Developing Your Persuasive Message – the 27-9-3 Rule

Created by some Vermont lawmakers years ago, the 27-9-3 rule requires you to make your persuasive point in no more than 27 words within a time frame no longer than nine seconds with no more than three points discussed. These limitations help us focus on understanding how to connect to our listener. This message is not the place to present your entire appeal – just enough to hook the listener in wanting to hear more. Try it!

Your name: ______________________________________________________________

Before crafting your message, consider and answer the 5 questions below.

1. Who is the audience for this particular message? (i.e. a lawmaker, volunteer, prospective advocate, donor, colleague from a different department, reporter, etc.)

2. What might appeal to their direct self-interest? (What’s in it for them? Why should they care?)

3. What do you want your audience to think or understand about your issue?

4. How do you want them to feel about what you have said?

5. What do you want your listener to do after they hear your message?

Write your 27-9-3 message on the reverse side. Practice saying it out loud to someone and invite their feedback. Your statement may sound very different than it reads and most of our messages will be spoken, so we want to make sure that our message rolls off our tongue easily; is not full of jargon; and that it actually sounds like something you would say out loud to another human being in person or leave on a voicemail! Revise your statement based on the feedback you receive.

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