

YOUR ELEVATOR SPEECH

Using the Messages

Many nonprofit organizations struggle with the task of developing a short, pithy description of their work. Many of the issues we tackle are complex, the policies nuanced; the needs of our constituents are huge. However, unless we can develop straightforward language to describe what we do, we risk alienating those we most want to reach. It's not about "dumbing down" the explanation of our work—it's about opening it up so that others find it relevant and interesting.

We have been stressing the importance of consistent messaging. Now this is your opportunity to try out these messages – to speak intentionally and in a focused way about League that will resonate with our target demographic.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO GET STARTED

- **Brevity.** It's not just the soul of wit, it's also the core principle of a good membership ask. You should be able to say what you need to say in about a minute. Focus on what's most important and cut away the rest. **What does your audience value? What is important to them? Write these down and prioritize them.**
- **The opening.** You want a hook to pique the listener's interest, or a quick tag line to encapsulate what you are about to say.
 - ✓ **For example:** In year one of the Membership Recruitment Initiative, LWVUS has used the language; "LWV is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement."
- **Problem.** Define the task at hand in clear simple terms to illustrate the purpose of your work.
 - ✓ **For example:** "Today, our communities are only as strong, safe and healthy as our residents are willing to make them."
- **Solution.** And what are you doing about the problem. Does your organization's mission and approach match the scale of the problem you've outlined?
 - ✓ **For example:** "At the League of Women Voters, our members are smart, active leaders who apply their skills and smarts they've accumulated during a successful career to create lasting change in their communities."
- **Action.** Close with an invitation to your listeners to be part of your solution. What can your audience do to engage, assist, or support your work?
 - ✓ **For example:** "Join the League where new members just like you are taking advantage of leadership opportunities and making an impact."

A FEW OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- **Avoid jargon.** Nonprofits are notorious abusers of acronyms, buzzwords and insiders speak. Avoid these, or you'll see the listener's eyes glaze over.
- **Values.** What value does your organization provide? **What does your audience value, and how does your organization's values intersect with theirs?** Values can be tangible (i.e., people living longer, healthier lives) or emotional (i.e., making people feel good about providing opportunity). Don't just list your services or ideology—focus on

outcomes, not process.

- **Passion.** Perhaps the most important part of a good membership **ask** is the gusto, enthusiasm and commitment to the work it expresses. Don't be afraid to demonstrate the passion and drive you feel for the work.

PREPARING TO COMMUNICATE
A Three Step Process

What opportunity (e.g. event with the Chamber of Commerce, city council breakfast meeting, etc.) is on your calendar?

STEP ONE:

What is the overall goal of this opportunity?

STEP TWO:

Who is the audience at that opportunity?

Describe that audience and what they value. What do they care most about?

STEP THREE:

What are you going to say? Which MRI messages will resonate most strongly with that audience?
