

Strategic Messaging

Extreme Weather

Speaking of Climate



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How to lose public opinion

Extreme Weather

- Present laundry lists of facts
- Use unfamiliar terms (e.g., CO², carbon emissions)
- Speak in units that seem small (e.g. 10ths of a degree, seawater changes of less than an inch)
- Create anxiety beyond a manageable level
- Use words like “global warming” that activate the wrong associations

How to win public opinion

Extreme Weather

- Embed facts in values-based messages
- Draw on multiple values, not just environmental (e.g., American exceptionalism, jobs, health)
 - *Example: We led every major technological revolution of the 20th century. Are we really going to leave this one to the Germans and the Chinese?*
- Speak in the language of the kitchen table
 - *Example: "Pollution that damages our lungs and our atmosphere"*
- Use vivid imagery that people can picture
 - *Example: "We can drill our way all the way to China, and all we'll find when we get there are wind turbines."*
- Draw on what people can see with their own eyes (e.g., wildfires, droughts)
- Use words like "extreme weather" that activate just the right associations
- Round our numbers (a million acres in 1970 vs. 5 million just 20 years later)
- Use messengers people don't expect, e.g., entrepreneurs, military officers

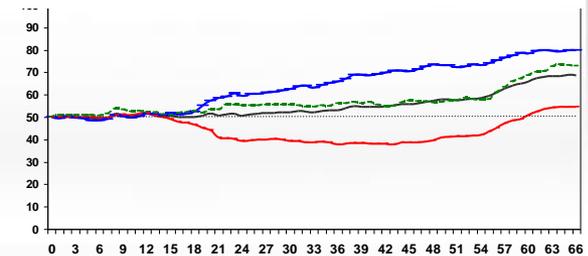
The language of the kitchen table on energy

Instead of this...	Try this...
Renewables	Energy that will never run out, like the wind and the sun
Carbon emissions, greenhouse gases, global warming, CO ²	Pollution that destroys our lungs and atmosphere; changing weather conditions we can see with our own eyes; our deteriorating atmosphere
The environment	The air we breathe and the water we drink; the majesty of our land; wilderness areas where families have hiked, fished, and hunted for generations
Barrels of oil (in the Gulf)	Gallons of oil
Conservation	Making the most of the energy we have
Retrofit	Renovate, refit, retool, insulate, replace with appliances that save energy
Cap and trade	Strict limits on pollution; making polluters pay and rewarding good corporate citizens
Numbers of chemicals (e.g., 450) to extract dirty fuels	Specific chemicals the public already associates with danger (arsenic, mercury, benzene) or "chemicals that cause cancer"

Climate science should extend to the way we talk with the public

Extreme Weather

- The same scientific methods that apply to policy should apply to communications
- Design messages and refine them in focus groups if useful
- Survey and dial-test messages online using large samples, always testing against strong opposition language
- Identify a range of messages for advocates with a range of values and constituents



Speaking of energy: If you only have 6 seconds...

Energy

- Our greatest natural resource is American ingenuity.
- Americans have led every technological revolution of the last century. Are we really going to leave this one to Brazil and Germany?
- It's time to invest in clean, safe sources of energy, like wind and solar, so we can start sending American dollars to Middle America, not the Middle East.
- We can drill our way all the way to China, but all we'll see when we get there are wind turbines.
- If you have to burn it, it isn't clean.
- Freedom, independence, and self-sufficiency are at the heart of who we are as a nation, and they should be at the heart of our strategy for energy independence in the 21st century.
- Which do you prefer, the clean, safe fuels of the 21st Century, or the dirty, unsafe fuels of the 19th?

Conclusions

Extreme Weather

- Times of crisis are times of opportunity
- This is a time of crisis
- We need to speak to people in the center in everyday language that speaks to their values, concerns, and aspirations
- The exact words we use, and the order in which we use them, matter, because words activate associations
- Distinguish polling from message research
- Tell stories
- Our final words should always leave people with hope