How to create a brand messaging hierarchy (the ultimate framework)

Category: Voice
written by Stewart Hodgson | 24 July 2024
Poor messaging can be toxic to even the most popular brand. If you're not conveying the right key messages to your target audience, in the right ways, with the correct tone of voice, then your brand loyalty and conversion rates will suffer. That's where brand messaging hierarchy comes in.

Not to be confused with your brand editorial guidelines, your brand messaging hierarchy gives you the structured framework you need for conveying information to your audience. That audience includes potential customers, employees, stakeholders, investors, and more.

Used correctly, messaging guidelines strengthen your brand identity, enhance the impact of your marketing campaigns, and build emotional connections with your buyer personas.

So, how do you create an effective messaging hierarchy?

Here's what you need to know.

What is brand messaging hierarchy?

Brand messaging hierarchy is the term used to refer to the pyramid-shaped system companies use to communicate their brand values, goals, and vision to an audience in a structured, consistent way. It combines a number of different components, from your brand promise to your proof points.



With a messaging hierarchy, you outline all the core components of your brand, from your brand promise and position in the market, to your value proposition, and translate them into messages you can use for marketing, PR, sales strategies and more.

A message hierarchy doesn't necessarily give more weight to one asset over another. Instead, it distils your brand's essence down into its essential points.

Messaging hierarchies also don't have to be set in stone. They can simply give you a brand messaging framework that you can adapt as your business goals, audience segments, and objectives change over time, allowing you to evolve, while maintaining "familiar" elements.

Why is messaging hierarchy important?

So, why do you need messaging hierarchy? Can't you just follow some basic editorial guidelines and leave it at that? Well,

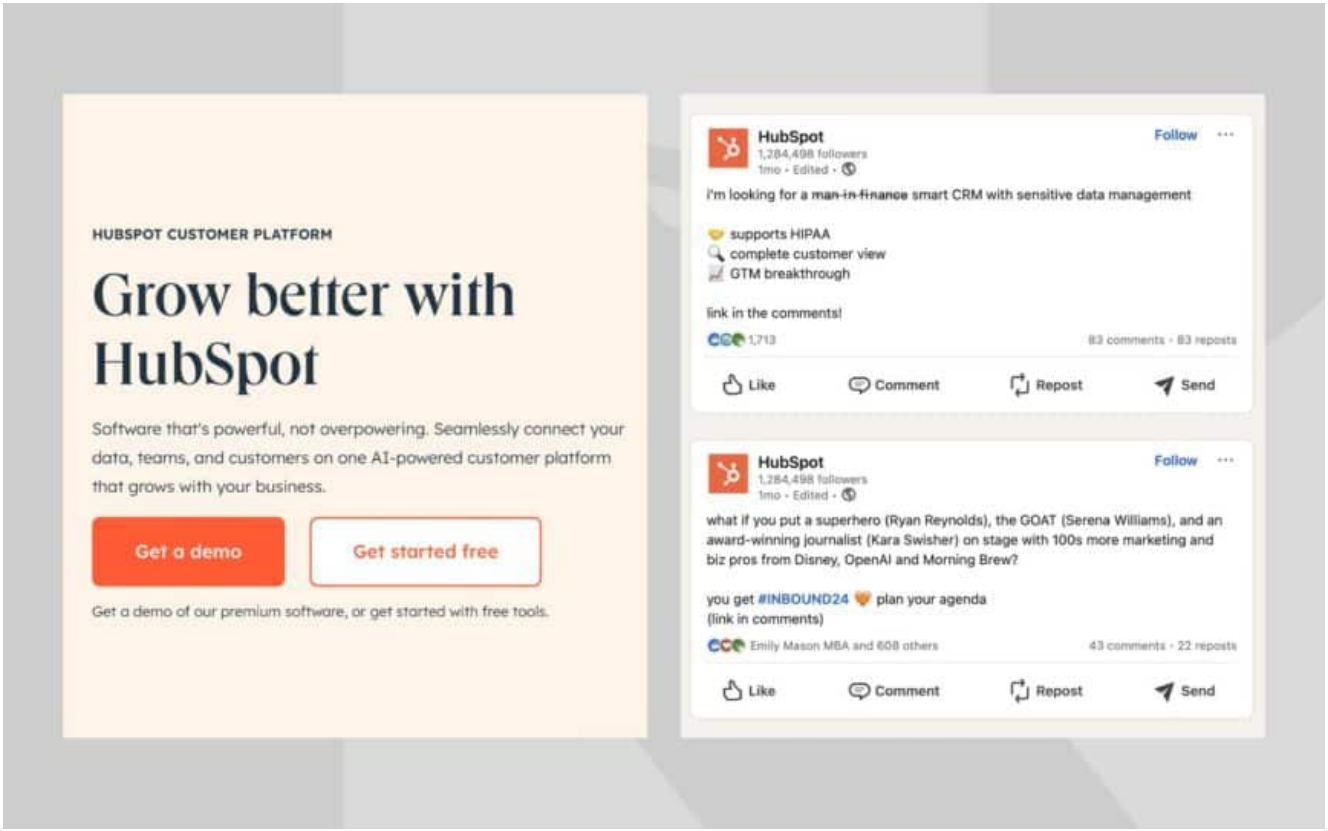
you *could,* but messaging hierarchy is powerful. It's one of the core factors that ensures you can send a consistent message to your target audience.

You might think everyone in your company already "knows your brand". But, in reality, the team members responsible for product development, customer service, and sales might have very different ideas of what kind of message they need to send to your target market.

If your employees don't have a clear view of your company's core values, mission statement, brand story, and unique selling points, key messaging statements can become muddled and inconsistent.

Creating a clear brand message hierarchy, and a brand messaging architecture, preserves the essence of your brand as you develop marketing materials, internal communication strategies, public relations campaigns, and more. Look at HubSpot for instance.

Across all channels, HubSpot uses a simple, friendly tone of voice, that directly draws attention to the core benefits of its tools (they're easy to use, and help companies grow):



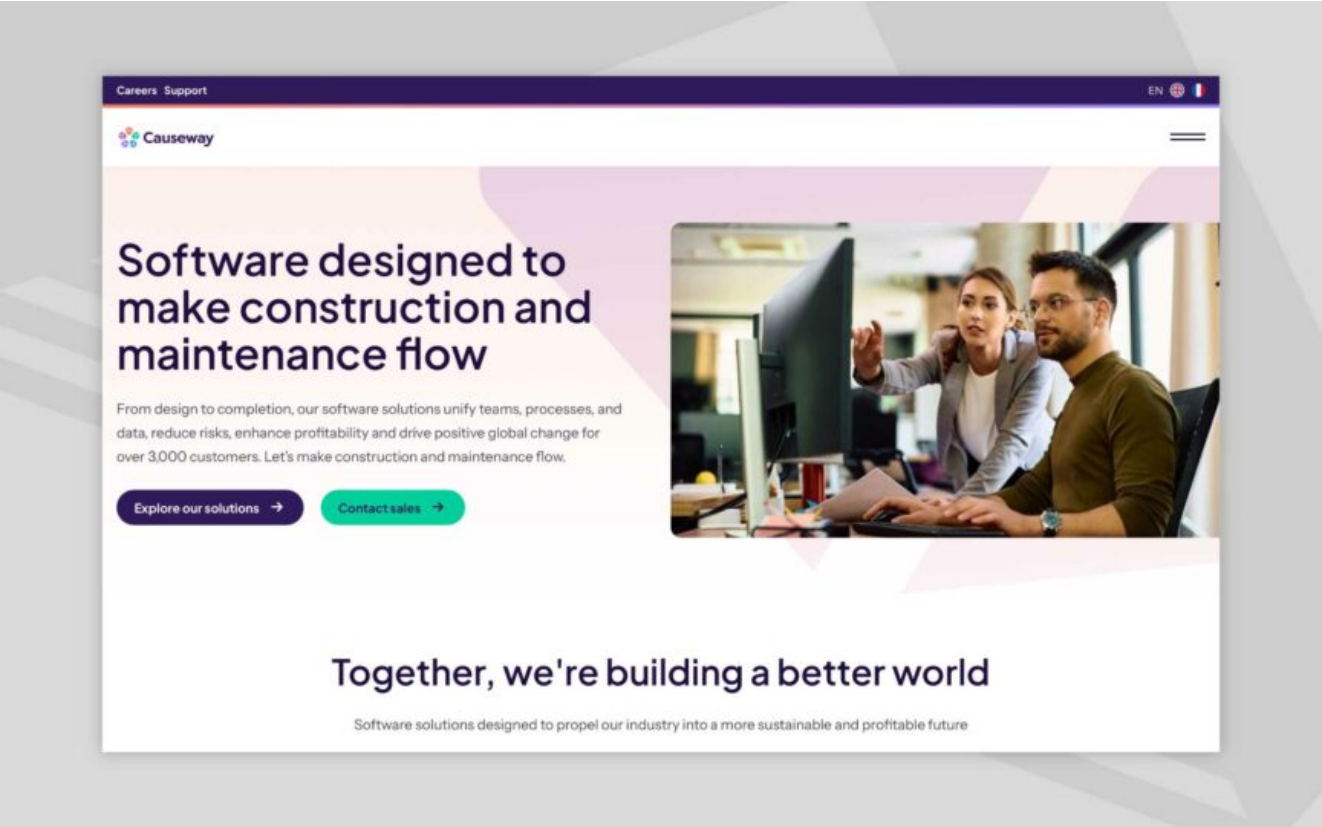
Aside from improving consistency, brand messaging hierarchy:

Ensures your brand message is strategic

Successfully selling products and services isn't easy these days. Companies can't just promise customers the world, they need to identify specific pain points and customer needs, and demonstrate their value through their messaging strategy.

With a brand messaging hierarchy, you ensure your key messaging statements are drawing attention to the information that matters most for your target audience. For instance, our client Causeway's brand messaging hierarchy conveys very specific brand promises and missions.

The company constantly draws attention to unifying teams, enhancing profitability, and reducing risks in the construction and maintenance space.



Notably, you can also adapt your brand messaging framework to suit different user personas and use cases for your products or services (we'll come back to this in a minute). This means you can send a consistent message, but still adapt to different audience priorities.

Aligns your teams

As mentioned above, brand messaging hierarchy is a crucial tool for content creators and marketing teams who need to send consistent messages across different channels.

However, your marketing team isn't the only group responsible for brand messaging. There are numerous employees in your team that need to convey supporting messages about what your company stands for, what it offers, and why its unique.

Your sales team needs to be able to tailor pitches, demonstrations, and presentations to different audiences, while constantly showing off your unique value proposition. Your customer support team needs to understand your brand promise, to deliver amazing experiences to customers.

A brand message map, or hierarchy acts as a comprehensive guide for every member of your team. It ensures everyone understands your core brand message, and the purpose of your business, so teams can create a cohesive narrative about your brand.

A strong brand messaging hierarchy can even help your teams track and understand the success of different messages. It can help them figure out what you're trying to convey as a company, and what emotions or responses you're trying to generate within your target customers.

Improves marketing ROI

Brand messaging hierarchy can be a valuable tool for companies looking to elevate their brand voice, while also reducing costs. We *all* know that great messaging is essential for any company. Your blog posts, social media marketing messages, press releases and more all serve a purpose.

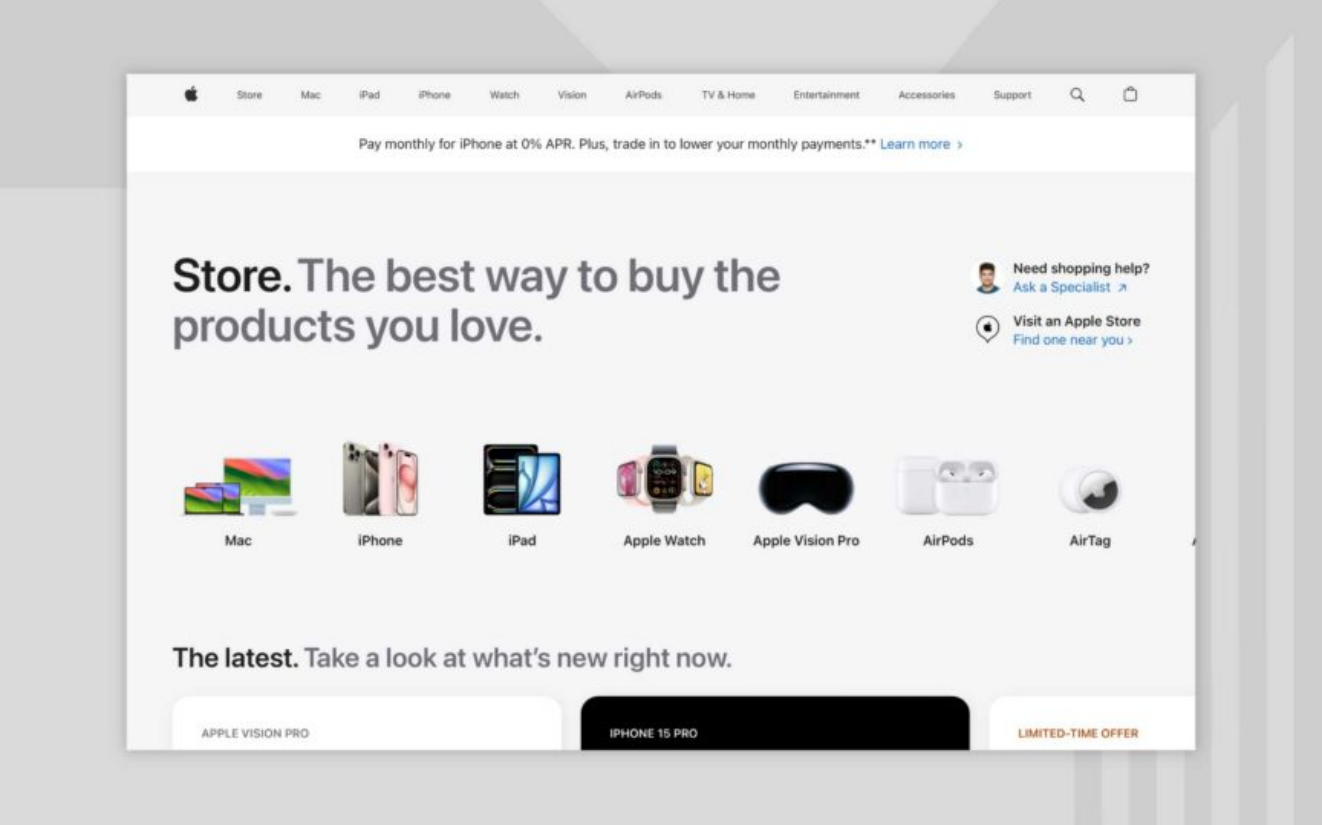
They help you articulate your brand's values, mission, and promise to your customers. Plus, with the right style guide, your brand messaging can showcase your personality, helping you to forge stronger emotional connections with customers.

Unfortunately, while the right marketing efforts are crucial, a comprehensive communication strategy can be expensive and time consuming.

Enter: messaging hierarchy. When you can identify precise pain points, value propositions, and statements that resonate with your customer base, you can spend time and money on the right strategies. You'll be able to track which key statements your customers associate with you.

This means you can adapt your overall brand strategy and focus less on messaging that doesn't really matter to your bottom line. Apple knows its main selling points are innovation and simplicity. That's why they focus on cutting-edge

functionality and user experience in messaging.



The core ingredients of a messaging hierarchy framework

So, how do you create brand messaging hierarchy? That's where things start to get a little tricky. The easiest option is to work with a brand strategist, like Fabrik.

We can work with companies to find the core elements of their messaging pyramid, from their proof points and unique value propositions to their key messages.

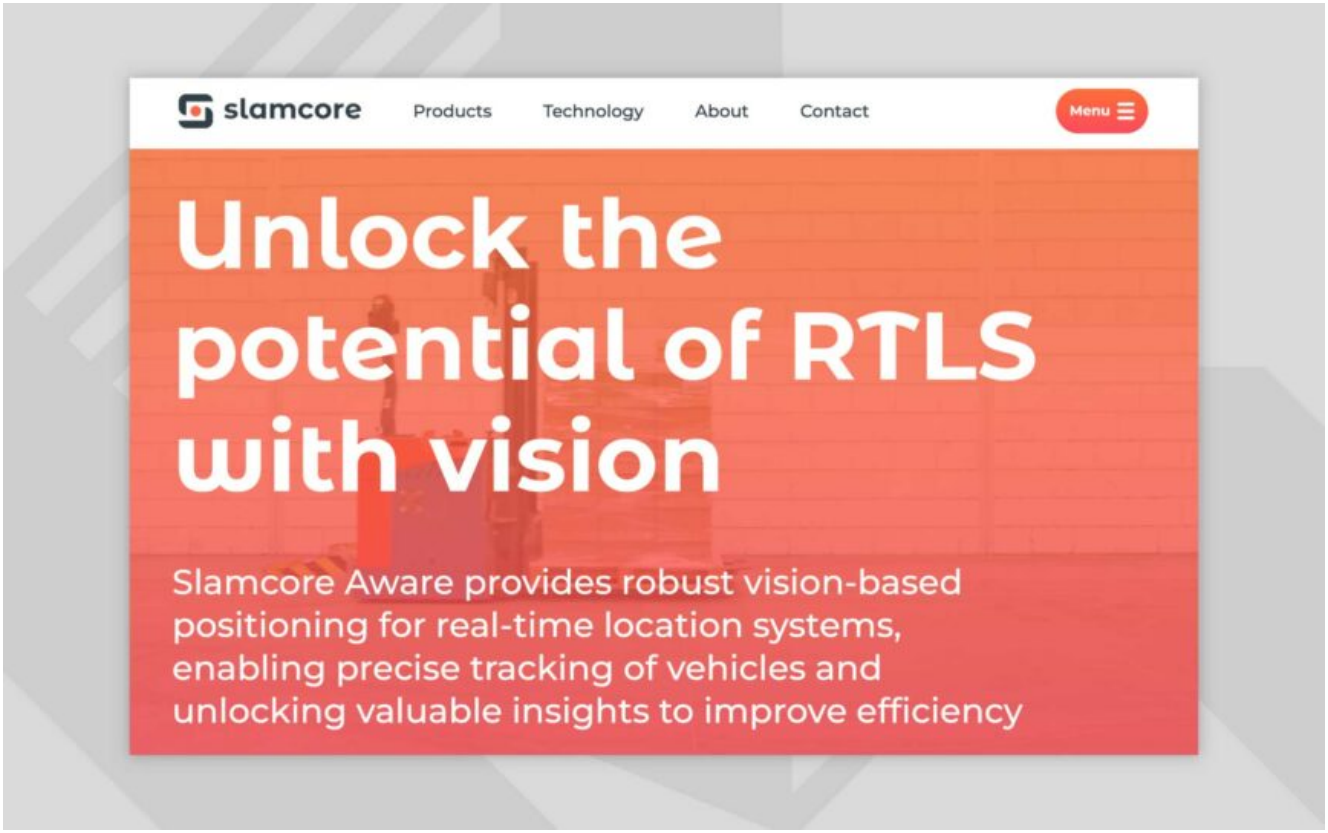
Look at how we helped Salad Money come up with the core messages for its marketing strategies, as well as a friendly tone of voice, and comprehensive positioning statement.

If you build your message pyramid alone, or with a partner, the framework might vary slightly depending on a range of factors.

However, most brand messaging hierarchies will include the following key elements:

Level 1: Proof points and USPs

Your USPs or Unique Selling Points, are the components of your brand, product, or service offering that separate you from the competition. They can include everything from proprietary products and features, to unique expertise, like Slamcore's expertise in the SLAM landscape.



Your USPs might even include your company's history, the partnerships you've built, or your approach to customer service. The best USPs respond to the priorities and long-term goals of your target audience, so keep that in mind.

What makes USPs into "proof points" is the fact that they're indisputable and undeniable. In other words, you can't just say your company is unique because it offers the best accounting software in the world. You need to be able to prove why that's the case.

If one of your USPs is that your product is incredibly easy to use, can you validate that with feedback from your customers? If your brand's unique selling point is a focus on sustainability, how do you prove that you're eco-conscious?

Level 2: Key messaging

Next, we have key messaging. These are the core messages you embed into your brand's marketing messages, product descriptions, and campaigns. They focus exclusively on your proof points, and what makes your organization special.

One of Coca-Cola's key messages is that it's the "original" soft drink, which is why it uses slogans like "Always the real thing". To create key messages, most companies start by listing their proof points in bullet form, then expanding them into descriptive phrases.

For example, if a proof point is that you offer exceptional ease of use, your messaging might revolve around "working smarter, not harder", or "making your life easier".



It’s usually a good idea to come up with a lot of different key messages based on your proof points, that you can embed into different marketing strategies. Additionally, remember that you can expand outside of your proof points too, as long as you’re not too overzealous.

Level 3: The value proposition

Wait, didn’t we already cover unique selling proposition? Yes, but your value proposition is a little different. A value proposition is a lot like your brand promise (another level of your brand messaging hierarchy). It outlines the value you’re going to deliver to your customer.

A good value proposition should be a complete sentence, something you’d put at the top of an elevator pitch in sales. For instance, Nike’s value proposition is that their products are accessible, innovative, customizable, and inclusive.

Remember, the best value propositions are unique, clear, compelling, and focused on the company. They’re also not packed full of jargon or empty marketing words like “world-class”. Focus on the specific benefits you can deliver to your customers.

For example: “Syneo: Harness the power of context to uncover risk, and prevent financial crime more efficiently, and effectively.”



Level 4: Positioning statement

Next, we have your brand's positioning statement. Like your proof points, your positioning statement helps to identify what makes your company unique. It captures the essence of your brand, your value proposition, and how you differ from your competition.

The key to an effective positioning statement is presenting your value in the context of a wider market, paying attention to what your competition actually does.

As an example, Amazon's positioning statement looks like this:

"For consumers who want to purchase a wide range of products online with quick delivery, Amazon provides a one-stop online shopping site. Amazon sets itself apart from other online retailers with its customer obsession, passion for innovation, and commitment to operational excellence."

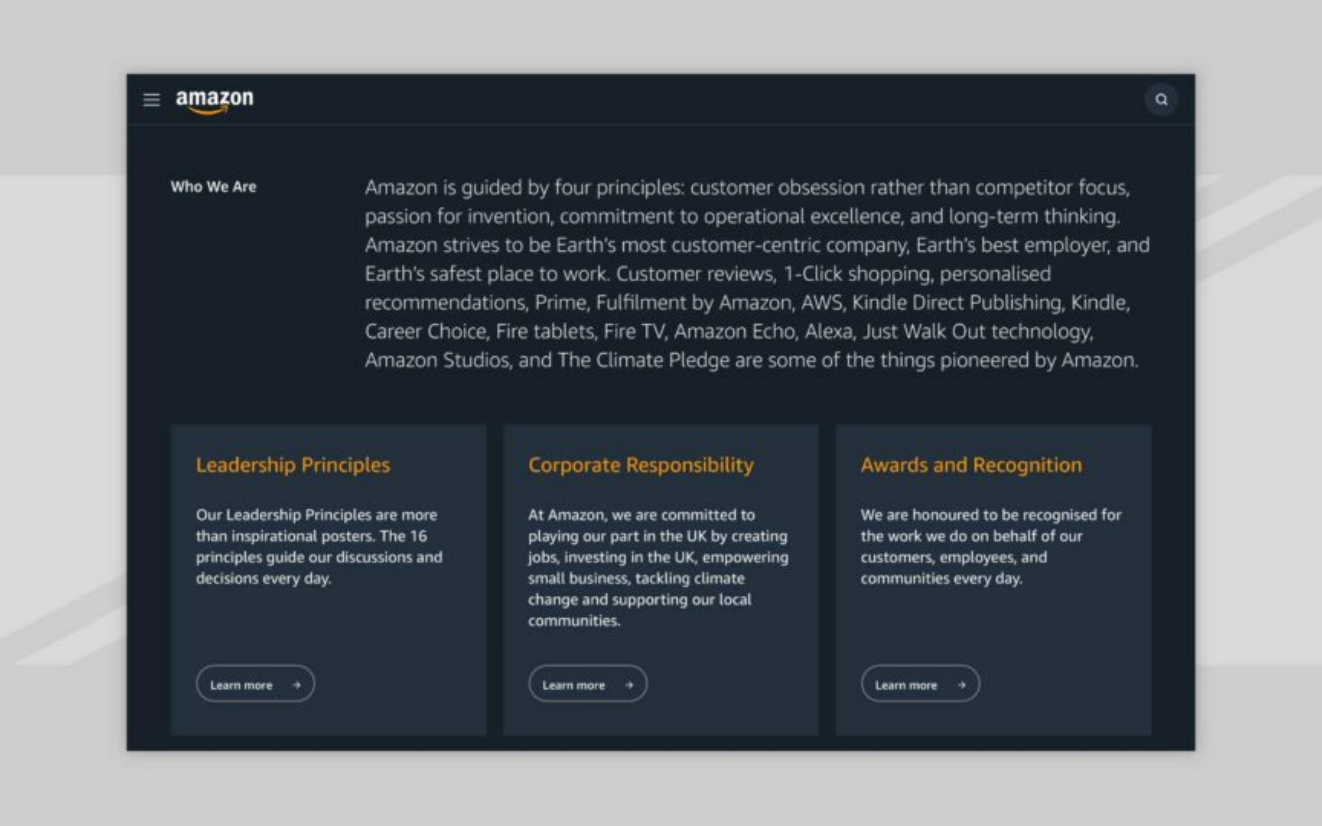
Extensive customer and competitive research will help you to identify a positioning statement that genuinely shows your

audience where your company stands in the market.

Level 5: Brand promise

Last in your brand messaging hierarchy, we have your brand promise. This is a simple, memorable statement that distils all of the earlier components of your messaging pyramid into one concept. It describes the exact experience customers should have with your brand.

In the case of Amazon, their promise is to be the world's most customer-centric company.



Your promise might be to give your customers the best possible customer service experience too, or you might be focused on paving the way for new innovations in your industry.

Your brand promise should guide and inform everything you do and say as a company. It needs to be authentic, and it needs to be something your company can actually live up to. No successful brand has ever lasted long by making a promise they couldn't keep.

How to use your messaging pyramid

Once you've built a robust messaging hierarchy for your company, the next step is figuring out how to use it. Usually, we recommend including your messaging pyramid in your other brand resources and guidelines, alongside your editorial and tone-of-voice details.

Here are some tips for success…

1. Create clear guidelines

Guidelines are incredibly helpful when you're trying to implement a specific messaging hierarchy and preserve brand consistency. Use your messaging pyramid as a guide when you're creating editorial and marketing strategies for your teams.

Provide clear examples of your key messages to team members, and share them with other contractors and external parties when you're creating different types of content. Make sure you have clear plans in place for your content strategy, social media posts, and other forms of messaging.

It can even help to give your team members examples of poor messaging, or campaigns that don't align effectively with your brand values, to avoid common mistakes.

2. Match your messaging to your personas

I said it before and I'll say it again, your messaging should *always* be aligned with your target audience. If you haven't already, double-check your buyer personas, and learn as much as you can about their pain points, goals, and language styles.

Keep in mind, you might need to use slightly different types of messaging for different audience groups. You might tailor messages to a younger audience with a focus on the simplicity

and convenience of your service, while focusing on innovation for an older audience.

You could also create specific messages that would address the objections different customers might have towards using your product or service.

3. Be collaborative

Not only do you need to ensure that all of your team members understand your brand messaging hierarchy, but you need to allow them to contribute to its evolution too. Your messaging should be data and experience-driven, based on interactions with real people.

This means your marketing, sales, and customer service teams all need to be able to use consistent brand messaging, and also share their insights on how it should evolve.

Remember, your main message might stay the same, but how you communicate with your audience is likely to change over time. Pay attention to what you learn about your customers, and how they feel about your business value proposition, and adapt accordingly.

Need help defining message hierarchy?

A well-defined and executed brand messaging hierarchy is crucial to any company. It’s not just a way to ensure you can keep your messaging consistent and in line with the needs of your target audience. It’s also how you constantly highlight your company’s values and differentiating points.

With the right messaging hierarchy, and brand message architecture, you’ll be more likely to achieve your communication goals, strengthening emotional connections with customers and increasing sales.

Plus, you'll end up with a more cohesive brand identity, and a stronger presence in your target market.

If you're struggling to build the perfect brand messaging pyramid, turn to the experts for help.

At Fabrik, we can help you identify the building blocks of your messaging hierarchy, and give you the guidance you need to formulate your core messages.

Contact us today to start working on your pyramid.

Fabrik: A branding agency for our times.

Now read these:
–Brand messaging: What it is and how it works
–How to create a brand messaging architecture
–The 5-step guide to brand messaging strategy