

Building Your

Messaging Foundation

OBRIEN

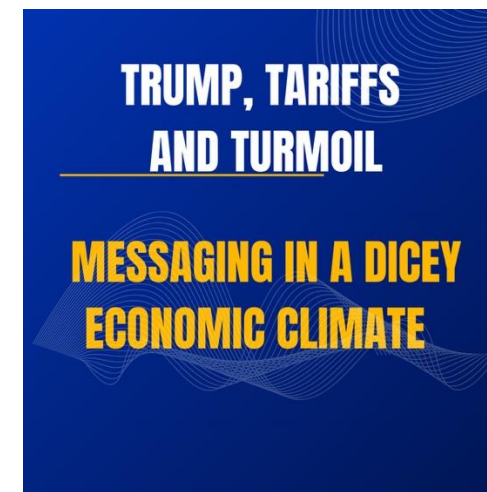
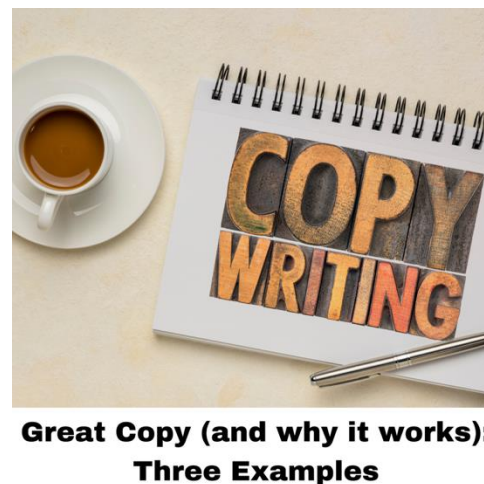
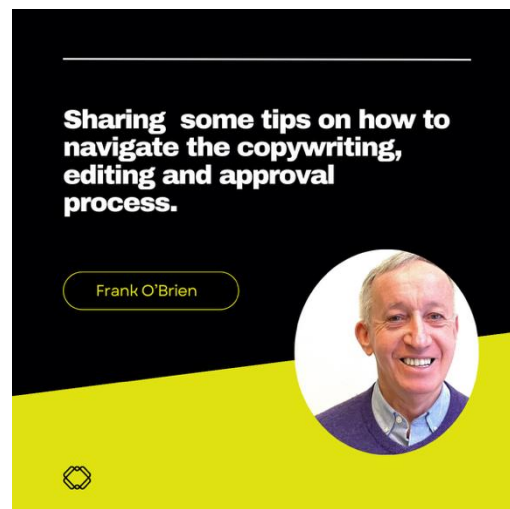
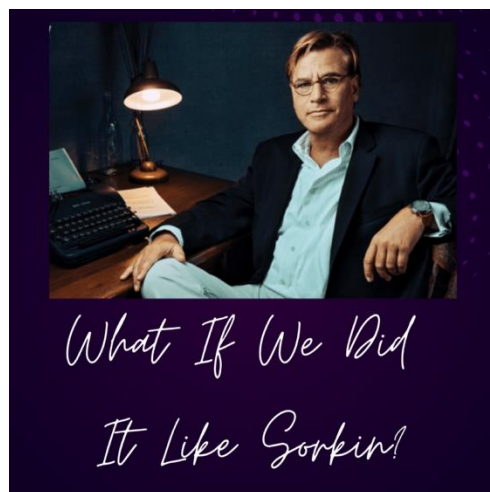
ON MESSAGE



BACKGROUND: Founder, O'Brien Garrett



Monday On Message Memo



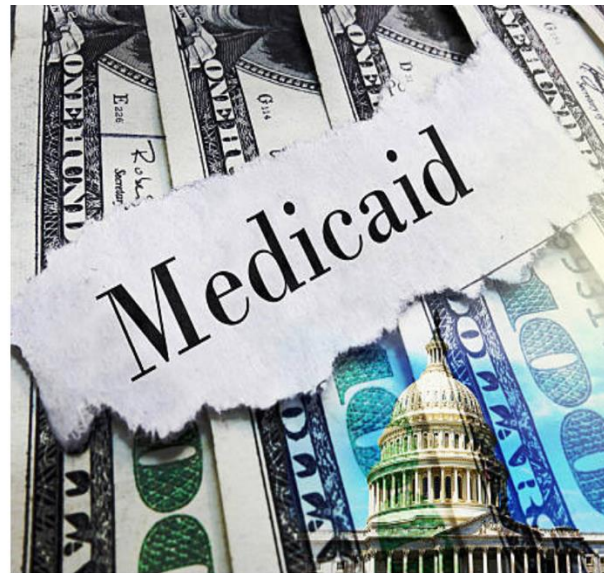
2026 PATH TO PERSUASION

THE PROGRESSIVE ROAD TO VICTORY

New Memo every Wednesday on Substack

How we can
win the 2026
elections

(And how we
could lose them)

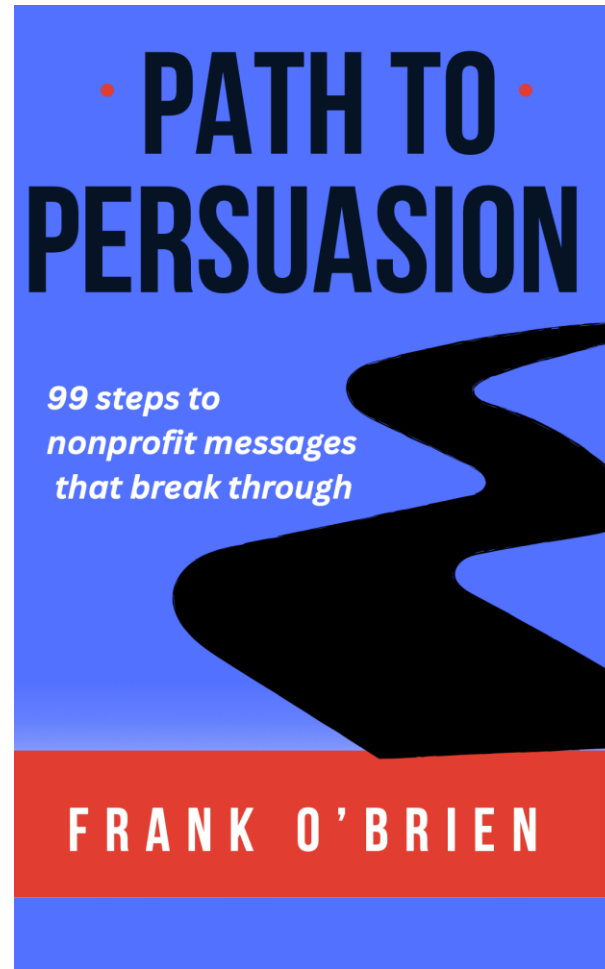


The Messaging Battle

**NO TIME
TO STAY CALM!**



Book Coming This Fall!!



The Premise of My Presentation

Before we turn to copywriting and design, the creative process begins with developing a sound messaging platform.

You're Not
Ready to Write
Until You ...



**Make sure you
really know
your material**

You're Not
Ready to Write
Until You ...



**Make sure you
really know
your audience**

How Well Do You Know Your Audience?



What
makes
them tick?



What keeps
them up at
night?




Where do
they get their
information?



What words
and
expressions
do they use?

The Most Important Question About **Your Audience**



**Are you connecting your
mission and work to
their personal identity?**

Jane is a tennis player.



Andrew plays tennis.



**Which one do you think
is more committed to tennis?**

You're Not
Ready to Write
Until You ...



**Understand
your audience's
emotional journey.**



**Democratic and progressive audiences
have been on an 18-month
emotional roller coaster**

Examples of Emotional Disconnects

Biden leans into fear-based message about “existential threat to democracy.”

Schumer backs off and gives GOP votes to pass budget resolution.

Democrats lean into a “we’ll gain ground in 2026 elections” message

But fear can immobilize audiences as easily as it motivates them.

But Dem audiences are desperate to know leaders won’t “roll over and play dead.”

But Dem audiences are looking for immediate pushback and emotional reassurance.

You're Not
Ready to Write
Until You ...



**Create a
compelling case
for engagement**

Four Case for Engagement Questions



What
problem are
you aiming
to solve?



What
compelling
solutions are
you seeking
to advance?




Why is your
group the
right
vehicle?



What role
have you
created for
people to
play?

The Messaging Choice That Can Define How You're Judged



What question are you
leading your audiences to
ask about your work?

The Search for Barriers (and ways to overcome them)





GOLDEN RULE:
Never raise a barrier
you can't dispose of.

You're Not
Ready to Write
Until You ...



**Clarify your group's
personality, voice,
and stance**

Eight Organizational Personalities

Compassionate and Caring

Bold and Activist

Determined and Reliable

Professional and Trustworthy

Creative and Innovative

Feisty and Risk-taking

Serious and Urgent

Optimistic and Hopeful

Adjective



Traditional

—

—

Bold

—

—

Caring

—

—

Feisty

—

—

Loving

—

—

Effective

—

—

Determined

—

—

Respected

—

—

Three Tests for Your Organizational Identity



What
adjectives
reflect your
personality?



Do your
language and
images match
that
personality?



Do the
emotions
you invoke
fit that
personality?

**You're Not
Ready to Write
Until You ...**





**Make sure your
storytelling is
purposeful and
persuasive.**



“We think in story. It’s hardwired in our brain. It’s how we make strategic sense of the otherwise overwhelming world around us.”



Lisa Cron

“Stories are not only engaging and involving, they are processed in the brain differently than facts and figures are. . . .
Stories stoke emotion. And emotion drives decisions.”



Nancy Harhut

The Storytelling **Trifecta**



**An Easy to
Tell Story**



**That Connects
to Your Brand
Identity**



**And to Your
Reader's
Personal
Identity**

When the Unthinkable Happens



Thank You

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ON MESSAGE