

# Hiker

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**Client:** Year Up

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**Project:** Volunteer Messaging

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**Introduction:** The following document reflects Hiker’s developing vision for key messaging to volunteers (mentors, tutors, guest speakers and community partners/influencers). The purpose of this messaging is to position Year Up as an authentic (and effective) way to deepen personal connections, build community, and make a meaningful impact on the lives of young people.

In preparation for creating the new proposed messaging, Hiker has conducted several hours of interviews with Year Up stakeholders. We watched hours of existing video content and explored both Year Up marketing materials and competitor language.

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## VOLUNTEER MESSAGING

Unlike prospective students and corporate partners, Year Up volunteers are moved almost entirely through the language of aspiration. Year Up's story is powerful. Its mission, inspiring and clear. Our messaging to volunteers doesn't need to "convince," it needs to amplify mutually shared beliefs. Stay away from jargon. Speak to the heart and keep *the volunteer's need* or reason to join in focus. Think about why the volunteer would want to join. What do *they* get out of it? Write to satisfy that need and use our strong facts and figures to reinforce (not lead) the story.

People give their time and money to causes they believe in. But what moves people to act is whatever moves them to feel. The truth is that people get involved because *it makes them feel good*. In other words, people might believe in a cause, but it's the way it makes them *feel* that makes them act. To inspire action, Year Up messaging must speak to emotions and feelings. What are the motives and emotional triggers that turn the beliefs of our best volunteers into action? *That* is where Year Up wants to tell its story.

Our ideal volunteer is looking for *ways to connect ... to find meaning* in their lives ... *to give back*. They want to do *something that matters*. That is their story. Their desire. It's our job in messaging to enable volunteers to recognize their own personal story within the larger Year Up narrative. We need to give volunteers the ability to see where they fit it. To see how their personal story has come to a place where they can align with a student's story and other volunteers in a dynamic and meaningful way.

A potential Year Up volunteer might be motivated to action by the gap they see between what America promises and what it offers to so many communities. They might be inspired by faith or moved by reason and a sense of fair play. Maybe our future volunteer is "tired of words" and hungers for way to *do something that matters*. Or maybe they are simply looking for a way to give back to the community they love. Whatever the specifics of their story, our goal in messaging is to give volunteers room to feel those action-driving emotions and see Year Up as a way to express and embrace the underlying beliefs sparking those emotions.

At the end of the day, nobody volunteers to be part of Year Up. They volunteer because of something they believe, something they feel about themselves and the people they see around them. They volunteer for the young people striving for more ... about the idea of community ... about their personal vision for America ... about right and wrong, fair play and citizenship ... about hope and opportunity ... and no doubt a million other deeply personal things.

Our messaging will be most effective when we tell our story simply ... provide room within the Year Up story for their story to grow ... connect their story with that of others ... and get out of the way.

## SUMMARY

### To strengthen messaging to volunteers we propose:

- Messaging should amplify shared beliefs.
  - A. Speak to *their* personal reason or need for joining/volunteering
  - B. Use facts and figures to reinforce decisions made by the heart
  - C. Stay away from jargon (of workforce development or nonprofits in general)
  
- Speak directly to the emotional needs of Volunteers to inspire action. Break it down to what *they* feel and show how getting involved at Year Up satisfies that need.
  - A. They want authentic connections – relationships that count
  - B. They want to make a difference, do something that matters
  - C. They want to have meaningful impact on young people
  - D. They want to give back
  - D. They want to break down walls, bridge divides, and build community
  
- Create language that gives volunteers room to feel good – have an emotional response – to their decision to act (volunteer or donate).
  - A. Don't over sell. Don't overload with details or crowd with jargon.
  - B. Our eyes are on them, their eyes are on the student.
  - C. Tell our story. Align their need/journey with the student's need/journey.  
And get out of the way.

## AUDIENCE ASSESSEMENT

### THE CONTEXT

Supporting Year Up is about young people, opportunity, and community. It's about saying to young strivers struggling in their pursuit for more "Hey, we see you. You aren't alone." The ideal volunteer already understands the need for Year Up's mission, though they may not be aware of Year Up specifically, or how we go about accomplishing our mission. They may already have a strong desire to do something that matters or a wish to impact the lives of young people meaningfully. But may not yet have connected that desire to action. They might be coaches or pastors, guidance counselors or business people within the community. They are no doubt busy in their lives — with family obligations and job responsibilities. They approach Year Up with a desire to "give back" and help others but may not yet know how they can do that in practical, real world way.

### Considering volunteers may be:

- Looking to share the benefit of their experience

**Thinking/feeling:** *I see so many young people in our community struggling to find direction. I was there once. I made it – with help. I think I can really make a difference if I had the opportunity to share what I know. Or at least help them find someone who can help. I'm doing everything I can to help. But how can I do more?*

- Recognize they have connections and knowledge that could help

**Thinking/feeling:** *I've spent my whole career accumulating this knowledge and skills I have. I've made connections in the business community that are really valuable. There has to be a way I can use that to point someone in the right direction, give them guidance, make some inroads. But how?*

- Tired of talking and ready to do something that matters

**Thinking/feeling:** *Sometimes the problems seem so overwhelming. Is it even worth it? But I can't just sit by and watch and do nothing. I've been talking about doing something for a long time. It's time to step up. This organization seems to have a real, actionable plan that gets results. I mean people are getting jobs and real-world experience out of this! I can get behind that.*

- Wanting to be a good citizen, improve their community

**Thinking/feeling:** *I've been really lucky in my life. I've worked hard, sure. But I've had some breaks, too. People who believed in me and stepped in and gave me a shot. It's time I gave back. I love this community and I know we have so much talent that's being wasted. We can do better, and it's up to people like me who are have achieved a bit more to step up and lead.*

- They want to give time to organizations that actually work

**Thinking/feeling:** *These folks are saying the right thing, but do they deliver? I don't want to waste my time here. If I'm going to do this, I want to be all-in and I want to make sure my effort counts.*

## PROPOSED KEY MESSAGES

### Key Message 1 — MAKE DEEP, PERSONAL CONNECTIONS THAT MATTER

**Year Up gives you the opportunity to make meaningful connections with young people struggling to better their lives ... and with others like you who care enough to help.**

#### **Key theme expanded:**

For better or worse, we live in an age when human interaction is often distilled to a Like, a thumbs up emoji, or social media post that's read and immediately forgotten. At Year Up, we offer volunteers the kind of authentic, personal, one-one-one connections that really matter in life. At our core, Year Up is about connections. If you have a passion for helping young people striving to better their lives, and know your knowledge, experience, and perspective can help make a difference, Year Up needs you. Being a Year Up volunteer is about looking people in the eye, shaking their hand, and letting them know you're by their side. It's about being present and mindful in a world that is increasingly distracted and remote. So, reach out. Make a real connection ... with young people who can benefit from what you have to say ... and with others like you who want to make a difference in the world.

## Key Message 2 — HAVE MEANINGFUL IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE

**Year Up is your chance to make a lasting impact for good in the lives of young adults from underserved communities.**

### **Key theme expanded:**

Year Up gives people with business skills and life experience the opportunity to impact the lives of young men and women in real, tangible, and significant ways. The knowledge you have can be a key that opens doors of understanding and opportunity for others. *How to manage finances. How to manage their time. How to present a professional and confident demeanor in an interview.* Even the simplest of business concepts might be a life-changing “aha” moment for one of our students — and you could help make that difference. Through Year Up, you allow the next generation to benefit from the wisdom and knowledge you’ve earned through your own professional and life experiences. By sharing your business knowledge, perspective, and experience with young people, you help shape their journey into adulthood and support in a real and meaningful way their dream of a good career and job.

### **Key Message 3 — MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD**

**For people who are eager to make a difference in the world, Year Up gives volunteers the opportunity to be part of something that truly matters.**

#### **Key theme expanded:**

Most people, if pressed, can dial in pretty quickly to what really matters in life. Family, friends, being a good person. Helping others. But, we all also know that life has a way of getting in the way of our best intentions. Year Up gives busy professionals a way to reconnect with the things that matter most. For just a few hours a week, you could change a life forever. This is a proven way to make a high-impact difference in the world, and to be a part of something that truly matters. You can be the one to step up and say to a young person struggling to claim their share of the American Dream, “Hey, I see you. You’re not alone.” Your professional skills, business experiences, successes and failures, and long-view perspective of life —just might help change the life and career trajectory of a young person searching for clear direction. The stakes couldn’t be higher, nor the experience more rewarding. Come on. Let’s change the world, together.

## Key Message 4 —GIVE BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY

**Year Up is a great way to “give back” to your community and support the next generation.**

### **Key theme expanded:**

You’ve worked hard to get where you are. You overcame obstacles, maybe caught a few breaks along the way. You understand a few things about how business works and what it takes to get past the hurdles and find some career success. But now, you’re at the stage in your life where you want to help the next person. Give them a hand. Help them along their journey. You had “heroes” in your life. Now, it’s your time. Nothing feels as good as “giving back” to a community you love. With Year Up, you have that opportunity and so much more. Year Up provides busy professionals with a direct, manageable way to make a serious contribution to the common good of your community — one deserving young person at a time.

## **Key Message 5 — BUILD COMMUNITY & BREAK DOWN WALLS**

**Year Up volunteers help break down walls, bridge divides, and build community.**

### **Key theme expanded:**

As a Year Up volunteer, you utilize your professional knowledge and business savvy to inspire, educate, guide, and motivate the next generation of young people striving for more. Through an intensive, one-year program and the generous support of professional volunteers like you, we train young adults in the job-specific skills hiring corporations need. We help young people find jobs; and help companies find talented, skilled workers. But we do something more. We strengthen our communities. Support families. And in the process, make America better. Where some raise walls, we build bridges. To build up these young people is to strengthen communities for years to come. All they want is a chance to prove themselves, and in return we all reap the reward of their rich, untapped talent and creativity. These young adults will invigorate our businesses. They will rejuvenate our politics. And they will become the community leaders who skillfully guide America forward.

## Key Message 6 — JOIN A PROVEN PLAN THAT YIELDS RESULTS

**Nobody is more effective than Year Up at connecting young adults from underserved neighborhoods with real-world opportunity for career advancement at major corporations.**

### Key theme expanded:

As a Year Up volunteer, you can help guide young people on a proven path for success. As a business person, you appreciate the bottom line. We can say without doubt: Year Up's one-year, intensive program works. Students get six months of training in the job-specific, hard skills our corporate partners tell us they need; followed by a six-month, hands-on internship. Along the way our volunteer mentors and tutors (that's people like you!) provide training in the invaluable professional skills that employers tell us really set Year Up graduates apart. It's an opportunity that most could never hope to achieve without Year Up – and YOUR generous support. The truth is, the knowledge you share as a volunteer can make the difference between a young person getting the opportunity to prove their worth ... or not. Year Up represents the “best return on your investment” as volunteer. Look at the numbers: 100% placement of qualified Year Up students into our internship program; 90% percent employer satisfaction; six times better performance as a pipeline for talent. And it goes on and on. But the greatest outcome is the single young man or woman *you* help over the hurdle and across the opportunity divide.