



Manage Your Message System for Meeting and Event Emcees, Presenters and Executives

In this Manage Your Message series, Brian Walter, professional speaker, Emcee, and engagement expert, shows you the *Extreme Emcee approach* for developing and delivering more relevant content for your event audiences.

Few Emcees or presenters actually USE an event theme. Oh sure, they *reference* it. But they rarely *directly* tie messaging and key points to that theme. You, in contrast, are going to embrace it.

For this Manage Your Message series, we will be using a completely made-up theme - "Rising to the Challenge." We will choose to refer to "your" organization as simply ABC (clever, I know). The theme provides you, the Emcee or presenter, with a framework for organizing your event content. Your event attendees are your target for messaging.

Strategy #1: Use the Theme to Frame Your Message

Rising to the challenge...

The very first thing you do is to position as "challenges" the typical content to be covered (performance goals, targets or issues in the event topic area) during your event.

As you describe what has been done, or is being done, to make the attendee's life better, frame it as how ABC is "rising to the challenge." The advantage of framing the event content with "rising to the challenge" is that you don't trip yourself up by over-promising. In some cases, you can state "we" (i.e. ABC and its employees) have truly met the challenge. In most cases, you share that ABC is making progress. You do that by saying "we are still rising" to a particular challenge. It is the specifics and velocity of ABC's rising that you communicate to attendees with your event content.

IMPORTANT: The theme will better resonate with the attendees if *every* presenter reinforces it. The words "rising" and "challenge(s)" should ideally be heard consistently throughout the entire event. If you are the Emcee, it is your job to tie everything together to create a cohesive messaging experience.

Strategy #2: “ASK & ANSWER” for generating the event content

As you’re reading this, most of you are likely in the process of developing your event presentation content. After adopting and aligning with the theme as an organizing principle, the next steps are to identify the issues, solutions and “newness” in the event topic area, and then focus on what is most important to communicate. An effective strategy for accomplishing this is by asking yourself a series of targeted questions, and then answering them. We call this “ASK & ANSWER.” The resulting event content forms the foundation for your presentation. You can then manage your message.

What are the challenges...and the “rising”?

In the event topic area, there should be “the big challenge.” This is the overriding, plain-as-day, clear-cut issue of the attendees in the event topic area. Start by identifying that and articulating it powerfully and succinctly. After that, you will need to nail down the related “sub challenges.”

These can be the related issues or barriers to meeting the primary challenge. It is always critical to look at them from the attendee’s point of view. Once you have outlined the event topic area challenges, it is much easier to match them to ABC solutions (i.e. how ABC is rising to the challenge) over the last year (since the previous event) as well as into the future.

Ask yourself (and answer) these questions:

- 1) What would an attendee say is the primary challenge in the event topic area? (Is there variation among attendees? Are there *different primary* challenges in the event topic area for different attendees?)
- 2) What would attendees say are the related challenges to this topic?
- 3) If attendees were explaining this challenge to you, what specific problems/examples would they use to make their point?
- 4) What was the “status” of these challenges at the time of last year’s event? How frustrated or satisfied were the attendees with ABC then?
- 5) Now...is ABC *truly* rising to these challenges? Or are things getting worse? Would the average attendee agree with your assessment on this?
- 6) Which of these attendee challenges need to be acknowledged and addressed at this year’s event? (List them!)
- 7) Since last year, what has ABC done to meet these specific challenges? What are the statistics and examples that demonstrate this progress?
- 8) Which attendees have had a dramatic improvement since last year on these particular challenges? Would any of them be willing to share their experience with the improvement process at the event? If not, would they be willing for their situation to be used as a case study?

- 9) What has been tried by ABC that has NOT worked in rising to the challenge(s)? NOTE: Often, it's quite effective to show you have been bold enough to experiment with solutions...and it's useful for everyone to know what has not worked.
- 10) If applicable, how has one "ABC" initiative contributed to rising to the challenges? This can be framed as additional autonomy in a region that allowed for more streamlined communication, quicker decision-making, or the like. Or it could be a new form of collaboration with certain business units that didn't exist previously.

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