

# STEP 4: CRAFT YOUR MESSAGING AND CONTENT

## Key Terms

- **Message:** Strategic, intentional communication of information, facts, and ideas
- **Content:** Digital communication materials, including text, images, and videos

- **Content Strategy:** Planning, development, and management of content



**How will you amplify your message and boost your impact?** Now that you have selected the strategies and complementary tactics to achieve your objectives and engage your audience, how will you boost your efforts to ensure that your message is heard and remembered? First, you need to craft your messages, then develop a plan for integrating those messages into your communication materials. Together, these two steps create your content strategy.

**Craft your messaging.** Your core messages should not just convey your organisation's mission or key facts about a specific cancer. The messages need to be grounded in insights gathered from your audience. Why should your audience care about what you have to say? In particular, try to understand your audience's beliefs, values, and behaviours related to your cause. What do they want or need? What are their passions and fears? Use these attributes to craft your messages. For instance, a young woman might value her family's opinions and enjoy going dancing with her friends, but she may fear the potential stigma of sharing her cancer diagnosis and seeking treatment. You could develop the following messages to address each insight:

- **Spouse:** Your spouse can be your most trusted friend and advisor. Help them help you with your cancer.
- **Family:** Sharing your diagnosis with family members will show them that you trust them and value their support.
- **Friends:** If you get treatment early, you will show your friends that you are being bold and brave.
- **Fear:** You are not alone. One million people are diagnosed with cancer each year in India.

**Develop a content strategy.** Once you have tailored messages to your priority groups, consider developing a content strategy, which is your plan for integrating these messages into the communication materials you develop. A content strategy helps you find the intersection of your objectives and expertise with your audience's interests and needs, so you can develop materials—like videos, blog posts, and tweets—that are meaningful and appealing. **Use the worksheet beginning on page 38 to develop your written content strategy.**



# BEST PRACTICES AND TIPS

Enhance your messages and content by adhering to the following best practices, including clear communication and prioritization of visuals.

**USE CLEAR COMMUNICATION.** Regardless of the content you create, it is critical to use clear communication to convey your key messages. Core tenets of clear communication include plain language, active voice, simple visuals, and understandable figures and numbers. Vulnerable groups with the greatest need for health information often have lower levels of reading comprehension. To reach as many people as possible in an engaging way, apply these tips:



- **Use everyday words and direct pronouns.** Avoid technical and medical terms; instead, use the same language that your audience uses. For example, rather than saying ‘adhere to treatment,’ say ‘follow treatment’ or ‘stick to treatment.’ When possible, use pronouns such as ‘you’ to speak directly to your audience and inspire action.
- **Write short, simple sentences.** Keep your sentences to a couple lines long to avoid unnecessary complexity.
- **Develop self-explanatory, relevant content.** Provide your content close to the place or time that the action might occur. For instance, if you are encouraging women to perform breast self-examinations, consider distributing your message in a place women can access from the privacy of their home, such as Facebook or a retail website.

- **Use active voice to engage your audience.** Craft clear, direct, and energizing messages. The more your audience participates, the more attention your initiative receives, which amplifies your reach. Avoid extra words by limiting phrases such as ‘there are’ and ‘there is.’
- **Do the math for your audience.** Express numbers and figures in common terms and explain what they mean. Do not include a full set of data that requires your audience to perform calculations; do that for them.
- **Test your content.** Use tools such as the [Hemingway App](#) and the [Readability Test Tool](#) to ensure that your content is written in plain language so that most people can understand it. See Figure 2 for an example of an unclear message and how applying these tips can make it clearer.



**Figure 2. Applying Clear Communication Best Practices**

**Original Sentence:** There is epidemiological research showing that lung cancer constitutes 6.9% of all new cancer cases and 9.3% of all cancer-related deaths in both sexes in India.<sup>15</sup> It is the cancer with the highest prevalence and mortality in men. It is important to minimize your risk factors by quitting smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke.

**Clear Communication Sentence:** In India, lung cancer accounts for nearly 7% of all new cancer cases and more than 9% of cancer deaths in men and women. It is the most common and deadliest cancer in men. To lower your lung cancer risk, quit smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.

## Key Resources

- The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) [Clear Communication Index](#): a research-based tool, supported by RTI International, that helps you develop and assess public communication materials. The Index uses 4 introductory questions and 20 scored items representing the most important characteristics that enhance and aid people's understanding of information.
- CDC's [Everyday Words for Public Health Communication](#): a document that lists frequently used terms in health and their common, everyday alternatives. Use this document to find substitutes for medical jargon and technical terms.

**PRIORITIZE VISUALS.** The human brain is wired to process visual stimuli more efficiently than text, and relevant visuals catch readers' eyes more than text alone. Nearly 26% of Indians are not able to read or write. Visual content that conveys your message can help you reach this group when words cannot by providing cues and context. People are more likely to remember concepts when they are presented as visuals rather than words. To enhance the impact of your content, include as many photos, videos, illustrations, infographics, and other visuals as possible. In particular, apply these tips:

- **Include photographs to make your content more human and relatable.** Photographs of people and places can be powerful tools to provide a 'face' and 'feel' to your stories.
- **Use infographics to share research, quotes, and calls to action.** An infographic is an image, such as a chart or diagram, used to represent information or data. Infographics are relatively affordable options for visual content that have become increasingly popular. Google searches for infographics have increased by more than 800% in the past 2 years, and they can boost website traffic by 12%.<sup>16,17</sup> The image on the next page is an example of an infographic communicating cancer statistics.

Breast cancer is the leading cancer among women in India, with incidence peaking at 40 to 50 years of age.

Only **1 in 2** Indian women with **breast cancer** survives the first 5 years after diagnosis.



Research and technical services to reduce the burden of cancer and eliminate disparities in outcomes.

**BREAST CANCER**

	Worldwide	India
New cases	1.67 million	145,000
Deaths	522,000	70,000

Source: GLOBOCAN 2012: Estimated Cancer Incidence, Mortality, and Prevalence Worldwide in 2012.

**IRTI**  
INTERNATIONAL

[www.rti.org](http://www.rti.org)

- **Use short videos to tell stories and provide tutorials.** If a video is available, readers are likely to watch it before reading any text. Online videos account for more than 50% of web traffic on mobile devices, and YouTube has become the second largest search engine. Including videos also will improve your initiative's visibility; your website is 50 times more likely to appear on the first page of search engine results if it includes video. Try to keep videos less than 5 minutes, and make sure they are captioned for people who prefer not to listen to the audio when watching.<sup>18</sup>

### Key Resources

- **No-cost, royalty-free stock photo sites:** [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com) and [Pixabay](https://pixabay.com)
- **No-cost graphic design and infographic tools:** [Canva](https://canva.com) and [Pablo](https://pablo.buffer.com) by [Buffer](https://buffer.com) can be used to create simple infographics or to overlay text on photos.



**Complete the messaging and content activity on the next page to develop a content statement for your initiative, then proceed to Step 5: Select Your Tools.**

## BUILD MY INITIATIVE: CRAFT YOUR MESSAGING AND CONTENT

My digital communication initiative so far...

**AUDIENCE:** \_\_\_\_\_ (for example, youths aged 18 to 24)

Based on what you learned in the **Step 1: Understand Your Audience** section, write your priority audience here.

**OBJECTIVE:** \_\_\_\_\_

Based on what you learned in the **Step 2: Define Your Objectives** section, write one of your objectives here.

**STRATEGY:** \_\_\_\_\_

Based on what you learned in the **Step 3: Select Your Strategies and Tactics** section, write one of your strategies here.

Your content strategy is your plan for the usable communication materials and messages you develop and digitally share with your audience. To create this plan, fill in the blanks below. The worksheet was adapted from CDC's The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit.<sup>19</sup>

**Find your content 'sweet spot':** Your content sweet spot is the area where your organisation's expertise and authority overlap with your audience's needs. To determine your sweet spot for this initiative, answer the following questions:

- Define your topic. What will your content and communication materials be about?

\_\_\_\_\_

- Consider the focus area of your initiative (for example, breast cancer awareness). What does your priority audience **want** related to this topic?

\_\_\_\_\_

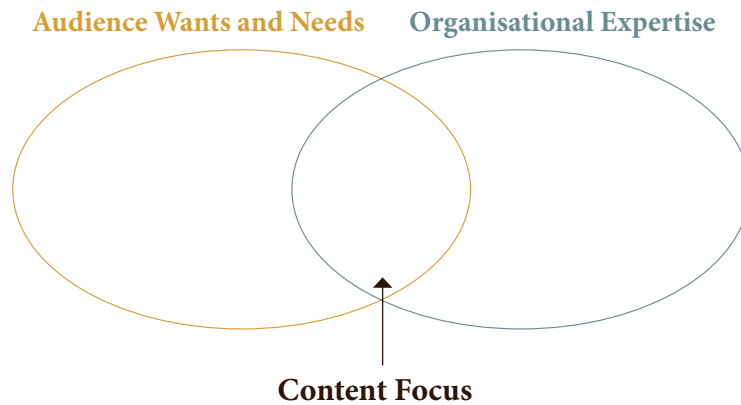
- What does your audience **need**? Think about information or tools that they might not have.

\_\_\_\_\_

- What is your organisation's **area of expertise**? List areas that are unique to your organisation.

\_\_\_\_\_

- Place your answers from questions 2 and 3 in the left circle of the graphic on the next page (Audience Wants and Needs). Place your answers from question 4 in the right circle (Organisational Expertise). Next, identify where the two circles overlap. What content can your organisation offer that your audience wants or needs? That content is where you will want to focus your effort.



**Get down to the details:** Once you determine the focus area of your content, think through the substance of each piece of content you will create. What does it look and sound like? How do all the pieces of content fit together into one cohesive picture? To clarify these details, follow the instructions below.

1. **Main messages:** What are the key messages or points you would like your audience to remember? Example: Conducting self-exams early and often can lead to early detection and treatment.

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2. **Calls to action:** What do you want your audience to do with the content you provide?

3. **Voice and tone:** What personality or tone is appropriate for your organisation, audience, and topic? Mark where your organisation falls on the spectrum for each characteristic by placing an X on each line provided.

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### Organisation Personality Spectrum

Personable and friendly

Corporate and professional

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Spontaneous, high energy

Careful thinking, planning

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Modern or high tech

Classic and traditional

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Cutting- edge

Established

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Fun

Serious

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Accessible to all

Tailored to one group

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4. **Style and format:** What types of content do you want to create? Think about types of content that are feasible for your organisation (for example, blog posts, infographics). Consider how your audience accesses digital information. Do they use social media or WhatsApp? (See **Step 5: Select Your Tools** section for more information.)

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5. **Roles and processes:** How will you determine roles within your organisation to get the content created and make sure it is high quality? Consider the following roles: project manager, content strategist, writer, subject matter expert, graphic designer, editor, web developer. Think about how these individuals will work together. What's the first step?

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6. **Policies and procedures:** Does your organisation have any policies, standards, and guidelines that apply to your content (for example, social media policy, accessibility for people with impairments)?

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7. **Monitoring and evaluation:** What metrics will you use to measure success (for example, reach, engagement, and action)? What are the baseline metrics? What are your target metrics? (See **Step 6: Track Your Impact** section for more information.)

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**Develop your content statement:** Your content statement is a one- or two-line statement that summarizes your overall content plan. It is a useful reference when discussing new content ideas.

Fill in the blanks below to create your content strategy statement.

The content we provide will help \_\_\_\_\_ achieve \_\_\_\_\_  
[your organisation name] [goal]

by providing \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ content that makes \_\_\_\_\_  
[adjective] [adjective] [audience description]

feel \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, so that they can \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.  
[emotion] [emotion] [emotion] [task] [task]

**Specify your hub and spokes:** Use the diagram below to specify your digital hub and the spokes that will direct people back to that hub.

