



DIVERSITY IS NOT A DIRTY WORD

A TO-DO LIST FOR NAVIGATING DEI
MESSAGING AND POSITIONING



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INTRODUCTION

Being a communicator right now is like living inside a group chat that you can't escape—every news headline, every crisis, every hot take is blowing up your notifications. Staying informed is part of the profession, sure, but maintaining your sanity in the process? That's the real skill.

I decided to fight back. I muted the noise (bye, doomscrolling), traded the online chaos for actual face-to-face time with a fellow board member, and doubled down on sharpening my craft.

That focus led me to the topic I'm sharing with you today: **Diversity is Not a Dirty Word**. Hope you find this as grounding as I did.

MESSAGING IN A SHIFTING LANDSCAPE

In the world of PR and communications, political campaigns offer lessons worth studying. The 2024 presidential race? It's a case study on steroids. It's both **Positioning 101** and **a masterclass all at once**. From a messaging perspective, it's equal parts fascinating and unsettling.

The basic tenets of messaging and positioning are straightforward and timeless:

- Replace old ideas with new ones.
- Disrupt strongly held beliefs.
- Conflict can be leveraged for reputation.

Fast forward to today—a few weeks into a new administration—and the masterclass continues. **“DEI” (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) has been rebranded into a dirty word, stirring up visceral emotions and polarizing opinions at nearly every turn.**

It’s a branding coup, executed with razor-sharp precision. And now, organizations are scrambling to figure out what to do with their marketing materials and website copy proudly touting their commitment to diversity.

THE TRUTH ABOUT DEI MESSAGING

The truth is: **diversity is not a dirty word.** Nor should it be treated as irresponsibly as we’ve seen in the last five years—a buzzword that’s seemingly in during racial reckoning and out with the change of political powers.

Across industries, party lines, for-profits, and nonprofits alike, **the battle for a winning message will be a fierce one.** In other words, check on your communicator friends as they navigate this unprecedented time; trying their hardest to implement the positioning principles mentioned earlier **(shoutout to the city of Baltimore’s head political figure who has one of the best counter-messages to the DEI backlash I’ve seen thus far).**



YOUR DEI MESSAGING ACTION PLAN

If your organization is taking a **"wait and see" approach**, I have one word for you: Run. Run as fast as you can because this war of words is a losing battle for companies that aren't living out their values to begin with. **Inauthenticity never wins.**

On the other hand, if your organization believes in the **long-term impact of diversity, equity, and inclusion**, here's how to strengthen your DEI messaging strategy:

1. Audit Your Foundations

- ✓ Partner across departments to review your policies, values, culture, and brand identity.
- ✓ Ensure alignment between internal culture and external messaging.

2. Align with the Rules

- ✓ Cross-check everything with regulatory changes.
- ✓ Stay compliant while ensuring your positioning remains authentic.

3. Show Your Receipts

- ✓ Gather hard data on how diversity, equity, and inclusion have impacted the bottom line.
- ✓ Transparency builds trust—use real numbers, not just statements.

4. Roll Up Your Sleeves: Craft Strategic Messaging

- ✓ Stand out with clear, compelling messaging that anchors internal and external stakeholders.
- ✓ Bonus points for unifying both audiences with a single, strong narrative.

5. Play the Long Game

- ✓ Messaging and positioning should be handled with deep collaboration and extreme care.
- ✓ Siloed efforts and reactive decisions won't cut it—build with purpose.

FINAL THOUGHTS: LEAD WITH AUTHENTICITY

The bottom line? **Diversity isn't a dirty word.** The companies that thrive—even in turbulent times—are the ones that live their values authentically and unapologetically.

This isn't just about surviving this moment—it's about setting your organization up for long-term success.



TAKE THE LEAD ON DEI MESSAGING

BUILD WITH PURPOSE. COMMUNICATE WITH IMPACT.

If your team needs expert guidance to adapt, refine, and lead with purpose, let's connect. I specialize in fractional leadership solutions that help organizations craft bold, effective messaging in today's complex environment.

✉ Let's talk: Email me at scale@andreacartermedia.com to discuss how fractional leadership can support your success.



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