

Telling Your Story

Speaking with One Voice

When the media or consumers ask questions, the dairy industry must respond with consistent answers and information. We must speak with one voice. Doing so enhances the industry's credibility. It also ensures the repetition necessary to get our key messages across to consumers. As communication professionals often say — just when you're getting tired of repeating your message, your audience is just starting to hear it.

The ideal key message is a simple, declarative sentence. It should be supported by additional evidence or sources. Key messages must speak to what is most important to the audience, not what is most important to the dairy industry.

Key messages must be:

- True
- Concise
- Memorable
- Persuasive
- Natural sounding (like a human, not an institution)

During an interview, you can use key messages in three ways:

1. **To answer a question.** All relevant key messages can be cited in response to a general question like “What’s the dairy industry’s take on this?”
2. **To return to a comfortable line of questioning.** You will be asked questions you don’t want to answer, and you can’t evade them. Answer the question quickly, and then attach a logical key message.
3. **To repeat yourself.** It’s okay to repeat key messages during an interview. That way, the reporter understands the context and the audience is more likely to remember the main points.

Key messages are more effective when a spokesperson has been trained to use them appropriately. A mock interview with a reporter is the most effective tool for learning to use key messages in a way that sounds natural and authentic. It also gives spokespeople an opportunity to develop examples from their own experience that support the industry’s key messages.

The dairy industry’s key messages were developed through focus groups and qualitative and quantitative phone surveys conducted in 2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2008. Research included consumers at locations throughout the country and on parents and socially conscious adults, among other audiences.

Key Media Control Techniques

Bridging

Bridging is a technique used to move from what the questioner wants to discuss to what YOU want to discuss. It involves dealing with the interviewer's question briefly and honestly, and then promptly following that response with your key message.

For example:

- "I don't know the answer to that specifically, but what I do know is..."
- "I'm not an expert in that, but what I can tell you is..."
- "I can't speak for them, but what I can tell you is..."
- "I'm not familiar with that, but what I can tell you is..."
- "In the past, that was true, but today..."
- "That used to be the focus. What's evolved is..."
- "No, let me explain..."
- "Yes, and in addition..."

Hooking

Hooking is a technique used to influence the next question you will be asked. Hooking helps you guide the questioner to his/her next question.

For example:

- "You'll be excited to learn what our survey showed."
- "There are several points that we find as extremely important."
- "Most people don't realize the numerous steps dairy producers take to protect the land and water."

Flagging

Want to call attention to a specific, important comment? Flagging is simply a technique to help your audience remember your message by highlighting what you consider to be most important.

For example:

- "The most critical point to remember is..."
- "I've talked about a lot of things today. It boils down to these three things..."
- "I can't emphasize enough ..."
- "It all boils down to these three things..."

Key Media Control Techniques

Diffusing Model For Difficult Questions	
Question Type	Technique
Totally False & Damaging	<p>Flat Denial</p> <p>(Shoot down the premise; take the high ground.)</p> <p>“That is absolutely false...”</p>
Opposite is True	<p>Reverse Statement</p> <p>(Demonstrate reverse is true.)</p> <p>“Just the opposite is true...”</p>
<i>Part True</i>	<p>Give-to-Get</p> <p>(Agree with truth; correct faulty conclusions.)</p> <p>“It’s true that...It’s also true that...”</p>
Inflammatory with Some Truth	<p><i>Restate the Concern</i></p> <p>(Rephrase the concern with non-emotional words and continue to answer <i>your</i> new question.)</p> <p>“I believe you’re asking...”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">© 2008 Health & Nutrition Network</p>