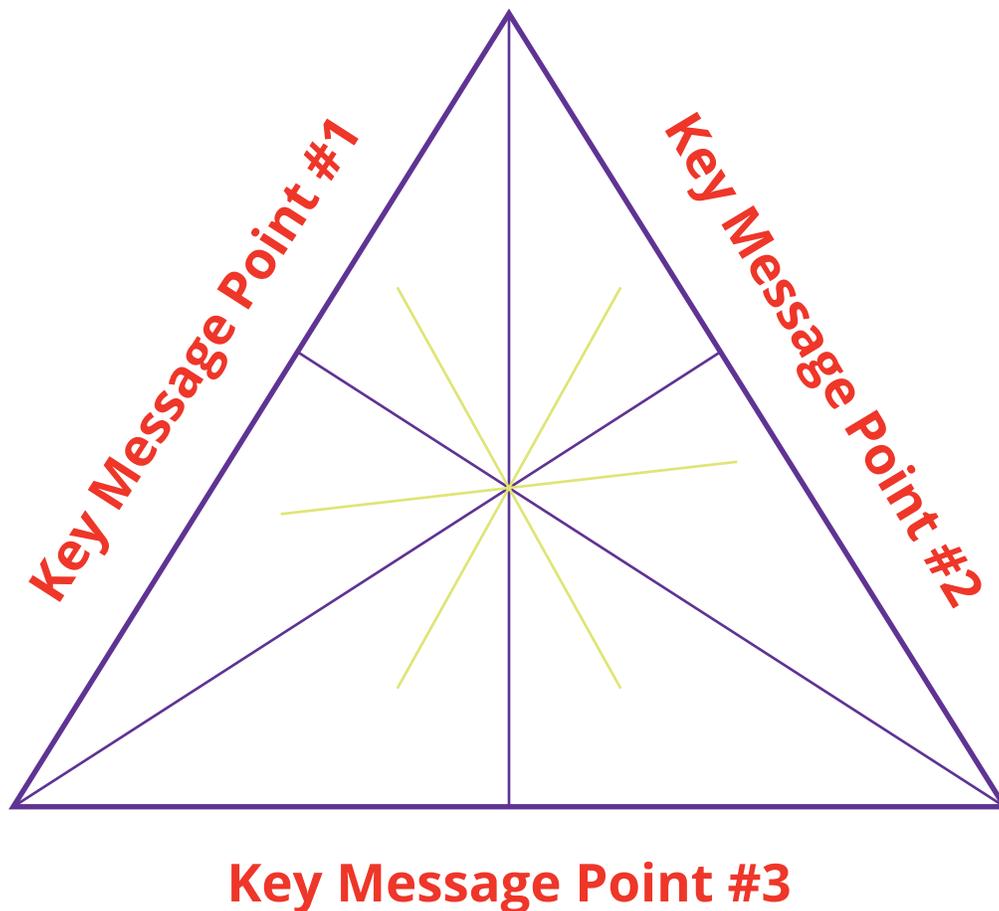


A 3-Step Guide to Message Triangles



"The message triangle offers focus and a shelter for your thinking. It is based on the principle that it is easier to visualize an image than it is to memorize a lot of words."

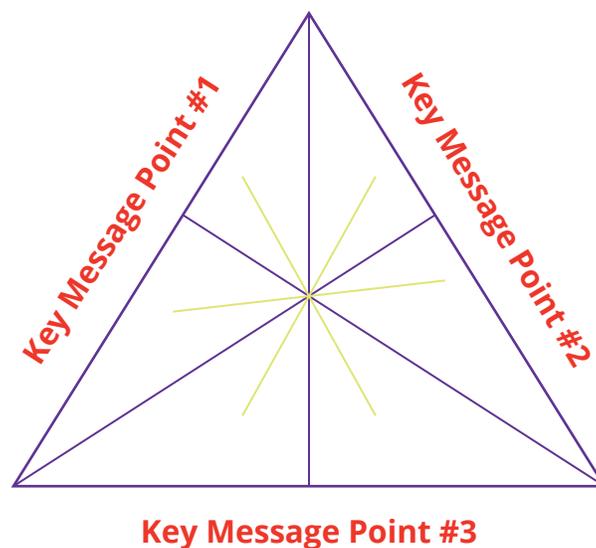
The Concept

The message triangle is a tool designed to help you speak to your audience successfully by getting across your key messages in a compelling, concise, and credible manner. It is based on the principle that it is easier to visualize an image than it is to memorize a lot of words.

- Each side of the triangle represents a broad message. Generally, each of the three broad messages is equally important.
- With open and receptive audiences, it ensures you communicate key messages in a way that resonates and is memorable.
- With unfriendly or skeptical audiences, it ensures you maintain control of the agenda.

"The message triangle offers focus and a shelter for your thinking."

Three-Step Guide to Developing a Message Triangle



1. Begin with Context

You want to begin with the context of the event, meeting, or presentation. Ask yourself a series of questions, and record your answers:

- What is your topic?
- What is your objective? That is, why are you speaking? What do you want your audience to think or do?
- Who is in your audience? What do you know about them? What do you think they know about your topic? (You may need to research your audience, including opponents. You may also need different variations of your message triangle for different audiences.)

2. Develop Your Key Messages and Support

You want to develop a maximum of Three Key Message Points for your triangle. (In a pinch, the simple act of thinking through your context and quickly sketching a triangle with three messages on the proverbial napkin can improve your effectiveness immeasurably.)

It may help to think of your key messages as a path that moves your audience from where it began, directly and unequivocally toward your objective. Social change and advocacy messages that are framed in a way that resonates with people's core values (e.g., fairness, equality, freedom, honesty) are the most powerful.

Ideally, and whenever you might face an antagonistic audience, you will want to make the time to develop credible supporting proofs for each of your key messages.

Supporting proofs are sound bites such as:

- Specific facts, examples, meaningful statistics
- Analogies, metaphors, and similes
- The "three Cs" (colorful words, clichés, contemporary references)
- One-liners, personal experiences
- Quotes from experts, (or from your opposition).

You do not need to memorize massive amounts of detail, but you will want to know the source of any evidence you are using as supporting proofs. Although frames are more powerful than facts, a message that is factually inaccurate will damage your credibility.

3. Practice Redirects and Bridging

Your final step is practicing the use of specific points to redirect off-message questions or issues, and to bridge back to your triangle message points. (You often see this technique in practice to its extreme when watching politicians running for statewide or national office.)

If possible, practice in front of colleagues, friends or family and encourage them to ask questions. We may do this twice for an event that is especially important for a client. In the first go round we pretend to be a friendly audience and focus just on asking clarifying questions. In the second practice, we may act as a hostile audience (or a reporter) and ask hard or challenging questions.

Relax

With a well-developed message triangle prepared, now you can relax and enjoy yourself at that big speech or event — confident you have prepared in the best way possible to present your case in a compelling, concise, and credible manner. Now, go forth and change the world, or your business market!

Your 3-Step Guide to Using Message Triangles

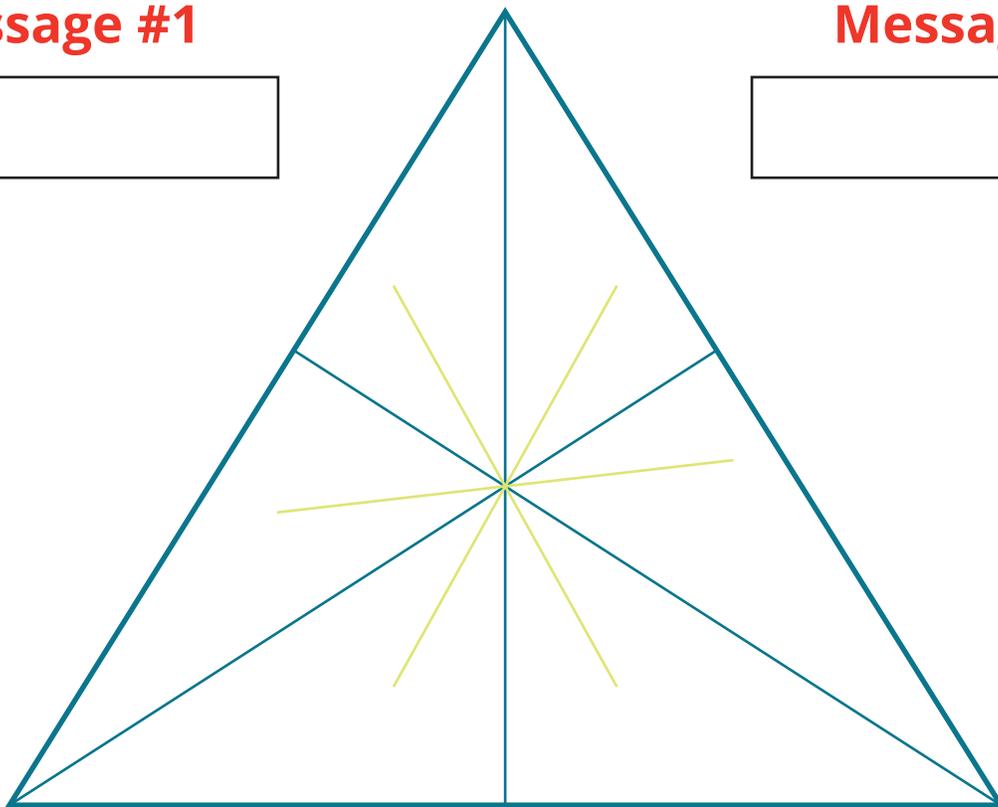
The following guide includes a blank message triangle and a worksheet to develop your supporting points and facts. Be sure not to forget the supporting points part of the process!



MESSAGE TRIANGLE

Message #1

Message #2



Message #3



Supporting Points for Your Message Triangle

Audience: _____

Objective: _____

- Each side of the triangle represents a broad message in one or two words. Generally, each of the three broad messages is equally important.
- Each broad message should be supported by specific facts or examples.

Broad message	#1	#2	#3
Supporting stats/stories/soundbites or facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••	<ul style="list-style-type: none">••••••