

## How communicators can craft better sustainability messaging

As more and more consumers say they want to know how your organization is protecting the planet, here's how to make sure your message hits the mark.

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The recent [UN climate report](#), published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), demonstrates a dire necessity for organizations worldwide to take a stand against climate change and mitigate further climate-related damage.

The UN's IPCC is the world's leading authority on climate science, and its recent report confirms the undeniable tie between human activity and climate change—as well as the Earth currently being on track to exceed an increase of 1.5 degrees Celsius within 20 years.

Understandably, businesses may be hesitant to share their efforts on climate initiatives through social media because they often come under fire from consumer activists. And critics are especially vocal when a company's messaging on social media lacks honesty or authenticity.

Nonetheless, it is still crucial for companies to communicate their positions and plans to address climate change.

Below are some important points to consider for effectively building and communicating a company's current and future commitment to environmental sustainability:

### **1. Messaging should be honest.**

Executives are responsible for ensuring that content is truthful and should incorporate data to support sustainability claims and update customers on progress towards goals. PR partners can pose guiding questions to the company to help build out key messages.

When a brand isn't a leader on environmental impact assessment or developing sustainable initiatives, it's OK to openly acknowledge areas that need improvement. Make sure to explain how the company plans to address any issues. Consumers value honesty and continuous improvement, and this type of vulnerability can be well-received by consumers and employees alike.

Incorporate statistics that demonstrate how the company is working towards strategic, measurable goals—not simply capitalizing on feel-good storytelling. These steps are essential to developing sustainability messaging that is perceived as “authentic.”

## 2. Effective sustainability messaging is accessible — avoid jargon.

Whether the company is putting out its environmental, sustainability and governance (ESG) plan or a social media statement, the PR team should be mindful of its audience and what kind of language is most appropriate. Jargon can make it more difficult for the public to comprehend and appreciate ESG messages.

Companies should make sure their stakeholders understand their initiatives and can engage with their sustainability initiatives. To build trust with the general public, the messaging should be as clear and transparent as possible about the company's initiatives and current progress. As an example, Patagonia's dedicated Climate Crisis webpage outlines how the company is eliminating its carbon emissions by 2025 and its progress toward these goals.

## 3. Messaging should be inclusive and people-centric.

Climate change impacts the poorest, equatorial regions of the world the hardest, making it easier for people in more privileged positions to dismiss them. However, a company's environmental messaging should be inclusive and incorporate the stories of those heavily impacted by climate change. This inclusivity will make it easier for audiences to empathize with the victims of climate disruption and support change.

Companies can take this opportunity to raise awareness about how climate change is felt around the world and in their own backyards. Finally, it is essential to highlight how racial justice and environmental health are connected. For example, studies show a significant disparity in U.S. air pollution depending on where a person lives and a heavy correlation between poorer environmental standards and lower-income, minority communities.

Ultimately, organizations and the customers they serve should all be working together toward similar goals of investing in a healthier planet and home.

Climate change will eventually impact everyone, no matter where they live. However, by effectively communicating their commitment to sustainability, companies can both raise awareness of sustainability issues and build trust with consumers that they prioritize contributing to a healthier shared environment.

*Christine Chu wrote this as an intern at Communiqué PR, and a version of this article originally appeared on the Communiqué PR blog.*

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