

Make It Matter: Messaging That Builds Trust and Sparks Movement

4 Messaging Myths That Hold You Back (and the Truths That Move People)

Myth: You're selling an idea.

- Truth: You're selling change.
- Action: Frame your ask around the cost of doing nothing.

Myth: You're selling to people.

- Truth: You're selling to the brain.
- Action: Build your message to follow the brain's arc — threat ► urgency ► hope ► belief.

Myth: Trust comes from being liked.

- Truth: Expertise earns attention. Shared belief earns loyalty.
- Action: Rewrite one message as a belief statement — start with why.

Myth: Features and benefits win the day.

- Truth: Real messaging is about impact.
- Action: Use the 'So What?' Ladder to climb from feature ► impact.

3 Things You Can Do This Week

1. Audit one message. Is it about you, or about them? Flip it.
2. Run it through the Cost of Inaction Lens. Show the pain of doing nothing vs. the relief of acting.
3. Ask "So What?" three times. Push until you land on a value that matters (safety, belonging, freedom, connection).

Messaging Tools at a Glance

Cost of Inaction Lens

- If you don't [act], [pain happens]. When you do [act], [relief/reward happens].

Emotional Arc of Messaging

- Fear/fear/pain grabs attention ► urgency builds ► hope engages ► belief sustains.

Belief Alignment

- People don't buy what you do — they buy why you do it. (Sinek)

So What Ladder

- Feature ► Benefit ► Advantage ► Impact. Keep climbing.

Let's Keep the Conversation Going!

This handout is just the start. Want help uncovering what really matters to your audience — and building messaging that sparks action?

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About Sara

Sara Wesche is a communication strategist, storyteller, and connector with over 20 years of experience helping organizations craft messaging that builds trust and sparks action.

She is also co-founder of Midwest Vertical Journal, a community storytelling project rooted in shared belief — celebrating the people, places, and culture of the Midwest outdoors.

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