

A WHITEPAPER from HEALOGIX  
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# Taking BioPharma Message Testing into the Fast Lane



HEALOGIX

# Modern message testing

It is vital to a company's success that its messaging and communications resonate positively with customers, and message testing plays a crucial role in predicting the effectiveness of messages before they are implemented in actual communications. The risk in deploying messages that have not been thoroughly vetted with target customers cannot be minimized, given that poor initial uptake can seriously diminish a product's success trajectory. Even when a brand team has considerable experience with a product category, the degree to which new messages will resonate should never be assumed.

But seasoned marketing researchers can attest to the difficulty of executing effective message testing in increasingly compressed launch schedules and budgets. Traditional testing methods fall flat in supporting teams moving at a fast pace with no time or budget for multi-stage research programs.

**Message testing today requires a new and different approach.**





## Outdated modes and methods

Traditionally, message testing was conducted through face-to-face interviews, with the messages presented to research subjects on sheets of paper. More recently, the internet has enabled message testing to be executed virtually, with a web conference replacing the in-person interview and a digital document (Word, PowerPoint, etc.) replacing the paper. Evaluating a large number of messages (often fifty or more) using paper or its digital equivalent is not only tedious, but can also frustrate the client team and moderator, who need clarity as fieldwork progresses: Which messages in each topic area are favored? Which are seen as ineffective? Which are confusing? Which are turning customers off? In the first day or two of fieldwork, it's crucial to have clear data on these questions. Client teams want to make changes on the fly to optimize the messages by the end of the research. Paper methods simply do not support this kind of rapid decision-making. And PowerPoint documents shown via the web are no better; they are simply "digital paper."

## The pitfalls of traditional testing

In preparation for launching a new brand, the marketing team and its advertising agency will typically draft a series of messages communicating a range

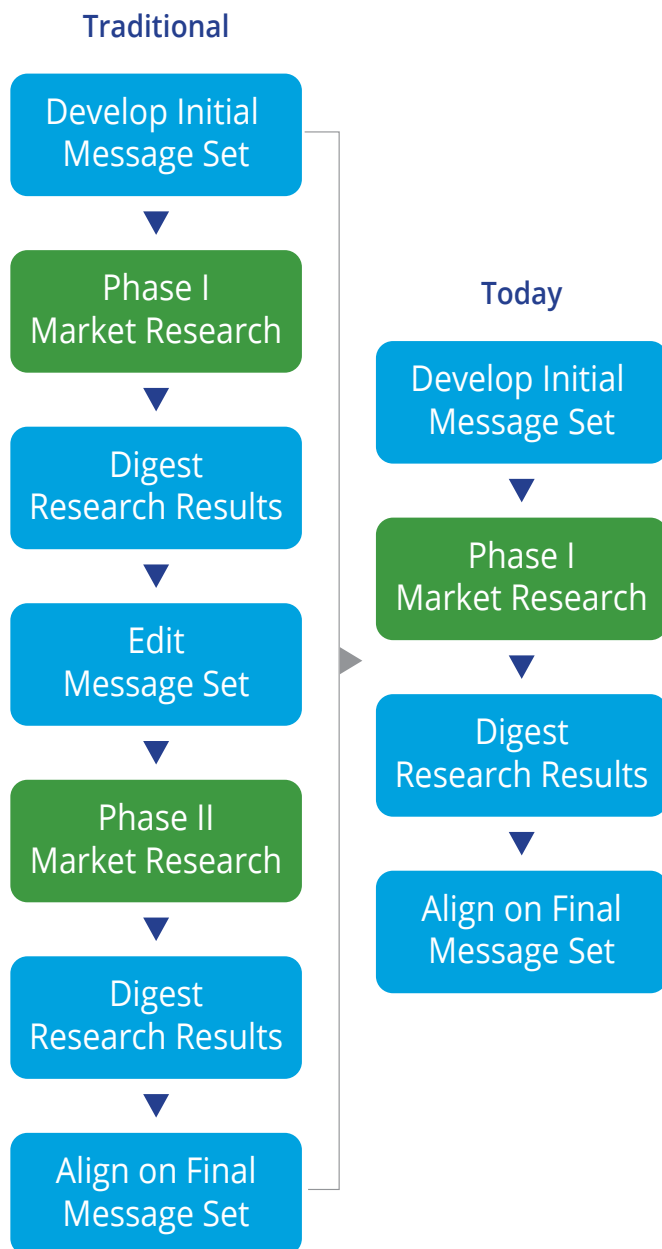
of clinical trial results and associated benefits. The messages are usually grouped into topics, such as indications, efficacy, safety, tolerability, pharmacokinetics, mechanism of action, administration, and dosing. With five to ten messages in each topic, the total message set can number well above fifty, sometimes reaching seventy or eighty.

In a research interview, the messages can be shown to subjects one at a time or in sets. Using traditional methods, this means many, many sheets of paper in person or many PowerPoint slides online. One might reasonably ask, "If this worked for so long, why is it a problem now?"

The answer has two parts. First, in recent years, 90% of biopharma brand launches do not have the time or budget for long, multi-phase message testing research. Second, in a single phase of research where the intent is to improve the messages as research progresses, the deficiencies of paper methods, including digital paper, pose real barriers to success.

### What are the specific deficiencies of paper and digital paper methods?

**Inefficiency:** With paper, tallying up message rankings and ratings simply cannot be done quickly.



**Poor support for on-the-fly decision making:**

Paper methods offer no built-in mechanism to enable geographically disparate team members to quickly access and digest up-to-the-minute research results.

**Risk of error:** With paper methods, the moderator must manage voluminous pages of static stimuli, including alternates and randomization, while staying attuned to the interaction and qualitative probing. Then, in support of the back-room client team, the moderator is expected to tally research results on the fly to support team decisions. With so many moving parts in compressed timeframes, errors are likely.

**Confusion:** Clients and observers—in research facilities and viewing remotely—struggle to follow the interview with traditional methods. We have all heard the back and forth: “Did the physician say ‘B2’ or ‘D2?’” “Sorry, I was on a call. Which of the efficacy messages are resonating most?”

**Low engagement:** Paper-based text stimuli are simply not engaging for observers, respondents or moderators.

**Poor support for on-the-fly changes:** During the course of research, client teams almost always add new messages, delete messages with poor appeal and modify message language to reflect what has been learned and optimize the value of subsequent interviews. While this desire to optimize from the research is admirable, it poses substantial logistical issues for paper-based methods and introduces the potential for confusion and error, especially when a large number of messages are being evaluated.





## Adopting new technologies

Fortunately, software and the internet are transforming message testing into what can be a highly rewarding experience for everyone. By making message testing more reliable, interactive, and efficient, a digital message testing platform can:

- Increase respondent engagement
- Allow the moderator to obtain richer qualitative feedback and more reliable data
- Enable the client team to make decisions about specific messages quickly
- Dramatically increase what can be achieved from a single round of message testing research

## Moving to a purpose-built app

In contrast with the paper-based approach discussed to this point, picture the features and benefits of an application designed specifically for message testing. The app:

- Presents ranking, rating, and multi-select tasks and captures or tallies responses automatically
- Enables all observers—back-room and remote—to follow along visually with the respondent's

interactions with the messages and to see up-to-the-minute response tallies

- Eliminates errors by handling message randomization and response tallies, which allows the moderator to focus more on listening and probing
- Displays the same on-screen messages to observers and respondents in addition to interview audio, which eliminates confusion on whether the conversation was about one message or another
- Engages respondents and observers alike through interactive visual displays, not static, black-and-white paper
- Supports fast and easy collaboration on message changes, with response tallies generated automatically and available to client team members around the world instantly

## Engaging directly with messages

A digital platform allows the respondent to highlight the most effective or compelling messages within each topic and pipe those messages forward for further evaluation. Through this method, there is little potential for miscommunication between the respondent and the moderator or between the

moderator and the client in terms of which messages the respondent sees as most effective. The moderator does not need to record which messages were selected and can instead direct attention and energy to probing for the factors distinguishing the more and less effective messages. The respondent is no longer passively answering questions; he or she is actively engaging with the messages that resonate.

Displayed below are the messages that you chose as best for telling YOUR BRAND story.

Every story needs a sequence. Please now arrange the statements in the sequence that tells the story in the most compelling way.

The top position on the screen represents the first message in the story, and the bottom position the last message. To move a message up or down, simply click-and-hold on it and drag the message up or down. Releasing the mouse button sets the message in your preferred position.

C6

Route of Administration Message #2

C2

Clinical Trial Size Message #1

E2

Efficacy Message #2

S2

Safety Message #2

C7

Dosing Message #2

## Metrics that matter

Rankings and ratings have been mentioned, and one might reasonably ask, “Isn’t this normally a qualitative interview?” Yes, this discussion has assumed a qualitative interview, but we have also discussed how multiple stages of research have been condensed into a single stage in recent years, with decisions and message changes made during that single stage. The inclusion of closed-ended metrics in the qualitative interview facilitates these on-the-fly decisions, balancing qualitative interpretation of respondent reactions and providing a focal

point for discussions on message changes. A digital, message-testing app facilitates the presentation of closed-ended results seamlessly and immediately.

## Testing through story

Most message-testing projects conclude with a story-building exercise in which respondents are asked to put the most effective messages into an optimal sequence that best tells the story of the product. A message-testing app can support this storytelling approach in a way that is more engaging and less error-prone.

**Safety**

Please read the Safety statements below and highlight a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 4 that in your view make the strongest Safety points for Product X.

Please select between 2 and 4

Currently selected: 2

S7	7.6% of patients taking Product X experienced clinically relevant non-major bleeding events versus 8.9% of patients taking the standard of care therapy
S3	Product X reduced the incidence of major bleeding events by 50% versus the standard of care therapy
S9	Clinically relevant non-major bleeding was comparable in patients taking Product X versus the standard of care therapy
S2	There were fewer fatal bleeds for patients taking Product X (<0.1% versus 0.4% for standard of care)

PREV

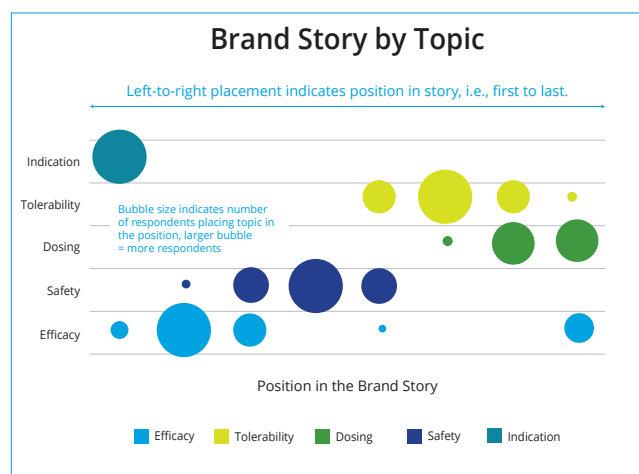
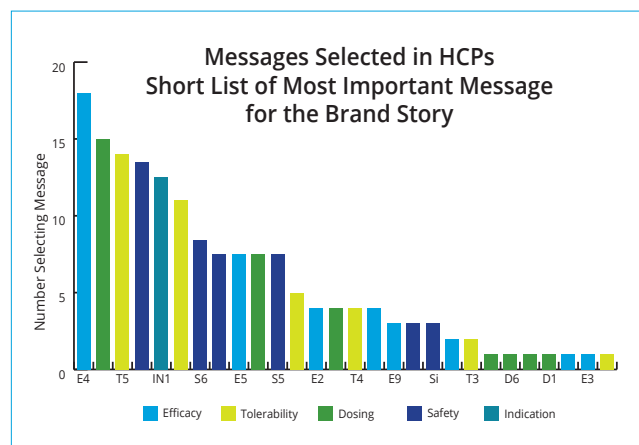
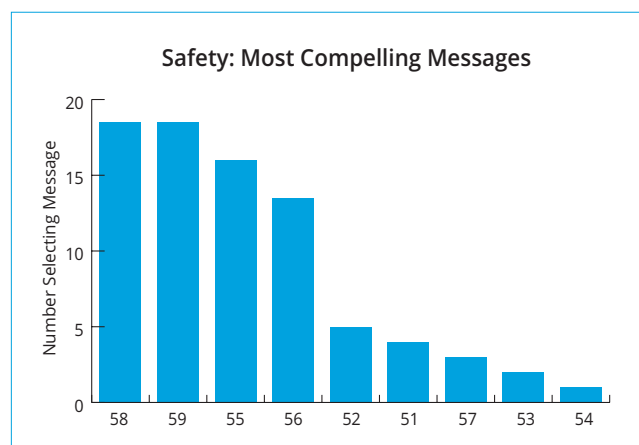
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## Results and data sharing

After capturing the response data, a digital platform can automatically generate results displays that anyone with access permission can review and download. The client, agency, analyst observers, and moderator are freed from keeping track of message testing results, interview by interview. At any point, users can log in and see up-to-the-minute results in

the form of a charted output for each closed-ended task, including those from story-building exercises.



## Powerful real-time reporting

Real-time, on-demand reporting is a powerful tool for marketing teams that need to make decisions on which messages to add, change, or delete for the remaining interviews as fieldwork progresses. End-of-day debriefings, during which potential modifications to the messages are discussed, become much more viable and productive when up-to-the-minute results are available to everyone.

In addition, a digital platform can enable results to be viewed through various important lenses, such as respondent type, segment, city, and other classification schemes. For example:

- See how interventional cardiologists reacted to messages vs. their non-interventional counterparts
- See how physicians in Chicago compared in their responses to physicians in New York
- See how nurse practitioners prefer certain messages vs. physicians
- See how message preferences differ by pre-determined market segments

## Varying messages by respondent type

Another benefit of a digital testing platform is that it can be programmed to show different messages to different target populations. For example, if you are conducting message research for an infusible hemophilia agent and your respondents are hematologists and infusion nurses, it may be appropriate to test the efficacy messages only with physicians, the safety messages with both audiences, and the messages related to administration and packaging with nurses only. You may also want to test specific individual messages with a single audience only. Unlike the paper-based approach, in which a moderator must execute these respondent-specific differences using stacks of paper or static digital displays, an online platform is programmed in advance to show specific

messages to specific respondent types and not to other respondent types. Again, the moderator is freed of such logistical burdens to focus on more important aspects of the interview.

## The future of message testing

Message testing using a specifically designed application supports both in-person and telephone-based interviews with equal success. In both cases, observers can watch the respondent interact with message evaluation tasks in real time. Technology has vaulted message testing into a new era—one in which paper-based methods and static displays are dinosaurs.

In conclusion, modern, app-based message testing offers numerous advantages over traditional approaches, including:

- Respondent interactions with messages observable in real time from anywhere
- Anytime, anywhere access to research results
- Fully-flexible interview design supporting multiple closed-ended metrics
- Seamlessly conducted in-person and web-assisted telephone research
- Global capability and language support

Marketing researchers and their clients will greatly benefit from stepping into this new era of message testing to embrace its enhanced power, speed, and flexibility.

## About Healogix

Healogix is a global marketing research-based consultancy that helps leading and emerging pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies achieve successful product development and commercial clarity. Founded in 2004, our mission is to enable the lifecycle success of pharma and biotech products that make a positive difference in people's lives. Our boutique approach and combination of experience, knowledge and integrity are what allow us to recommend research solutions to organizations and then get as specific as possible with custom insights, lifecycle solutions and qualitative and quantitative methods.

**For more information, visit  
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