset?**

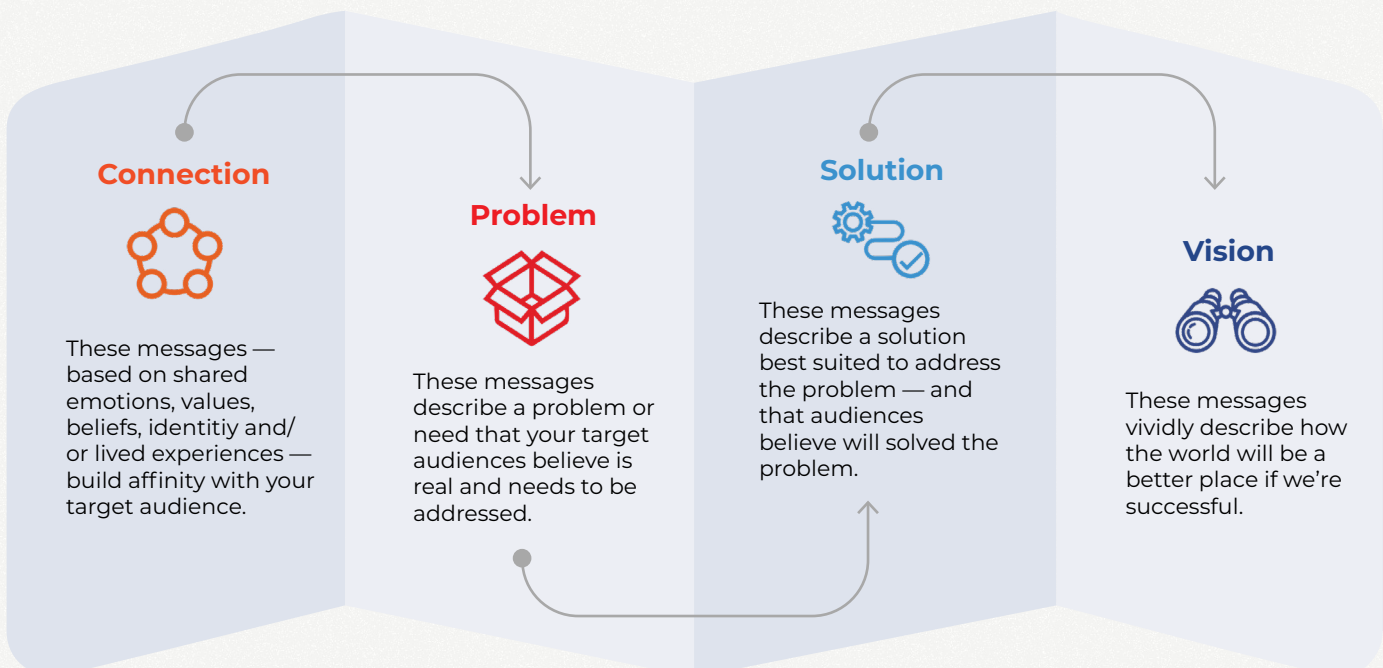


Step 1: Narrative Framework

Based on insights and recommendations from your audience mindset research, you can develop a narrative framework that will serve as the foundation for the messaging you develop and test in your audience persuasion research. Keep in mind that the most persuasive messages are not based on what you want to say, but rather what your audience needs to hear.

Narrative Framework.

What messages in the 4-part Narrative Framework will most resonate with your audience, based on the research you've conducted so far?



Step 2: Messaging Prototypes

Using your narrative framework as a guide, create a series of short messages or test content for your audience. Consider which narrative elements to use, as well as the appropriate content type that may make sense for your audience.

Narrative Elements.

Consider how each of these narrative elements will show up in your messaging prototypes.

- **Stories:** What and whose stories do you need to tell your audience?
- **Language:** How can your prototype use plain spoken language or explain language that is unclear?
- **Messengers:** If you tell a story, what perspectives and characters need to be present?
- **Heartwired Factors:** How does your messaging reflect the Heartwired factors you know are fueling or creating friction for your audience?

Content Type.

Plan to test between three and five pieces of content that use your messaging. Consider the following types of content:

- **Problem and Solution Statements.** These are short statements (1-3 sentences) that describe the problem in a way that you believe your audience will understand it, and describe the solution that your organization/partners provide to address the problem
- **Hypothetical Op-Ed or print story.** Draft an op-ed or newsletter (usually no more than one page) in which you embed elements of your narrative framework. You may choose to include an image or set of images to bring the op-ed or story to life.
- **Video.** You may have existing videos that can be re-edited or re-cut to align with messages you are interested in testing. Or you may want to create a new video featuring the specific messengers, messages, and ideas you want to test.

Research Objectives.

Based on your narrative change hypothesis, narrative landscape research, and Heartwired mindset map, what are your research objectives? What do you want to learn from your mindset research about your target audience?

Developing your Plan.

Your plan should address the following methodological and logistical considerations:

- 1. Methodologies:** What methodologies should you use to learn about your audience's mindsets? (e.g., in-depth interviews, focus groups)
- 2. Number of Participants:** How many people will you include in your research, depending on the methodology you have chosen to use?
- 3. Criteria:** What criteria will you use to determine who should be included in your research?
- 4. Moderator:** People are often more comfortable talking to someone who they perceive to be like them in some way. For this reason, it can be helpful to have the moderator or interviewer share an identity with your research participants. This can be a racial and gender identity, or in some cases a professional identity.
- 5. Recruitment:** Who will recruit your research participants and how will they do so? Will you provide an incentive for participants? If you are conducting a survey, do you have access (or will need to buy access) to a list of people from your target audience, and how big is that list? Could you host a survey and track responses?
- 6. Location:** Where should you conduct your research? If in-person, where can you find a neutral location where your research participants will feel comfortable and relaxed? If online, what platform will you use?
- 7. Consent Form:** Every research participant must sign a consent form. If you are conducting research with minors, both the minor and their adult parent/guardian must sign a consent form.
- 8. Confidentiality and Anonymity:** How will you protect the research participants' confidentiality and ensure their anonymity? Perhaps you will anonymize the transcripts from your focus groups and interviews or create a code for respondents' names in your survey.
- 9. Transcription:** How will you transcribe your audio/video? There are several online resources for transcription.

Step 4: Develop Your Research Tool

As with the Mindset phase, for focus groups or interviews, you will need to develop a set of questions and follow-up prompts that the moderator uses to guide the conversation(s) in focus groups or interviews. If you are conducting a survey, you will develop the survey questions and any skip logic that will apply.

In persuasion research, you are seeking to understand how your audience reacts to or understands messaging about your issue or idea. You can use a combination of existing messaging (e.g., a story on your website) and new messaging that you create for test purposes. You may be testing a combination of video content and print content. You will show your research participants this sample messaging and ask them questions to understand how the content resonates for them or what questions it raises for them.

Learning Objective(s).

What do you hope to learn? Refine the questions you hope to answer through your audience research.

Designing Questions.

You will need to develop a set of questions and follow-up prompts that you can use to guide your conversation(s) in interviews or focus groups. Your guide or survey may include some or all of the following components:

Sample Components

1. Introductions
2. Word Associations / Reactions to Language
3. Pre and Post Scales of Agreement
4. Reactions to Problem and Solution Statements
5. Reactions to Video Explainers or Program descriptions
6. Reactions to Impact Statements (e.g., program evaluation data)
7. Reactions to Stories (e.g., testimonials, student profiles, blog posts, videos, etc.)
8. Final Thoughts

Step 5: Analyze and Document Your Findings

Analysis.

Review all of the notes and transcripts from your research interviews and focus groups and develop a summary of what you learned. Consider these questions:

- What did you learn about specific words or language your audience uses or that resonates with them?
- What did you learn about each component of the narrative roadmap that you tested (Connection, Problem, Solution, Vision) and how persuasive it was for your audience?
- How or where did you see implicit bias in your audience's responses or opinions?
- What messages or content were most compelling to your audience? Which details, characters, and/or journey stories were most persuasive for your audience?
- Which messengers were most effective in shifting your audience's mindset?
- Was there any movement on the Pre- and Post-scales of agreement questions you asked?

Narrative Interventions.

Based on what you've learned about your audience's mindset, what do you think your messaging interventions need to do?

Narrative Refinement.

Based on your audience insights, what would you change about your narrative framework to ensure it resonates with and persuades your audience?

Synthesis and Documentation.

Summarize the 5-10 high-level, overall insights you developed from your audience persuasion research. Create a report or presentation that documents your audience research objectives, methodology, insights and your final narrative framework recommendation. You may also want to include 1-3 anonymous verbatims from your focus group and interview transcripts, or data from your survey that offer "proof" of what you observed.