

MARCH 2023

Climate Communications Toolkit



PREPARED BY

**ASPEN FUTURE CLIMATE LEADERS, EMILY PRETTYMAN AND
JESSICA HARRINGTON**

The Future Leaders were asked to put together this toolkit on [climate communications](#) to support their cohort and others looking to communicate about climate action. Emily and Jessica are Senior Account Executives for [Redwood Climate Communications](#), a PR and communications firm supporting climate tech companies and environmental causes. This toolkit provides actionable ways to help organizations amplify climate stories and share key messages.

Table of Contents

- **Overview**
- **3 Universal Communications Truths**
 - You must know your audience(s)
 - You must how to reach your audience(s)
 - You must know your goal
- **Climate-Specific Communications Considerations**
- **Tools: Messaging and content development; media relations; and owned media**
 - Key Messages
 - Media Relations: Announcement 101
 - Be your own media outlet: content for owned channels
- **Getting Connected**
 - Networking and relationship building
 - Resources to work in climate and get connected

Overview

One might interpret “climate communications” as sharing information and perspectives related to information or education about the climate crisis. But at a deeper level, climate communications refers to dynamic communication that intersects with diverse experiences, attitudes, and innovations related to climate change.

Today, the practice of climate communications is more important than ever. Climate communications initiatives are most effective when they are not passive or appeasing but are active, forward-thinking, and bold. In fact, “A large-scale study found that members of the public in Germany and the USA, as well as other climate scientists, would prefer scientists to adopt fewer neutral stances when communicating with the media and policymakers about climate change (Cologna et al. 2021). A study with climate communication practitioners in the UK also highlighted that climate scientists, journalists, and other communicators believe it is important to nurture a sense of agency and empowerment through their communications practices (McLoughlin et al. 2018).” ([Source](#))

When it comes to climate change, people must find common ground in order to make progress; the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) is an example of this. The passage of the IRA represents the most robust climate legislation in history, and it is a product of political compromise. The bill is designed to distribute benefits to many industries and segments of society, and it affects many different sectors of the economy. Bridging the divide between different perspectives is important. Yet climate communication at its best, requires assertive, authentic language.

This toolkit is designed to help communicators amplify active messages about the climate crisis that highlight solutions and positive work that is being done to address the crisis. Whether you are a climate tech company looking to promote your climate solution, a nonprofit with an ambitious goal, or an individual climate activist, this toolkit will help you tell your story.

3 Universal Communication Truths

To fully grasp the concept of climate communications, begin with the 3 Universal Communications Truths:

3 UNIVERSAL COMMUNICATIONS TRUTHS

1) BEFORE YOU GET STARTED, FIRST YOU MUST KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE(S):

- AGE, DEMOGRAPHICS, INDUSTRY, ETC
- WHAT DO THEY VALUE?
- WHAT ARE THEIR OPINIONS ON RELEVANT TOPICS?
- WHAT ARE THEIR ATTITUDES?
- WHAT ARE THEIR PAIN POINTS?
- HOW ARE YOU SOLVING THEIR PROBLEMS?

2) WHEN DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY, YOU MUST KNOW HOW TO REACH YOUR AUDIENCE:

- DO THEY PREFER SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS, NEWS REPORTS, BROADCASTS, ETC?
- WHAT MEDIA PUBLICATIONS DO THEY READ?
- WHAT WILL GET THEIR ATTENTION?

3) WHEN EXECUTING YOUR STRATEGY, YOU MUST BE CLEAR ON YOUR GOAL:

- HAVE A CALL TO ACTION;
 - OFFER AN EXPERT SOURCE
 - SHARE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
- WHAT DO YOU WANT YOUR AUDIENCE TO DO?

Tools

MESSAGING AND CONTENT DEVELOPMENT:

Key Messages: Your audiences' positive reception of climate communication depends on how well the messaging is structured. Messaging, in essence, is the bulk of what goes into press releases, social media posts, media campaigns, interviews, documentaries, or whatever communication media you are using.

Key messages contain the most important information about your organization or initiative and can be reused and customized based on the topic and audience at hand. The key messages are the protein, the building blocks of any strategic communication effort. Are you trying to reach more than one audience? It's important to note that your key messages may vary by audience. To craft key messages that resonate with the people you are trying to reach, you should apply the 3 Communications Truths to each of your audiences.

Additional Messaging Considerations

Additional questions to consider when crafting your key messages:

- Why should your audience care?
- What problem of theirs are you trying to solve?
- How are you different/ why do you stand out?
- Do you have expert advice to offer?

“

The key messages are the protein, the building blocks of your strategic communication effort.

Communicating About Climate Change

COMMUNICATING ABOUT THE CLIMATE CRISIS CAN BE SENSITIVE. HERE ARE SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND.

CLIMATE-SPECIFIC COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE'S MOTIVATIONS FOR ACTION.

AUDIENCES' MOTIVATIONS AND INTERESTS WITHIN CLIMATE WILL DETERMINE HOW THEY RECEIVE AND REACT TO COMMUNICATIONS. IT'S GREAT THAT PEOPLE WANT TO BE A PART OF CLIMATE SOLUTIONS FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.

YOUR ORGANIZATION'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND/OR ADAPTATION

HOW CAN YOU COMMUNICATE THIS IN THE clearest, most compelling way?

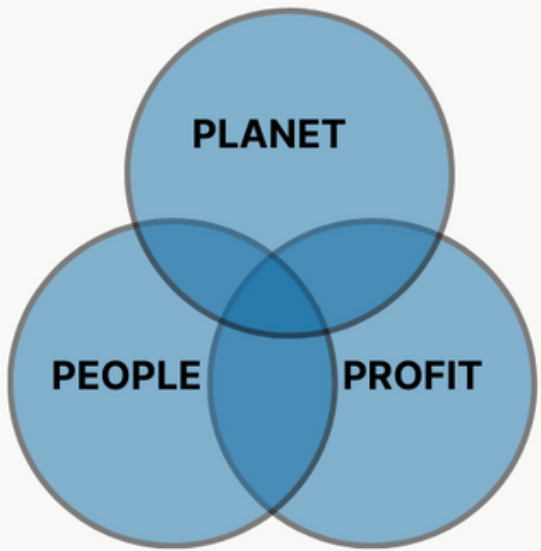
PEOPLE, PLANET, AND PROFIT

CLIMATE COMMUNICATIONS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN HIGHLIGHTING ALL THREE KEY PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: PEOPLE, PLANET, AND PROFIT. HOW CAN YOU HIGHLIGHT THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF THESE PILLARS?

PEOPLE, PLANET, PROFIT: AKA EQUITY, ENVIRONMENT, AND ECONOMY

Almost every climate solution delivers public/community, environmental, and economic benefits in addition to helping to mitigate or adapt to climate change. Strong climate communicators map out those additional benefits and weave them into their messaging. Pay special attention to these intersectionalities.

KEY PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:



People

- How is climate change affecting people directly?
 - E.g. Are there public health implications of the climate impact you're focused on?
- Climate Justice: How can we uplift the voices of those most affected by the climate crisis?
- Highlight Intersectionality: Connect the dots between what your audience cares about and climate change.

Planet

- What is the environmental impact of climate change that you're trying to address? What are the near-term and long-term solutions?
 - E.g. How does your solution affect air, water, soil, ecosystems, and wildlife?
- Balance urgency needed and hopeful solutions.

Profit

- When considering your audience: Do they care about the climate benefits or just the profits?
 - In other words: should you highlight the climate benefit of your solution over the economic benefit or vice versa?
- Be able to make the business case; environmental sustainability makes long-term economic sense.

Media Relations: Announcement 101

ONCE YOUR MESSAGING IS THOROUGHLY DEFINED AND POLISHED, YOU CAN MOVE ON TO MEDIA RELATIONS.

Have big news? Press releases are concise ways to get your information out into the world. They are not always necessary, though. You should only put out a press release when there is real news, major events, funding, and other significant announcements. The essential pieces of a press release are labeled on the next page.

Your press releases can be distributed through a third-party service or posted to an owned channel such as a website or blog. If you post through an owned channel, you are responsible for increasing the reach of your press release, posting it across other channels, sending it out to reporters, etc. Continue reading for more on this topic!.

What goes in a press release:

- Title
- Subtitle
- Date
- Location
- Your News
- Key Messages
- Quote
- Boilerplate (standardized text about your company that can be repeated for all future press releases, grants, award submissions, and more.)
- Contact information



Sample Press Release:

Redwood Climate Communications Launches to Provide Public Relations Expertise in CleanTech, ESG and Clean Energy

Title, Subtitle

New Consultancy Exclusively for Climate Tech Companies and Initiatives is Led by Josh Garrett, a PR Professional with 17 Years Experience and Masters in Environmental Science and Policy from Columbia University.

September 09, 2021 08:00 AM Eastern Daylight Time

Date, Time, Location

NEW YORK--(BUSINESS WIRE)--Redwood Climate Communications launched today to bring a uniquely impact-focused approach to public relations for climate tech startups, companies, and corporate initiatives. Redwood will focus on the climate and business impact its clients are making through communications initiatives and building the right combination of activities to realize those goals, whether they are measured in dollars, CO₂ emissions removed or avoided, customers earned, or all of the above. Redwood will provide four essential communications services: strategic counsel, writing, strong media relations, and marketing content and consultation.

"The climate crisis is humanity's greatest challenge, and every profession has a role to play in meeting that challenge"

Tweet this

Redwood Climate Communications is led by Josh Garrett, an expert in climate tech and 17-year veteran of the communications profession, with over a decade focused solely on climate technology and initiatives. Garrett has diverse experience in the nonprofit and private sectors, and counts Google Nest, Sunrun, QuantumScape and Stem among the companies he has worked with.

"The climate crisis is humanity's greatest challenge, and every profession has a role to play in meeting that challenge," said Garrett. "For communications professionals, our role is to educate diverse audiences about what's required to curb the crisis, and which organizations are offering the most effective and promising solutions. That's why we founded Redwood--to devote an entire firm, stocked with communications professionals who are also experts in the science and economics underlying climate solutions, to tell the fascinating stories of the people and organizations behind them."

Add a quote

[Fill in the body of the text with the remaining key messages.]

About Redwood Climate Communications

Redwood is a communications and PR consultancy that combines deep understanding of climate tech with expertise in strategic communications and media relations. We have worked with startups in renewable energy, grid edge, battery tech, EV and EV charging; we've also helped some of the biggest brands in cleantech and sustainability tell their stories at pivotal points in their evolution. We provide climate mitigation and adaptation organizations with the strategy, writing, media relations and marketing content they need to enhance their climate impact and grow their revenue. Learn more at www.redwoodclimatecomms.com.

About Strange Brew Strategies (SBS)

Boilerplate

SBS is a technology public relations agency with deep expertise in artificial intelligence, enterprise software, financial services, fintech, robotics, silicon and chips, among other next-frontier technologies. SBS has stripped the bland, programmatic, and systematic nature of PR engagements down to focus on business strategy, creative thinking, big stories, real results, and impactful content marketing for many of the biggest and most powerful technology companies in the world. SBS is headquartered in San Francisco with resources in Denver, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, Seattle, and Washington D.C.

Contacts

Josh Garrett
Redwood Climate Communications
info@redwoodclimatecomms.com

Contact Info

Getting News Coverage

EARNED MEDIA

Now that your press release is full of key messages and you've decided where to host it, it's time to get your press release in front of your key audience(s). The next step in executing your media relations strategy is researching reporters covering your industry or topic. Make a list of reporters and their contact information. Then, go through your list, reach out to each contact with your news hook, and try to book interviews with an expert related to your story, your CEO, or someone on your leadership team who can help convey your key messages.

BE YOUR OWN MEDIA OUTLET: CONTENT FOR OWNED CHANNELS

Owned channels can be your Website Blogs posting articles on your company' LinkedIn.

Sometimes, your story may be better for publishing on your own media outlet. With outlets such as company blogs, LinkedIn articles, and social media pages, you can create the story from your perspective and develop yourself as a thought leader on a subject. First-person accounts of organizations' news can be influential and even more compelling than articles written from other points of view.

Social media

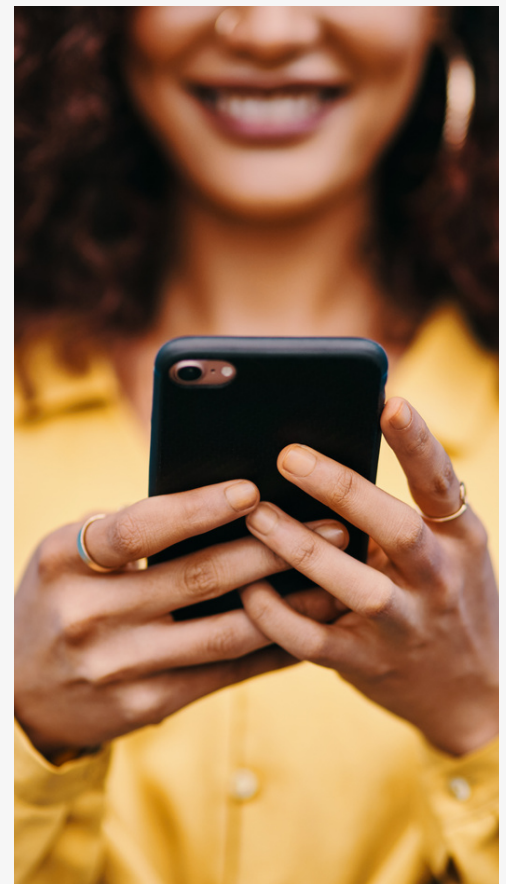
Social media is a powerful tool to amplify your messages and analyze your campaign's reception and online sentiments. Due to its high accessibility, social media provides a unique opportunity to widen your reach across to audiences you otherwise may not have access to.

Connecting with and even tagging the parties involved in your campaign is a smart way to broaden your reach while nurturing a sense of community and closeness with your professional network. Incorporating hashtags is even more crucial because they help the right users find your content, increasing followers, views, likes, and overall engagement.

Social media is also great for boosting your notoriety as a thought leader. Commenting and sharing relevant content provides credibility to your audience.

Things to consider when deciding what to comment on

- What is your/your team members' area of expertise? Why are you a credible source?
- How can you create a story around this topic?
- What topics align with your goals and key messages?



Getting Connected

NETWORKING AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Having a well-developed network can lead to more opportunities. The climate crisis is a vast problem that demands collaboration. Whether it is with journalists, your competitors, or your key audiences, you want to maintain positive relationships with those involved in your work.

It is important to put yourself in spaces where you can build relationships and work on creating things together. Engaging with people who think differently than you is also crucial, and will challenge your thinking and communications skills. Attend events to meet others, learn more, and share insights.

RESOURCES TO WORK IN CLIMATE AND GET CONNECTED:

Are you [Ready to work in climate?](#) Check out Redwood Climate Communications' blog for guidance on finding your place in the movement and job-hunting resources. The [Work on Climate slack community](#) is another great way to connect in the space.

The Aspen Institute's Future Leaders cohort is a fantastic opportunity for young adults who have demonstrated an interest in climate change work. Apply to participate in this program to explore more opportunities in the climate field. You can learn more about the program by visiting [this webpage](#).

Events are a great way to get involved and inspire your work. [My Climate Journey hosts](#) a variety of events, from in-person happy hours around the world to career transition zoom calls.

Aspen Future Climate Leader and Redwood Climate Communications Senior Account Executive Jessica Harrington will be speaking at the next virtual MCJ College to Climate meetup on Thursday, March 9th. To register to attend the event, visit [this webpage](#).

