

Principles for Effective Climate Communications

A key principle of climate communications is that people are more likely to believe people that they trust, and are much more likely to take action based on the recommendation of a trusted person.

Friends, family members, and co-workers are likely to be among these “Trusted Messengers,” and as engaged participants in your communities, local town energy committee members are well positioned to become such trusted messengers within your community.

Below are a few key principles of effective climate communications to keep in mind:

1. **Keep It Simple** - We get it. Climate science and our responses to it are complicated. But nothing loses the attention of an audience faster than overly complicated ideas. Try to make your key message as simple as possible, boiling it down to two or three main points you want to get across.
2. **Tell a Story** - Narrative storytelling is one of the most powerful methods of communication that humans have available to them. Use it! Help people see where they fit into what you are talking about.
3. **Identify the “So What?”** for your audience - Why is what you are trying to share relevant to who you are talking to?
4. **Lead with Benefits** - Doom and gloom around climate can often be paralyzing and demoralizing. When trying to get people to act, help them to understand how the actions you are suggesting could benefit them and the things that are important to them.
5. **Provide Direction** - What do you want people to do with the information that you are presenting, and how could they do it?
6. **Tap Into Key Moments** - When something happens in the news relevant to climate, whether that’s a natural disaster or a new solar array, those are key opportunities to
7. **Listen to Understand** - Communication is a two way street. Authentically listening to your audience’s responses and concerns is critical, both to demonstrate that you respect them and what they have to say, and to help you better tailor your message to what really matters to them, as opposed to what you might assume matters to them.
8. **Avoid Jargon** - Unless you are speaking to an expert audience, technical language and dense jargon can often be intimidating and hard to understand for the general public. Very similar to point 1, try to use simple, easy to understand language whenever possible.
9. **Choose Your Mode of Communication Carefully** - In today’s media environment, not every audience gets information from the same place. Want to talk to retirees about the benefits of weatherizing their home? A post on Instagram is unlikely to reach them. Think about where your audience is, and go where they are.

Further Resources:

[Yale Project on Climate Communication](#) - Fantastic data on public attitudes about climate.

[How to Effectively Communicate About Climate Change](#) - Blog post by the Empower Agency.

[IPCC Guide on Principles of Effective Climate Communication](#) - Detailed guides created to help scientists clearly communicate scientific findings to the general public.