

# The Founder's Survival Guide

Helping healthcare leaders  
navigate the top 10 challenges  
with communication expertise



Jessica Ovadia  
Content Strategist

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## Attention founders, leaders, managers, and entrepreneurs,

You've got a barrage of challenges and business objectives to prioritize. And, while I'm sure you appreciate the power of communication, allocating the time and resources to build a content strategy rarely makes it to the top of your list.

But here's a secret: Communication is NOT an "extra" and the sooner you realize that, the easier your challenges will become.

A solid communication plan is a cornerstone for overcoming obstacles and achieving ambitious business goals, extending far beyond sales and marketing. As leaders, you must be ready for anything, and a foundation for exceptional messaging makes it all a bit easier.

### *Doesn't easier sound enticing?*

Whether pivoting your business plan, crafting tailored messages, preparing for a pitch or responding to a challenge, a messaging foundation provides a rubric from which to craft relevant content and engage with your audience.

A messaging foundation, therefore, is your organization's most critical piece of collateral; before your one pager, pitch deck or 20 page business plan.

Of course, even with this foundation, leading an organization means challenges will arise. Pivots are endless; some are industry agnostic and reflect the natural progression of business growth. Others are so healthcare focused, even seasoned physicians struggle to manage them.

Regardless, with a messaging foundation in hand (aka: a content rubric to follow), it's all surmountable and that's what this guide will show you. To manage the inevitable challenges that growing your healthcare organization will bring, you need to engage with your strategy and lean in to benefits of consistent, honest and ongoing communication.

This Founders' Survival Guide will help you navigate the top 10 challenges with communication expertise and grace. Let's get started!



## Challenge 1: Regulatory Compliance

In the early stages, maintaining regulatory compliance can seem like a maze of complex rules and requirements. **And contrary to popular belief, “achieving compliance” is not just a box to tick;** It's an ongoing exercise in trust and credibility to ensure you maintain certifications, approval and more in a widely regulated industry.

Regardless of which compliance agency you are in contact with, here's how communication can facilitate a reliable relationship:

### 1. A Messaging Foundation

A content strategy, or as I like it, a Messaging Foundation, enables you to easily communicate your value and pivot when needed. It aligns your team, keeps stakeholders informed, and enables you to address regulatory requirements confidently. Engineer your foundation as early as possible - you'll thank me.

### 2. Communication Plan

Since ongoing engagement with regulatory bodies is the only way to stay informed and maintain compliance, build a plan to stay organized. After crafting the Messaging Foundation, list the specific stakeholders to build relationship with, how and who on your team will own that line item. Typical communication plans include webinars, meetings, one pagers, onboarding materials and more. Getting organized will keep you consistent.

### 3. Internal Support

Maintaining compliance is more than a checklist to complete; it's a mindset to embed within your company culture. Be sure to share the communication plan with your entire team - regardless of their involvement. Everyone has a role to play.

### 4. Collaborate

Engage with industry experts and seek guidance from seasoned professionals such as advisors, mentors, and regulatory consultants. Collaboration creates a strong support network, plus in an industry with changing regulations, you'll need to rely on outside help to stay abreast of new laws!

***Regulatory compliance isn't a hurdle to overcome; it's a pathway to building a future, founded on trust and innovation.***

## Challenge 2: Funding and Capital

You've got a brilliant idea, a dedicated team and a vision for changing the game in healthcare. **But, how do you secure the funding to turn that dream into a reality?** Each pitch is a one-time opportunity to convey your worth - wouldn't it be nice to confidently convince investors why they should put their money behind you? Btw - a messaging foundation always includes the language necessary for a pitch. But, in the event you haven't laid yours yet or are unclear how to pull it all together, here are some things to consider:

### 1. Unique Story

Every successful pitch starts with a compelling story connecting you to the pain points at hand. Answer the following questions to make sure you're focused on the challenge FIRST:

- ? What problem are you solving?
- ? Who does it impact most?
- ? Why does it matter?

### 2. Execution

Investors are not just interested in ideas; they want to see how you plan to execute them. Showcase your operational prowess, your team's capabilities, and why your product is uniquely positioned for success. This can be challenging when you are early stage or 5 years away from market approval. Yet, investors still need to understand the runway. Don't pitch an idea. Pitch a operational solution.

### 3. Beyond the Pitch

Investor relations require more than an occasional update, or a killer pitch. Whether growth is skyrocketing or you've hit a road-bump, keep the lines of communication open. Current and potential investors appreciate honest updates throughout your journey.

### 4. Embrace Tough Discussions

Leaders are reluctant to communicate when things aren't going well; And while this anxiety is natural is often leads to huge pitfalls in communication. If you know something is wrong, chances are your stakeholders do as well. You can't hope your way out of a challenge so, talk to your investors. Ask for help and lean into the power of honest conversations.

***Tell your story, demonstrate your capabilities and communicate honestly.***

## Challenge 3: Market Entry and Adoption

Entering a new market is a great sign of progress. However, do it poorly and you'll experience massive delays in growth. Check out these 4 communication strategies to tackle the unique challenge of market entry & adoption:

### 1. Know Your Stakeholders

Before leaping into a new market, get to know your stakeholders. Make a list of who they are, their interests, pain points & hesitations. For help, grab the Stakeholder Identification Guide under Resources: [www.jessicaovadia.com](http://www.jessicaovadia.com).

### 2. Product-Market Fit

Find that sweet spot where your solution aligns perfectly with market needs. Is there a demand for what you offer? How will your product be received by healthcare providers, patients, and others? Understanding product-market fit means taking time, initially, to intimately know your audience and identify their pain points - so reference number 1 often.

### 3. Map Out Integration Possibilities

How will your product seamlessly integrate into the existing healthcare ecosystem? Which partnerships can you forge, and what networks can you tap into? The more you fit into the existing puzzle, the smoother your market entry will be. Of course, there may be elements of integration which aren't smooth, despite your efforts. Don't worry - If you specifically address the needs of your customer in your messaging foundation, you're likely to communicate effectively and discover solutions.

### 4. Embrace Flexibility

Plans rarely unfold exactly as envisioned, which is why it's important to integrate change management into your strategy. Key messages, prioritizing your customers, and maintaining alignment with your mission are all critical in managing pivots. Above all else, your stakeholder relationships are most important so focus on that... the rest will fall into place.

*Maintain an open line of communication with stakeholders to gather insights, address concerns, and pivot when needed.*

## Challenge 4: Clinical Validation

Clinical validation is the ticket to success in the healthcare industry, enabling you to market proven results, gain interest and secure future funding. But navigating the process is often like a complex medical diagnosis - demanding precision, thorough examination, and a keen understanding of the intricate systems it functions within. Essentially - achieving validation is complex, regulated, time consuming AND critical.

If you're a founder, check out these crucial strategies to make this daunting process more manageable:

### **1. Understand the Approval Process**

Before you begin the process, be sure you're clear on each step, timelines, validation proof points you'll need to submit & more. Identifying and planning for these "nuances" is the only way to generate results.

### **2. Gather A Team**

Your success largely depends on the expertise and coordination of your team. Ensure they are prepared to handle the intricacies of the validation process. This includes defining expectations so everyone understand roles, responsibilities and timelines. If your current team is unable or unfit to manage this, outsource!

### **3. Communication Flexibility**

As part of the approval process, you may receive feedback that you didn't expect - disqualifying you or complicating your timeline. Expect the unexpected from the beginning - and devise a plan for business pivots and stakeholder communication. For example, investors are keen on knowing your clinical approval roadmap. After all, approval is an important part of any go to market strategy. So, if you experience progress or a delay, communicate!

*Validation means you are one step closer to solving the toughest challenges in the healthcare industry, so plan accordingly.*

## Challenge 5: Insurance and Reimbursement

Conversations with insurance and reimbursement organizations can be a pain. But, with massive influence in the market, they can hold the key to your revenue growth. Here are some payer-focused discussions to initiate:

### 1. Product Development

Engage with payers early to understand the specific requirements for coverage and reimbursement. Plus, ask questions to gain insights into the competitive landscape. What solutions have payers partnered with in the past? What pain points or frustrations still exist? This will guide you in product development.

### 2. Pricing

The US healthcare system is complex - profit sharing, fee for service, bundled payments, network benefits and more. Be sure you have a strong handle on the nuances within the system and how your solution fits in.

### 3. Market Access Planning

Negotiating contracts, understanding pre-authorization processes, and establishing reimbursement channels are all important elements of market penetration. Investigate, research and appreciate the dynamics relevant to you.

### 4. Coding and Billing

If your revenue is linked to coding practices, you'll need to master the language of diagnostics, denials, mitigation and more. Review the ICD 9 and 10 codes, hire a coding consultant and, if relevant, include a training program as part of your customer onboarding strategy.

### 5. Market Expansion

Expanding into new regions or markets? With a fragmented system, local policies and different reimbursement protocols dependent on state, familiarize yourself with location specific dynamics before entering the market.

*The US reimbursement system is intimidating but by focusing on these 5 categories, you'll simplify the process & gain the expertise needed for successful growth.*

## Challenge 6: Competitive Landscape

### Don't Look Over Your Shoulder!

Here's my golden rule for brand creation: When crafting your value proposition, mission, vision, or brand visuals, resist the urge to peek at your competition first. Instead, here's how you should handle the competitive landscape when crafting your messaging foundation:

#### 1. Meet and Greet Stakeholders

Before choosing language to communicate your value, you need to be clear on the needs and pain points of your audience. Here are some questions to ask as you *Meet & Greet* your stakeholders.

- + What is your biggest pain point?
- + How have you tried to solve this challenge in the past?
- + Is there a way to solve this challenge without disrupting your workflow?
- + Who else is impacted by this pain point?
- + Do your colleagues or direct reports appreciate the gravity of this challenge?

Most founders focus more on the uniqueness of their solution than the challenge they are solving. That's why, by gathering 'real' data from the people you are looking to serve, you end up standing out from the competition without that being the focus at all.

#### 2. Word Bank

Once you gather the treasure trove of insights from key players, organize and categorize what you've learned, identify themes and begin to craft the differentiation language. Handpicking words to encapsulate this all helps create a word bank you'll reference when building your foundation and future collateral.

Only after you have intimately understood the pain points of your audience and chosen language to reflect it, will you review the competition to ensure your messaging stands out. NOT A MOMENT BEFORE.

So, if you're navigating the winding road of branding, remember this:

***Rather than the competition, focus on your stakeholders, their pain points, and how you show up for them. Your differentiation will naturally emerge.***



## Challenge 7: Talent Acquisition

If you're assembling your dream team, focus on people, not skills. Here's how to attract the right talent and nurture them through excellent communication:

### 1. Strong Identity

Before you start drafting job listings, get crystal clear on your solution and values. The words you use to recruit, not only define the position but also set the tone for your company culture.

### 2. Onboarding

Don't just focus on the job details. When you hire a new employee, be sure to give them the tools necessary to be excellent advocates for your brand. Build an onboarding process full of key messages, introduction to the team, language around mission, values, and goals. Btw - startups tend to cycle in and out of high growth periods. If you systemize the onboarding protocol before high demand, you'll have a set process to rely on during all cycles of growth.

### 3. Internal Communication

Fancy office perks and Thursday pizza don't make a great company culture. But strong internal communication does. Make sure everyone feels inspired, heard and valued. Share updates and use an FAQ for guided help when internal challenges arise. Also, serving pizza never hurts.

*Skills are important, especially in healthcare. But, committed people are even better. Attract the right talent and get them onboard with the vision you are creating. The rest will follow.*

## Challenge 8: Public Perception

Did you know you can control how the world views your company - even with a rapidly moving news cycle, in a fluctuating industry?

How?? With great internal and external communication!

Great doesn't mean you are always sharing good news. Great means you share content with honesty, integrity and discretion. Great means you are prepared and have worked diligently to build and maintain relationships with those who matter most to your business. Here are some tips to consider:

### 1. The Challenge

Articulate the challenge you're tackling and the ingenious solution you bring to the table 🔍🌟

### 2. Scripts

Provide your team with a well-crafted script to guide their conversations, respond to tough questions and always focus on the ultimate benefit to the stakeholder. Btw - as part of the messaging foundation, you should have created an FAQ which can very helpful when a strong message is needed.

### 3. Malleable Messaging

The world doesn't stand still, and neither should your messaging. A solid foundation provides a rubric for communication while also allowing for natural flexibility. So, as challenges or PR mishaps arise, rely on the framework you've built to customize the message for the topic at hand. Don't forget, though, if your company evolves over time, your messaging may need to as well. Cracks can form in even the strongest foundations so look out, make adjustments and move forward.

*These 3 strategies - when done consistently and purposefully - will allow you to manage your public image.*

## Challenge 9: Crisis Management

There is nothing like a crisis to cause anxiety to surge and there is nothing like a good plan to help it all go away in an instant.

Here's a 4-step change management strategy to quell all anxiety:

### 1. Who

Recruit influencers who can help facilitate a smooth transition. These individuals assist in the dissemination of information to the team and provide a 'boots on the ground' approach to help leadership adjust strategy as needed. A network is there to support your wins and help you through challenges so don't forget to call them when it matters most (another plus for continuous engagement with stakeholders).

### 2. What

Communicate using my signature Trifecta of honesty, integrity, and discretion. Share what you know, admit what you don't, and provide resources.

### 3. When

Timing plays a critical role in how you shepherd your audience through change:

- + Communicate Early - The earlier you communicate what is happening, why and how, the better it will be received.
- + Communicate Often - A consistent, yet periodic communication cadence will reassure your audience, even through times of uncertainty.
- + Communicate Ongoing - Varying touch points offers the audience time to process and ask questions.

### 4. How

Provide your stakeholders with the resources needed to succeed. Changes bring about many questions and facilitating the answers will help your stakeholders process and prepare. Consider various messaging tactics to suit each stakeholder- oral messaging, FAQ, a written recap, hotlines, resource centers and more.

***Embrace the change and the crisis, and remember, you've got the skills to manage anything, even when it catches you off guard.***

## Challenge 10: Global Expansion

It's exciting to expand to a new market – so if you are, big congrats are in order! Keep in mind, though, what worked in one country might not work in another. So, here's the key to a successful expansion:

### 1. Cultural Breakdown

Take time to understand the cultural nuances around you - they can and should impact your messaging strategy. Pull up your foundation and identify what you need to adjust. If you aren't sure how, invest in outside support with experts familiar with the market you are entering. First impressions are valuable.

### 2. Identify Stakeholders

You'll encounter a variety of key players unique to each market. That's why it's crucial to establish effective engagement strategies tailored to these stakeholders. Remember, identical stakeholders may have distinct pain points in varying markets so, identify these variations and bridge the gaps.

### 3. Stay Humble and Seek Support

Embrace what you don't know and ask for help. Don't hesitate to partner with others who've already made the pivot, hire support, connect with industry insiders, and build bridges with local experts.

### 4. Adapt to the Industry

Even if pain points align, healthcare systems vary greatly (For example, the US and EU have very different regulations). Understand the unique dynamics of the new healthcare market to tailor your messaging strategy effectively.

*If you are growing, globally, you have likely spent the time and resources adjusting your product. The same effort must go into your communication strategy. So, learn the market, refine your foundation and most importantly, raise a toast to this new adventure!*

## Congrats! You've completed the Founder's Survival Guide!

This guide has provided you with practical communication strategies to tackle each challenge, head-on. By exploring ten critical challenges and their accompanied communication solutions, you are on your way towards building trust, articulating your value and fostering innovation in the industry.

Remember, your messaging foundation is still your greatest asset as it forms the basis for all communication. And, with the insights gained from this guide, you can now apply it as you face the dynamic and ever-evolving world of entrepreneurship.

Embrace the journey, stay resilient, and continue to reference your foundation as your north star.

Learn more about our proven, 3-phase approach to engineering a messaging foundation by visiting [www.jessicaovadia.com](http://www.jessicaovadia.com)