

Mass ECAN
Climate Change
Communication Workshop

Facilitator:

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What do you feel when you hear the words

Climate Change Communication

I can't fix all your communications-related woes, but I can try to help

Part I: Context, common pitfalls and a few key considerations

Part II: Case studies from your colleagues

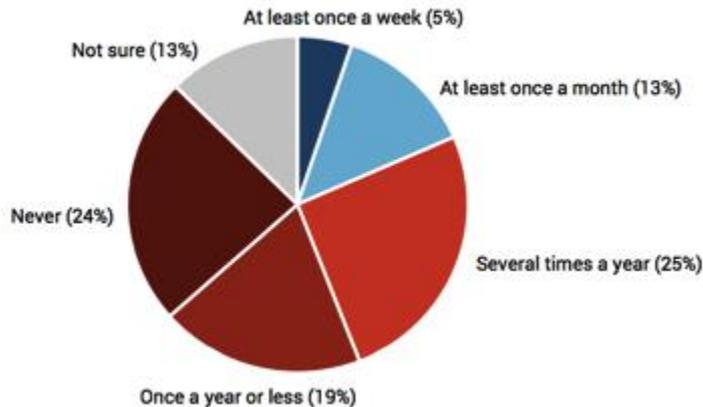
Part III: Message and narrative development

Part I:
Some context,
Common pitfalls to avoid,
Key considerations

Unfortunately, few people talk and think about climate change

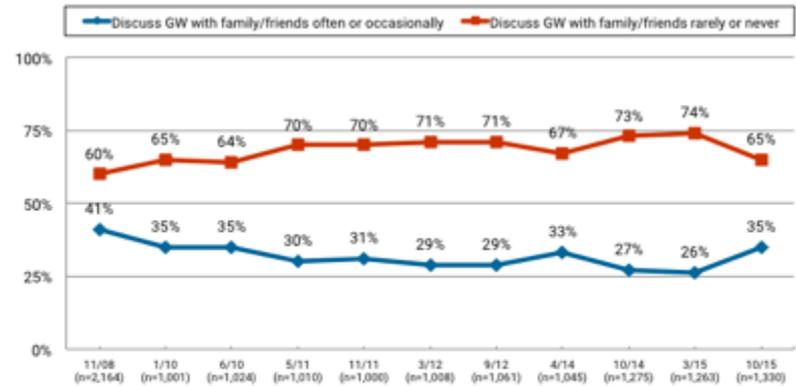
Less than 1/3 of Americans talk about climate change even occasionally

Only One in Five Americans Hear People They Know Talk About Global Warming At Least Once a Month - One in Four Never Hear it Discussed -



About how often do you hear other people you know (your family, friends, co-workers, etc.) talk about global warming?

Base: Americans 18+ (n=1,204). March, 2016



How often do you discuss global warming with your family and friends?

Base: Americans 18+, October, 2015.

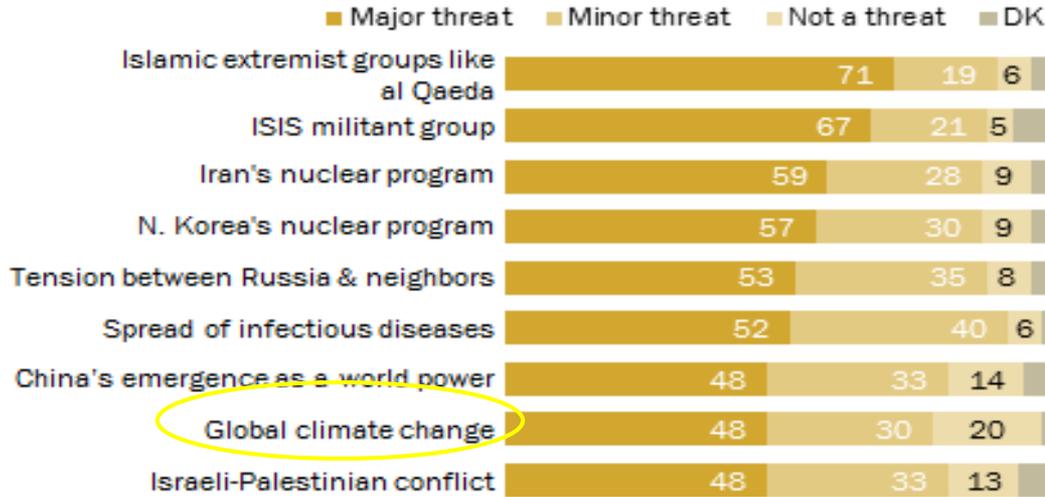
Note: Results in this chart differ slightly from results for the same question presented in Malbeck, E., Leiserowitz, A., Roser-Renouf, C., Myers, T., Rosenthal, S. & Feinberg, G. (2015) *The Francis Effect: How Pope Francis Changed the Conversation about Global Warming*, which reported on a separate national survey conducted using a different methodology.



This is a serious problem

Public's Views of Global Threats Facing the U.S.

% saying each is a ...



Survey conducted August 20-24, 2014. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER/USA TODAY

Economy

Taxes

Most other issues

Health

Climate Change



**Too
complex**

**Too
abstract**

**Too
big**

**Too
uncertain**

**Climate change is not the easiest
thing to talk about**

**Too
“science-y”**

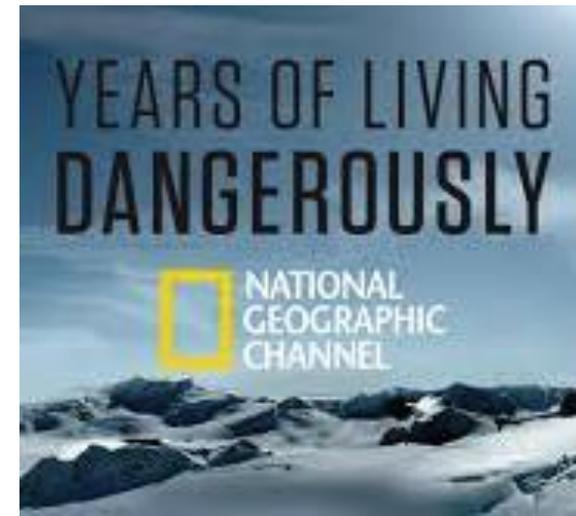
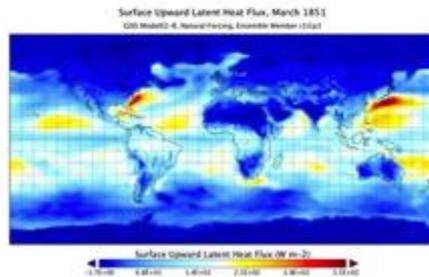
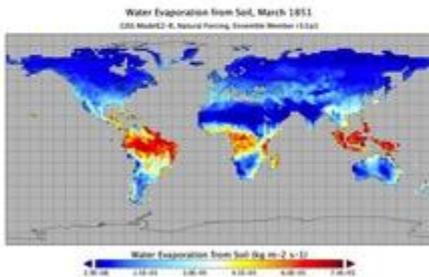
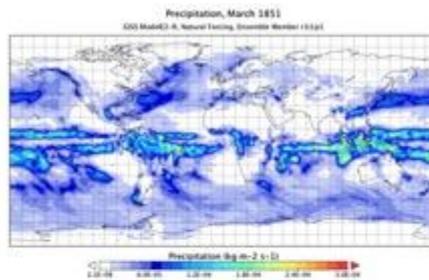
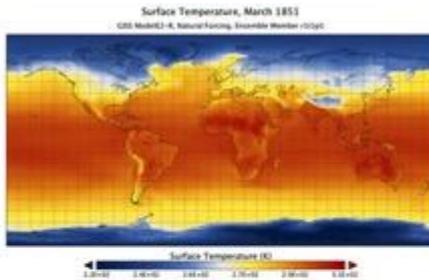
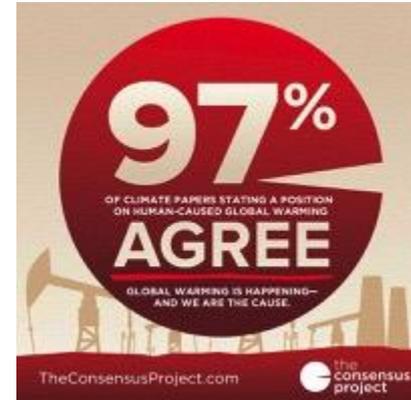
**Too
political/contr
oversial**

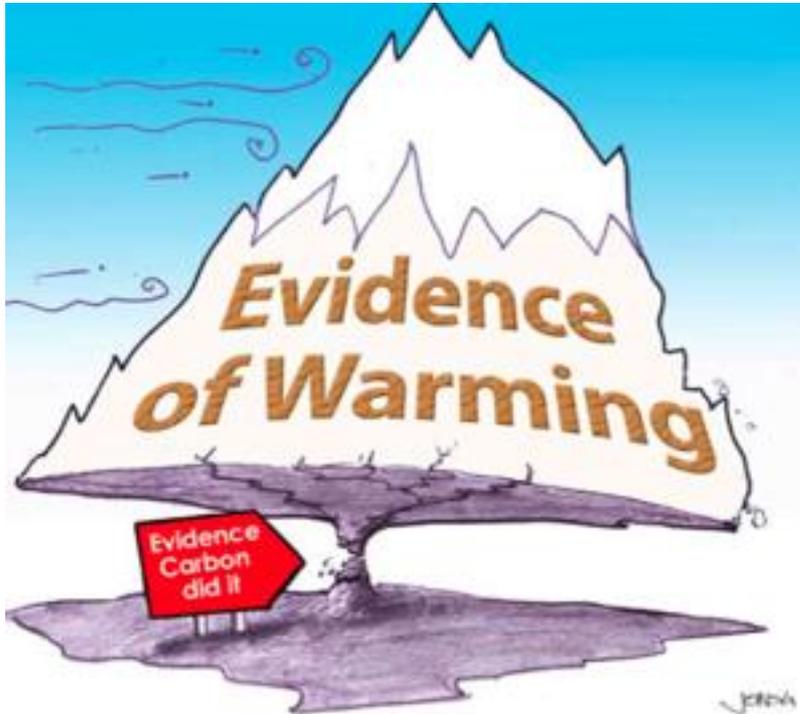
Too risky

**Too
scary**

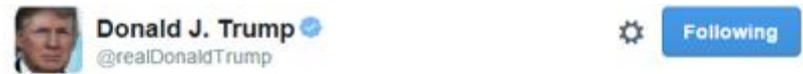


Despite all this..





50% BELIEVE CC IS ANTHROPOGENIC, 40% SEE SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS



The concept of global warming was created by and for the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive.

RETWEETS 24,831 LIKES 14,654

2:15 PM - 6 Nov 2012



~40% OF US PUBLIC CERTAIN CLIMATE CHANGE IS HAPPENING



Pitfall #1:

Believing that facts will carry the day

Reality: Facts rarely speak for themselves

People don't have the familiarity to make use of them

Most facts are divorced from people's day-to-day lives

Facts don't tell a story (on their own)

People have been exposed to competing and contradictory information for years

Pitfall #2:

Thinking that people need to know and care about everything you do

Reality: People will adapt to climate change for THEIR reasons, not yours

Providing more and more reasons to care, more negative impacts to worry about, etc. is more likely to disempower than motivate people to action

Pitfall #3:

Communicating the same way with
every audience

**Reality: Different audiences need different
things from you**

Climate change presents unique risks, challenges, opportunities, etc. for different audiences/stakeholders, so blasting out the same message is unlikely to work (no matter how well constructed)

Pitfall #4:

Not knowing or being clear about what you want people **to do differently**

Reality: To lead to action, communication needs to be clear in what it asks of people

Many climate change practitioners and advocates get caught up in the details of their communication and forget to clarify and relentlessly reinforce their **core message**

Pitfall #5:

Assuming that the problem is one of finding the “right” words

Reality: There are no “magic” words or phrases that will show people the light

True, some frames, metaphors, analogies, etc. may be more productive than others with some audiences, but focusing on the specific words is more likely to lead to frustration than to effective communication

Pitfall #6:

Forgetting that climate change is often
personal for audiences

**Reality: Accepting and responding to
climate change, particularly adaptation,
carries significant personal costs**

Failing to recognize and address the financial, social,
psychological and other costs of climate change action
risks audience rejection

So, what's to be done?

First, try to avoid these pitfalls



Check your outreach materials, communications strategies, and own practices

Second, know *what* and *why* you are communicating*



Communication cannot be effective if you don't know what the end-goal is

Third, tell stories*



Narrative structure is a powerful tool for improving EVERY interaction you have with your audience

Fourth, tailor messages to your audience's needs



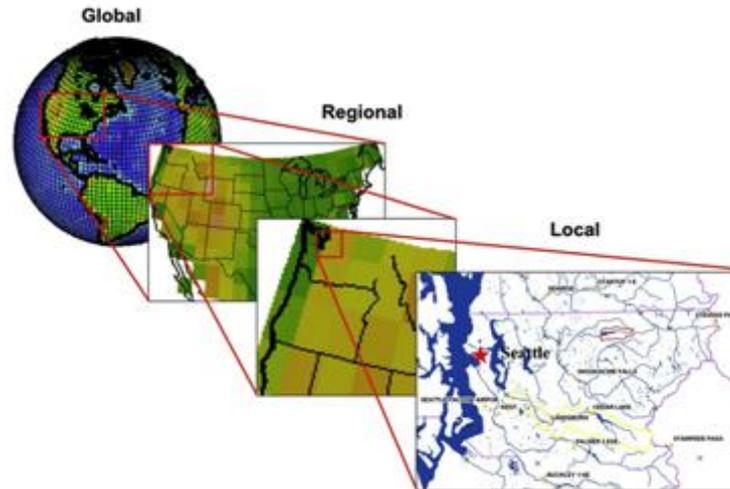
Only provide personally relevant information that informs specific decisions people already have to make

Fifth, remember that climate change provides context but isn't the reason why we ask people to adapt



Focus on the specific risks and benefits your audience faces from (in)action, not on providing lots of background information

Seventh, leverage the fact that adaptation is often local, immediate, and personal



It's ok to talk about the “big picture,” but start and end with local/regional implications

Bonus!

Some things you **don't** have to worry about (too much)

- **Providing factual, scientific information is OK**
 - It just can't be relied on to move people without context and proper storytelling
- **It's fine to leave out the minutiae**
 - In fact, it's almost always advisable to do so!
- **Eliciting the “right” emotional responses**
 - Instead, focus on knowing where your audience “is at” and tailor your tone accordingly
- **“Climate change” vs. “global warming”**
 - And other types of word choices—in a well-crafted, well-told message, specific words become less important

Questions?

Part II: Case Studies



- Kristen Grubbs
 - Environmental Planner
 - @ Ipswich River Watershed Association



- Lisa Hayden
 - Outreach Coordinator
 - @ New England Forestry Foundation

Part III: Message and narrative development

- Two quick activities
 1. Audience-specific message development
 2. Telling (extremely short) stories

1) Message development

- Start with **content**
- When developing your content, keep in mind:
 - Focus on **Solutions** and **Impacts** rather than **Causes**
 - Don't assume facts speak for themselves—you need to tell people **why** the information is relevant
 - If talking “big picture,” move from **local** to **regional** to **global** and then back to **local**
 - **Climate adaptation** is not as politically polarized or polarizing as mitigation, but **it is more personal**
 - **What you want people to do differently**

Mass ECAN Message Development Activity: Content

Audience _____

My audience currently thinks _____, but I want them to think _____

My audience currently does _____, but I want them to do _____

My communications-specific goal is _____

So what: Why does this matter to your audience?

Problem: What is the issue that you are addressing?

Benefits: How does your work benefit the audience or other stakeholders?

Issue/Topic: What is the "Big Picture"?

Solutions: What can you and/or your audience do to address the problem?

Example: My task today

Audience **___You!___**

My audience currently thinks **___CCC can be done on intuition___**, but I want them to think **___it needs to be strategic___**

My audience currently does **___some things well & some not so well___**, but I want them to do **___everything well!___**

My communications-specific goal is **___quickly provide useful insight into effective CCC and improve efficacy and impact___**

So what: Why does this matter to your audience?

- Climate adaptation practitioners have important knowledge, insights, recommendations and decision-support tools to share with their stakeholders
- Ineffective communication efforts impede diffusion of existing knowledge and best practices to decision-makers who need them

Problem: What is the issue that you are addressing?

- Many climate adaptation practitioners and advocates have trouble effectively communicating with various audiences
- Intuitive approaches to communicating about climate change often lead to less-than-ideal outcomes

Issue/Topic: What is the "Big Picture"?

Effective climate change
adaptation communication

Benefits: How does your work benefit the audience or other stakeholders?

- Understanding common pitfalls and climate change communication best practices can improve practitioners' ability to communicate effectively with their audiences
- Improved communication increases chances of on-the-ground "wins" through changes in stakeholders' decision-making and issue engagement
- Increased familiarity with climate communication context and recommendations can increase self-efficacy and comfort communicating

Solutions: What can you and/or your audience do to address the problem?

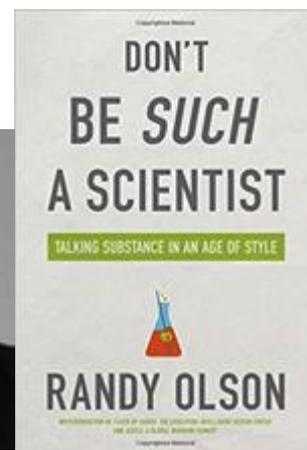
- Provide accessible, actionable recommendations to rapidly improve CCC and avoid pitfalls
- Develop and refine intentional, careful communication strategies and messages prior to audience engagement
- Incorporate basic storytelling principles into CCC efforts

Your turn!

- Communication is always audience-specific
- Six broad audience-types for today (plus “other”)
 - General public
 - Business owners
 - Politicians
 - Land owners
 - Younger generations/Students
 - Antagonistic audiences
 - Other
- Spend next 5-10 minutes developing a message for your selected audience, based on a current project

2) Turning your “message” into a **story**

- A clear, intentional message is critically important **but not sufficient**
- Effective communication **tells a story**
- One easy technique: **And, But, Therefore (ABT)**
 - For more, check out <http://www.randyolsonproductions.com>



ABT examples

- Climate change is happening **and** we have to adapt **but** most people don't know what they can do **therefore** we need to develop new support tools.
- Climate change is hard to talk about **and** that makes some people unwilling to do it **but** if no one talks about the issue then we won't take action **so** we have to help practitioners and advocates feel more confident and capable of having these difficult conversations.
- Adaptation practitioners have important knowledge to share with stakeholders **and** are trusted messengers within their own communities **but** ineffective communication efforts often impede diffusion of best practices **therefore** I designed today's workshop to help you improve your own communications practice.

Expanding beyond a single sentence

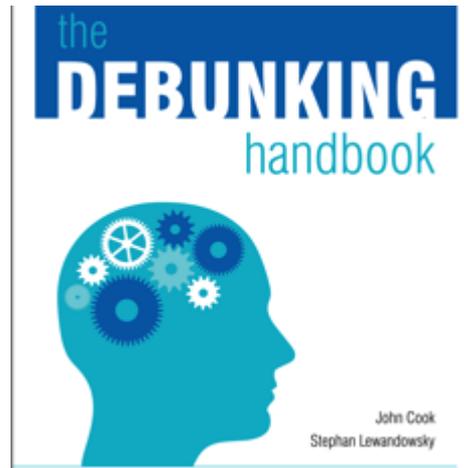
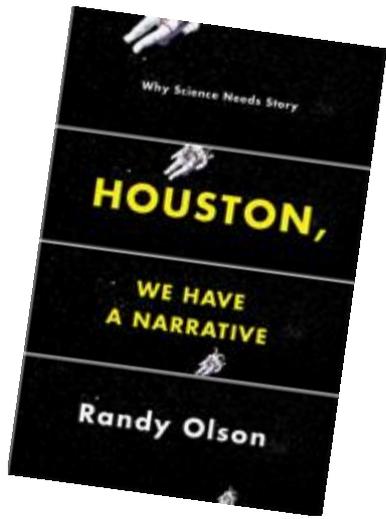
- Replace “ANDs” with “BUTs” or “THEREFOREs” when you can
- Can be done any time you communicate:
 - newsletters, blog posts, op-eds, copy for radio/video
 - preparing slides or remarks for a presentation

Goal is to move towards treating every communication act as

an opportunity to tell a story

Your turn

- On the back of your “message box” worksheet are three boxes
- **First**, take 3-5 minutes to turn your message box into a succinct, single paragraph that uses the ABT format (explicitly or implicitly)
- **Second**, hand your worksheet to the person next to you—they will try to “translate” your paragraph into a single ABT sentence
 - Tip: You may want to try speaking the sentence out loud a few times or use some scrap paper before you write something in the box
- **Third**, get your worksheet back and try to do the same—condense your message box content into a single sentence that follows the ABT format
 - You won’t be able to include everything, that’s ok



Want more?

There are so many resources out there!





Questions?

Contact

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