

State Coverage Initiatives
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Messaging: It's More Than Words

November 2008



Session Goals

- Review the current environment
- Present messaging tips and examples
- Discuss steps for creating messages

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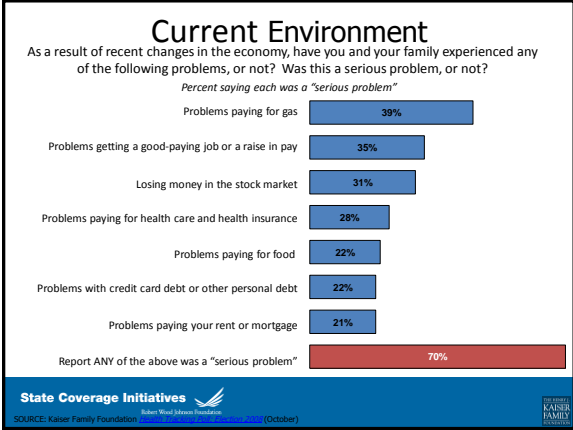
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Dave Coverly

"DO YOU WANT TO BE MANIPULATED BY THE LEFT WING MEDIA OR THE RIGHT WING MEDIA?"

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Current Environment

About one in three Americans report their family has had problems paying medical bills in the past year and almost one in five Americans report household problems with medical bills amounting to more than \$1,000 in the past year.

Nearly half (47%) of the public reports someone in their family skipping pills, postponing or cutting back on medical care they said they needed in the past year due to the cost of care.

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Public Opinion Data

Nearly twice as many voters said that in the face of the economic challenges "it is more important than ever to take on health reform" than say "we cannot take on health reform right now."

Exit polls show 81 percent of voters were worried about their family's finances – 48 percent were, "very" worried. Two-thirds said they were worried about being able to afford health care.

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RWJF Small Business Research

42% of small business owners ranked "making health care more affordable" as their most important issue compared to 18% who ranked "helping individuals and families who are uninsured get health care coverage."

Small business owners see the government as an important enforcer – bringing insurance and drug company profits and policies in line.

More than one out of three (36%) small businesses say they will likely cut some portion of health insurance benefits for their employees.

Those that do not already offer insurance say they do not particularly want to.

Small Business Messaging Tips

Talk about reform as achievable.

Make small business owners see action as a win/win.

Underscore the notion of shared responsibility.

Avoid language that sounds overly dramatic or depressing.

Use statistics in moderation.

Be sensitive to language that sounds like mandates.

Do not to overstate the issue of health care among the many challenges facing small business owners.


Top Testing Messages



Small businesses are the engine of new job growth in our economy. During these tough economic times, we must ensure that we keep America's small businesses strong. This means fixing our health care system to ensure that small businesses have access to affordable, quality health care coverage.



We need health care reform that is fair and reasonable where we all – employers and employees, business and government, doctors and patients – share in the responsibility and costs.




Harry and Louise - "Coverage"

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Policymakers



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Obama - "Two Extremes"

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A Quick Note About SCHIP




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Cover the Uninsured Week - "Reasons"

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Cover the Uninsured Week - "Worst Day"

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Back-to-School Campaign - "Hard Choices"

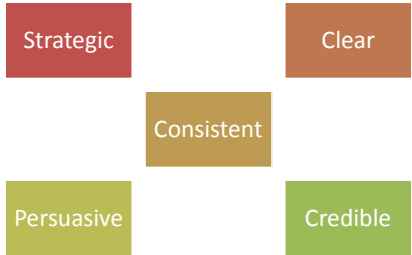
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Back-to-School Campaign - "Cash Register"

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Effective Messages Are...



Strategic

Clear

Consistent

Persuasive

Credible

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Tricks of the Trade

Make it personal

Hardworking American families shouldn't have to choose between filling a prescription or filling up at the gas station.

Tricks of the Trade

Use plain language

Health reform needs to focus on cost containment, quality of care, affordability and increasing access to care.

vs.

Americans need health coverage they can afford that will be there when they need it.

Tricks of the Trade

Keep it timely and relevant

In today's tough economy we need health reform now more than ever. At a time when hardworking families are struggling to make ends meet, we must work together to find solutions that will ensure families get the care they need when they need it.

Tricks of the Trade

Use themes and words that resonate

We need health care coverage that guarantees every American both security and choice. That means letting them choose the doctors and plans that are best for their families. That also means if they like what they have now, they can keep it.

Tricks of the Trade

Use proof points

Rising costs are putting the health and economic well-being of our families at risk and threatening to cripple our economy.

- Health care premiums grew nearly five times faster than workers' earnings in Utah from 2000 to 2007.

Steps to Developing Messages



Questions & Answers



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