

PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY & AVOIDING GREENWASHING

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Written & Presented by **Organized by**
Laura Dunkley | lauradunkley.com NiagaraSustainabilityInitiative.org





LANGUAGE OF SUSTAINABILITY

There are many words used in communicating sustainability. How do we use these words? What do they mean? What do they mean to us? Should we use the same words all the time? Understanding these words and using them in the proper context, and making sure your audience understands them, is fundamental to the success of your communications. Not using them properly is one reason GREENWASHING is a problem [yes, greenwashing is one more term]

COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Does this scenario sound familiar?

You just provided your staff with more information on your sustainability initiatives, and you believe they understand everything you told them. Some of them are excited about the green story! Some proceed to tell your customers everything they know, which often misses the mark. Others, well, maybe they understand some of it, but they don't understand it all, so they decide not to say anything. Sometimes it is not about whether or not the words they are using is right, but it is how they say it, or when they say it can be out of context, or maybe it is too much. Looking at the image above, I can only imagine what the customer in this scenario is thinking...

"I just wanted to know if they had this shirt in the colour blue."

Questions to consider

- 🌱 **Do your employees have the information they need to share your sustainability message effectively?**
- 🌱 **Do your audiences understand the message? Do they know how it relates to them?**

UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF OUR 'GREEN' WORDS

There are many words and acronyms that we use in the language of sustainability. In my experience working with sustainability professionals and academics, is that they use these words and definitions on an everyday basis and forget that not everyone understands them. Or maybe they hear what you are saying but can't connect the dots to how it is relevant to them.

Having explored these terms and looked for the best definitions for each of these words on the internet and in reference materials, I was challenged to find simple, clear explanations.

Definitions are constantly evolving, but these are some key definitions:

Sustainability means meeting our needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The three pillars of sustainability are social, economic, and environmental. Sustainability is often thought of in an environmental way because we need to consider taking care of our natural resources for a healthy environment. However, the term is often used by many to consider the health & wellness of our people, and economic development.

Greenwashing is a form of corporate misrepresentation where a company will present a green public image and publicize green initiatives that are false or misleading.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is the actions or decisions of an organization that displays its values or sense of responsibility to the wellbeing of society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behaviour.

Other definitions [1]

KEY TAKEAWAYS

As the language of sustainability continues to evolve, we must remember to do a few key things to be effective.

-  **Know your audience**
-  **Keep the message clear and simple (whenever possible)**
-  **Connect the dots-“Why is this important to your audience.”**

MARKETING VS. PUBLIC RELATIONS

Two important roles in promoting your sustainability initiatives are marketing and public relations. We will cover the differences between the two roles, why they are important, how they work together, and when to include them in the program.



MARKETING

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.[2]

- Brand Development
- Sales Support
- Lead Generation
- Promotion

PUBLIC RELATIONS

Public relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. [3]

- Crisis Communication
- Reputation Management
- Stakeholder Relationships
- Corporate Social Responsibility



INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS (IC)

Internal communications (IC) is the function responsible for effective communications among participants within an organization [4]

- Team Building
- Collaboration
- Culture
- Education
- Policies/Procedures

PUTTING IT TOGETHER - STRATEGY

For your communications to be effective, you must always align your communications goals with business goals.

Questions to consider when planning your green story campaign

- What goals do you want to achieve? How does communicating your goals help reach your sustainability goals, your business goals?
- Who is your audience?
- What do you want to say?
- How is the best way to communicate? Look again to your audience.
- When is your timeline? Can you leverage other efforts to help get your message out in time? Is it a report that is due?
- What are the costs? What resources are available?



- How will you evaluate the success of telling your green story?

WHY ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS TEAM?

- 🌱 From beginning to end, engage your communications department to ensure constant and consistent messaging across all your organization's materials.
- 🌱 Align your goals with other communication goals? Marketing, Public Relations / Internal
- 🌱 Resources may be available | marketing budget, people to help, projects already underway. Note: Make sure you plan in advance to be able to access these resources.

BENEFITS OF PROMOTING YOUR SUSTAINABILITY INITIATIVES & GREEN STORY



Communicating your sustainability programs in the right way, for the right reasons, to the right people, and at the right time, offers a variety of benefits!

Telling your green story offers a variety of benefits for revenue, retention & reputation.

The following are ways to leverage your story to build your business case; as well as, inspire you to continue, improve, or perhaps get started, promoting your sustainability initiatives.

What are the benefits?

- **Create Champions!** Internal teams (employees & suppliers) will more likely get involved when they know what you are doing, what they can do to help, and why you are doing it.
- **Cultivate Collaboration** - Working with others gives opportunities to share budget. Engagement with other departments means more people to get the work done and spread the news. Use the exercise of telling your story as an opportunity for a team building exercise!
- **Create more projects!** To get buy-in on a new project, to get approval beyond a pilot project, to extend the reach of your sustainability efforts, value must be shown.
- **Competitive Advantage** - Quite often sustainability, especially in energy conservation projects, offers cost savings. People often want to invest in an organization, through large capital investments or daily purchases, when they know they are supporting an organization that values sustainability best practices.
- **Compliant** - When environmental considerations are regulated, the benefit is, that by complying, they are able to stay in business. However, you should still promote it! By letting your customers, community & suppliers know you are compliant helps build positive relationships.

- **Culture [Positive]** - Make your company the one everyone wants to work at! It costs a lot to train employees, and attracting talent is important to the success of most businesses. People, especially young people, want to work for employers that have corporate social responsibility initiatives, such as environmental sustainability, is in place. They want more than just a pay check, they want to make a difference.
- **Creative & Innovative Leadership** [Reputation] - Studies show that organizations, especially in the technology industry, that support the wellbeing of our planet, are often considered leading edge & innovative! [5]
- **Crisis Management** - Over the years, research continues to show, that companies who have a positive reputation with their key stakeholders are more resilient during a crisis. [6]

CHALLENGES

When you aren't able to communicate sustainability effectively, it can lead to a variety of challenges and potential risks. We will present some of the challenges to watch out for when promoting green programs, products and services. And yes, there are risks to not promoting your sustainability effectively, including greenwashing. We will address some of those risks and their impact.

Why is it that people don't promote their green story? What are the challenges organizations face that keep them from promoting their sustainability efforts?

- We don't have enough time
- We don't have enough budget
- We don't know what information to share
- We don't know how to share it
- We don't know who we should tell
- We don't know if what we are doing is being effective

GOOD NEWS is that if you don't tell your green story, your efforts are not all done in vain. For example, cost savings are still valid in an energy conservation project or choosing to recycle still helps reduce landfill waste.

But, what are the risks of not telling your green story? And even when you do tell your story, what happens if you don't tell it in a way they understand or resonates with them.

If you don't address the challenges above, there are risks. Your sustainability initiatives may not get started, continue, or even worse; it can create risks to your organization's reputation and hurt your growth strategy.

RISKS AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES CAN BE AVOIDED BY TELLING YOUR GREEN STORY

Approval

Leadership - One study shows that in nearly half of companies surveyed (49%), sustainability is at least among the CEO's top five priorities, and this has increased over the past year. [7]

- Having strong leadership helps drive engagement, and resolve competing priorities that are one of the biggest barriers to deeper integration. If they don't see the value in your project, why will they continue?



Revenue

If you promote that something is better for the environment than it actually is, that is called greenwashing. Many studies show that consumers will pay more for a product or service if they believe their investment offers social value (community/environment). [8]

- However, if consumers believe they are being swindled... beware. Not only will they never purchase again, but with the world of social media, there is opportunity to share their experience at a viral rate causing lasting damage to revenue and reputation. Just Google "greenwashing examples" and you will see a multitude of blogging sites, articles, and social media posts sharing lists and negative comments towards companies that they believe are not being honest in their environmental claims.

Employee - Recruitment & Retainment

Another study shows that 80% prefer to work for sustainable employers . Why? Because it gives them a source of pride, it implies the company will take care of their employees if they are considerate to the environment, and employees want to work with a company that has values that align with their own personal values. [9]

- If you aren't promoting your sustainability initiatives, you won't be able to tap into these potential job applicants.

Volunteer & Donor Support

Similar to above, if you are a not-for-profit or charity, not sharing your sustainability story, it can hurt your chances of getting volunteers to donate their time, or money, to support your cause. In the for-profit organization, most sustainability initiatives are voluntary. In a time when employees already feel burdened with completing their jobs, it can be hard to convince people to give up their free time, such as sit on a green team, where they would have extra work.

- If you aren't able to communicate the importance of your sustainability initiatives in a compelling way, it will be difficult to get support.

Recommendations / Earned Media

Millennials are more like to trust recommendations from friends and families rather than company advertising. [10]

🌱 If you don't promote your sustainability efforts, people won't be able to share your efforts!

Investment Opportunities

In a study done in April 2016, it shows that sustainable, responsible, and impact investing approaches, continue to gain traction among investors. [11] Especially among high net-worth (HNW) millennials. Many companies are now compiling information and reporting on their initiatives.

🌱 Remember, what investors are looking for may not be what regulators are looking for, or even the public is looking for. Knowing what information is needed for investors, and ensuring it is readily available, will help with investment and voting decisions. Too much information may be confusing, or long, and either overlooked or discarded as an opportunity to invest.

IMPROVE EFFECTIVENESS, OVERCOME CHALLENGES & REDUCE RISKS



Promoting your sustainability story takes time and money, and there are risks involved if not done properly. To get the greatest return on your investment, overcome challenges, and reduce risks, there are a few guiding principles to consider when planning, sharing information, and engaging with your audiences.

The following tips will help improve the effectiveness of your sustainability promotions, avoid the risk of greenwashing, build your sustainable brand, and capture opportunities to grow your organization.

Have clear goals & vision for your sustainability initiatives + have an actionable plan

Understanding WHY you integrated sustainability into your operations is the first step to communicating it effectively. Once you know the WHY, then start to put together what you are doing, when you want it to be done, and how it supports your business goals. After that, know WHO needs to be informed, or possibly partner with, to help promote your sustainability program. This is the start, and an essential foundation to building out an effective communications plan.

Who is the expert on staff?

Always make sure to have someone(s) designated as the lead contact. This makes it easy when there are questions that need to be answered. It is recommended to have more than one person informed of the sustainability projects in case one is not available. You wouldn't want to miss out on an interview from a major publication on the work you are doing, just because someone is on vacation.

Be authentic

Practise what you preach. If you are advertising that you are an eco-friendly organization, or you believe that the environment is important, and you aren't doing anything to promote environmental best practices in your

work place, then that can harm your credibility. It doesn't mean that you have to be 'perfect' in your efforts, because all of us know that is impossible. However, some green living activities have more weight than others when it comes to optics of importance. For example, recycling is one activity that has a wide spread awareness and acceptance of the environmental benefits. And, people know that it is not a hard program to put into action for the average office environment. At the very least, recycling is something every organization can start with as a basic green program.

Be transparent

Don't be afraid to show that you haven't reached all your goals! Tell your story anyway. What better way to 'humanize' your organization than to show the challenges you face. It also lets your audience to relate to you, as they too will be facing their own challenges. And when you do overcome those challenges, and reach your goals, they will be there to celebrate with you.

 Remember, transparency does not mean that you have to tell everything to everyone. Share what you can, when you can, and then share the right information to the right people.

Know your facts

Research thoroughly to ensure you are getting facts from credible sources, and always make sure to cite your sources.

Examples

- Manufacturers often have information on the types of materials they use in making their products. Steelcase, an office furniture manufacturer, offers details on their website about the materials used in their office furniture, among other environmental facts about their operations. Example - <https://www.steelcase.com/content/uploads/sites/10/2015/01/EPD-Amia-UK.pdf>
- 3rd party certification sites will have information on the requirements needed to gain certain levels of certification. Note - see references for resource links to some certification programs.
- Organizations, like Niagara Sustainability Initiative, are a local not-for-profit organization here in Niagara. Their team stays up to date on sustainability facts and offer a valuable resource of information and networking opportunities for their members. Look for organizations in your local area to join.

Stick to the Facts!

Don't take creative license when it comes to publishing your results, or claiming environmental benefits of your products.

Certifications

Acquire certifications when possible to show. Research to make sure they are relevant for your industry and a credible organization. e.g. Rainforest Alliance, LEED, FSC, Green (furniture), ISO 14001

Be Proactive

In the study mentioned earlier, the sustainability leaders say that they believe that by engaging proactively with key stakeholders helps to reduce risks that may come from making a public commitment and having environmental 3rd party watch-dog groups from pointing out missed targets. They affirm that the benefits of public commitments significantly outweigh the risks by creating a shared sense of mission and helping companies stay the course during difficult phases.

Educate

INTERNAL AUDIENCES

Let your internal team know what is going so they can share in the pride in what you are doing, they will have their facts straight when talking about the work the organization is doing when they talk to their clients, and it will encourage them to participate in your green programs because they will know why you are doing it and what they can do to contribute.

Communicating your sustainability initiatives to your boss is important. Helping him/her understand the value of your program can help get buy-in, expand your program, or potentially help your career if sustainability is in your job description.

EXTERNAL AUDIENCES

Educating external audiences is also important, especially for your customers. There is no one type of socially conscious consumer! Not only do you have to consider the typical marketing demographic traits (age, gender, country, education, lifestyle, etc.) but you have to consider their attitude and understanding of what sustainability means. Know your audiences! Use the language that resonates with them, promote where they get their information, and in a way they like to receive it. For example, don't sending out a print brochure in the mail if you want to reach a young audience. For one thing, sending print notices in the mail is perceived as being NOT environmentally friendly, but our youth spend more time on their mobile devices than reading what comes in the mailbox.

Engage the Team! Get them involved!

Yes, it starts with first educating your internal team on the benefits of sustainability (environmental, social, and profits), which will help to give them the WHY behind what they are doing. But, the real story starts to come alive when you give them opportunity to get involved!

The benefits of "In my 52 years of business," Ray Anderson, founder of Interface, says, "I've never seen an issue galvanize people in a company like sustainability." There are a lot of benefits to getting your team involved in your sustainability initiatives. [11]

Celebrate successes

Connect the dots between environmental sustainability & social wellbeing.

If people believe that their purchases are making a positive impact on society they are more likely to behave in a socially conscious way.

One study showed that people's concern for how their purchases affected society, was almost 6x more important in influencing environmentally friendly decisions, than concern for the environment alone. [12]

When promoting your green story, ensure you connect the dots on how purchasing from your company, and how your programs benefit our environment and how that can positively impact society.

If consumers believe their purchases are contributing to the wellbeing of society, they are 6x more likely to act in an environmentally friendly way, than just from concern over the environment alone.

Know the regulations/laws

For each country, province, state, city, or municipality, there may be specific regulations on how and what you are allowed to promote environmental sustainability, especially in progressive places like California.

Walmart has agreed to pay \$1 million to settle greenwashing claims that allege the nation's largest retailer sold plastic products that were misleadingly labeled "biodegradable" or "compostable" in violation of California law. [13]

Green should never come at the cost of offering your customer the best product and experience possible.

IN CANADA there is the Environmental claims: A guide for industry and advertisers

3.5 Objective of CAN/CSA-ISO 14021

CAN/CSA-ISO 14021 is intended to harmonize the use of terms and symbols that claimants use in making self-declared environmental claims.

A link to this guide can be found on the resources page of Niagara Sustainability Initiative [14]

Quality should not come at the cost of sustainability

Green should never come at the cost of offering your customer the best product and experience possible. With the progress of green technology, and other environmentally friendly ways to do business, quality and eco-friendly are no longer mutually exclusive terms. It is possible, Patagonia has successfully built their company even when we didn't have the tech and level of awareness to the benefits of sustainability as we have today. "Make the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, and use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis." - Patagonia Mission Statement [15]

One study shows that, **The average premium consumers are willing to pay is 10% — if quality remains the same [16]**

SUCCESS STORIES

What companies promote their sustainability story successfully? Is it only the big companies that are doing it well, or can small local businesses be successful?

How are they telling their green story? What are they doing to engage & inform their audiences of their sustainability initiatives, values & vision?

We have some examples below from business pioneers in environmental sustainability that have proven that it pays to be sustainable, to our some of our local community - academia & business members. These success stories offer us great examples of what we can do, and inspire us along the way.

Organizations must always adapt new ways of storytelling as their initiatives develop, their audience awareness levels progress, and technology changes. Watching what other companies are doing is one way to find creative and innovative ways to fine-tune and customize your storytelling tactics.

The following companies & organizations are a mix of large & small organizations, for-profit & not-for-profit, as well as local and international.

GLOBAL

Patagonia

Patagonia is a successful outdoor clothing company and known by many as one of the leaders in sustainability. Yvon Chouinard, founder and owner of [Patagonia](#), began his business life making and selling rock-climbing equipment in the late 1950s. Never considering himself to be a businessman, Yvon believed that he could grow a successful business by providing his customers with a quality product while still considering the wellbeing of the people around him and the environment. Patagonia is proof that it works.

Without a business model to follow, Yvon started Patagonia. Guided by its mission statement Patagonia continues to grow successfully using the triple-bottom-line model; people, planet, and profits.

"Make the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, and use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis." - Patagonia Mission Statement

Yvon was a pioneer for sustainable business best practices and continues to lead by example.

In his book, "[Let my People go Surfing](#)", Yvon Chouinard takes the reader through the journey of how he got started in the business, his challenges and successes along the way, and some practical insights on leading a successful sustainability-focused organization.

Frequently throughout the book, Yvon emphasizes the key role communication plays in Patagonia's success.

- 🌱 website & social media are two ways that they use to communicate their story
- 🌱 Patagonia's Black Friday 2016 campaign was an example of how Patagonia put their words into action. They gave \$10M in sales to grassroots local environmental groups [15]
- 🌱 communicating and training their employees on their values & vision takes priority

Read more here > [7 Communication Lessons Inspired by the Way they do Business at Patagonia \[15\]](#)

DIRTT

DIRTT [17] is an office furniture & interior construction company; head office is in Calgary, Canada; company was founded in 2005. Sustainability is part of DIRTT's business model; it is not something they added on as an afterthought. It is in their product sales material marketing, but also a main part of the mission/values statement on their website.

- 🌱 Sustainability - zero waste to landfill, tech software only makes what is needed, reuse sections for future design/space changes (modular)
- 🌱 DIRTT does not forgo quality & customer service to protect the environment with their product, but rather their sustainability story enhances their offering.
- 🌱 Note: Industries such as the Healthcare, Public Sector & Higher Education are on the forefront of proposing sustainability as mandatory, or key driver in their purchases. This is shown by many of their public proposal requests; requiring companies to report on their sustainability information to meet certain mandatory conditions.
- 🌱 Their website is a good example of how DIRTT shares their GREEN story: infographics, videos, and multiple pages of information in a predominant place in the main navigation bar.

INTERFACE

Interface [18] is a global flooring manufacturing company founded by Ray C. Anderson. A pioneer in the sustainability movement, Ray C. Anderson led his company in decisions to reduce the harm his business was

doing to the environment. Interface continues to offer quality products, grow as an organization, and set aggressive environmental harm reduction goals.

- 🌱 As a passionate & outspoken leader, Ray C. Anderson often publicly shared his personal story on why he was passionate about the work he was doing, as well as the work at Interface. There are numerous videos from TEDTalk conferences and articles written that share Ray C. Anderson's story. By sharing his story, he helped teach and lead others within his industry, and the world, to follow suit.
- 🌱 The INTERFACE website offers their sustainability statement. The use targeted words that inspire emotion & show their commitment to the cause.
- 🌱 INTERFACE consistently engages their audiences on social media & writes articles regularly to educate their audiences on the importance of sustainability as it relates to the interior design market, and informs them of what is new.

Local - Niagara, Ontario

Beatties is a local office furniture and supply company who publicly shows their commitment to their environmental sustainability goals on their website. They are a carbon project member of NSI, have an active green team, and even speak at events about their work.

Brock University is a major supporter of sustainability here in Niagara, including being a sponsor of NSI, and an International leader in Sustainability science Research. Coinciding with the 2017 UNESCO World Poetry Day Celebration, Brock University offered a sustainability poetry contest. This not only brought awareness to the topic of sustainability locally, but also gave an opportunity to showcase themselves as leaders of sustainability research and education.

- 🌱 Communication tools they used to promote and manage their event included their website, social media, and Eventbrite [21], a free event ticket management program.
- 🌱 Collaboration - They partnered with a local coffee shop, Mahtay Cafe, which is also a sustainably minded business, to host the Poetry contest award celebration.

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES

Videos - Alphacoms, a French Communications Agency, created an online virtual tour that presented their 2013 Corporate Sustainability Report. As part of the virtual video tour, they created physical signs to visualize their data and placed them throughout the business. They were successful in showcasing the results of their sustainability initiatives, and made it fun & engaging for viewers. Find the banana! To make it even more engaging, they added a giant banana hunt to the tour! [22]

- 🌱 When people hear information, they're likely to remember only 10% of that information three days later. However, if a relevant image is paired with that same information, people retained 65% of the information three days later. [23]
- 🌱 4X as many consumers would prefer to watch a video about a product than to read about it [24]

Games - The objective of the **Clim'way** [25] game is to help an online community reach specific climate goals. You have to create a climate plan to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a certain percentage in a certain time frame. Your plans can include setting up alternative energy sources, reducing human consumption etc.

Why are games popular? People, especially our younger audience, want to quickly see the results of their actions. They want feedback to show what they are doing is making a difference. Gaming offers the ability to get involved in something and see immediate feedback as you progress through the game. Gaming technology offers the opportunity to see change in real time, crowdsource talent to collect ideas and input for potential project development, reaches a global audience at a reduced cost to traditional methods. Using visuals also help reduce language barriers.

Augmented Reality - In partnership with BBC, the '**Frozen Planet: Face to Face**' Sea Life Aquarium in London, UK, is an exciting place where people can visit and learn about the environment in an engaging and real-life way. Rather than having live animals, they are using augmented reality experiences to help people learn more about nature.

"Through immersive augmented reality experiences, visitors are able to take a walk to encounter a polar bear and her cubs, killer whales, cracking ice beneath their feet and other elements of the natural environment that these incredible creatures call home. As a companion to the visuals provided by BBC Earth, there are also multi-sensory elements to the experience, such as scents and sounds that will make visitors feel as if they've been transported deep into the heart of the arctic" [27]

What is Augmented Reality?

Augmented reality is the integration of digital information with the user's environment in real time. Unlike virtual reality, which creates a totally artificial environment, augmented reality uses the existing environment and overlays new information on top of it. [26]

Infographic - Envirotech Office's Waste Audit & commitment to waste reduction is reported in a visual way using an infographic. The infographic was added as a supporting visual on their website in a blog post, and shared on their social media profiles. [28]

TIPS ON HOW TO PROMOTE YOUR GREEN STORY | WORDS, VISUALS & ACTION



Finding ways to communicate your sustainability initiatives to your boss, your employees, your customers, and investors can be a challenge. Here are some creative ways to share your green story to help promote your efforts and build engagement.

Some ideas presented below require big marketing budgets, but mostly they are everyday ideas that can be incorporated into promotional tactics already in place. Pick and choose what works best for your organization!

APPRECIATION, FEEDBACK, INCENTIVES | EMPLOYEES

- Employees are an important audience when communicating sustainability. You want to show them appreciation for their ideas and leadership, get feedback, and offer incentives to engage.
- Use your intranet to post a recent success
- Share success stories on your website / blog
- Create a bulletin board 'wall of fame' photos
- Paint one of your walls with white board paint and use it as place for people to share inspiring messages on how to be more sustainable in the workplace
- Everyone loves to doodle! Put up a white paper banner in the lunch room, get a set of coloured markers, and let your team inspire your with their green ideas.
- Share charts to show successes
- Front row parking for electric cars
- Showers & safe bike storage to encourage people to bike to work
- Day off to volunteer
- Social media posts sharing success stories
- Ask for feedback! One of the greatest things we can do to show appreciate is listen and make changes. When you can't, let them know why.
- Sponsor employees who take their green initiatives beyond the office walls i.e. community garden project

EDUCATE | EMPLOYEES, CUSTOMERS, SUPPLIERS, INVESTORS

Help people understand the WHY behind your sustainability initiatives. And, help people connect the dots to why they should be engaged with, and supportive of, your sustainability initiatives. Include articles, visuals, research, and insights on what is being done in your business, industry, community and globally. If you are

facilities or the department in charge of the sustainability program, talk with your communications on how to best promote your story. If you are a business owner, marketing director, or President of a small-medium sized business, contact a [communications consultant](#) who specializes in sustainability or corporate social responsibility to help you with your campaign.

- 🌱 Create a short animated video | [example here](#) [29]
- 🌱 Reporting - Make them creative & engaging! Visual graphics, videos, and interactive PDF are all ways you can make your sustainability report more interesting. It is more likely your investors, employees and boss will read your entire report if you add design to the text and number rich content.
- 🌱 Incorporate your green story into your sales materials - brochures, trade show displays
- 🌱 Certification badges - Apply certifications, when applicable, you have to all marketing materials to give credibility
- 🌱 Website - sustainability statement / vision, news releases, success stories.
- 🌱 Blog - write about your work with a specific category for Green Team and/or Sustainability.
- 🌱 Social media - share success stories, use hashtags #CSR Corporate Social Responsibility / #Sustainability
- 🌱 Print Posters
- 🌱 P.A. System - IKEA is one organization that shares their sustainability message on their store's P.A. system so people can hear when shopping.
- 🌱 Lunch n learn events
- 🌱 15 min. at the general office meeting for the green team to update everyone on progress is sometimes all you need
- 🌱 Create visuals on waste stream separation and post on blog, social media, and use in posters
- 🌱 Have your sustainability story as part of your corporate video!
- 🌱 Submit a press release - newsworthy items
- 🌱 Word of Mouth - mention at networking events as part of your 'Our Story'
- 🌱 Lead by example - business owners & CEOs should be examples for their employees on how to be an ambassador.
- 🌱 On their professional social media sites, such as LinkedIn, leaders can educate through thought leadership - sharing articles, joining groups, and commenting on relevant posts in their network
- 🌱 Be available for comment for media.
- 🌱 Ride your bike to work!
- 🌱 Make sure you are engaged in the office green initiatives e.g. recycling.
- 🌱 C.S.R./sustainability report needs to be interesting! Visuals, or even interactive. (See example)
- 🌱 Speak at a conference / member meeting

SUPPORT YOUR COMMUNITY

Leverage the marketing opportunity, networking, and support available by getting involved with various groups in your community that are proactive in supporting

"Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much." -

environmental and wellness initiatives in your local community. Make sure these groups align with your vision and values. [Niagara Sustainability Initiatives](#), [Niagara Land Trust](#), and [Niagara Farm Project](#) are some of my local community groups who are always looking for volunteers and sponsorship.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR HELP

Whether you are just getting started, need help taking your communications to the next level, or an experienced organization, resources are available to assist in developing your sustainability communications.

- Member organizations like Niagara Sustainability Initiative can help plan & implement
- Marketing team (internal or external consultant) might be able to integrate this into their budget & time
- Collaborate with other local businesses
- Lunch n Learns should be free! Ask a communications consultants who have experience in communicating sustainability come in and do a series with your team.
- Getting employees involved can be motivating! It some creative talent that you may not realized you had on staff. *'Many hands make light the work'*
- Suppliers may have marketing dollars to put towards a project
- Possible grants to implement sustainability programs
- Local college internship programs - environmental studies, public relations, marketing, etc.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Know your Audience!
- Goals, Vision + Plan
- Stick to the Facts
- Keep the Message Simple
- Do it, Live it, Tell it
- Learn & Adapt
- Celebrate Success
- Be Creative!
- Ask for Help

"Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much."
- Helen Keller

ABOUT



Laura Dunkley is a communications strategist with expertise in the area of digital marketing, public relations, and social media. Offering expertise in wellness and sustainability, she assists organizations to develop, implement, and manage their communications programs. Laura is a board member at Niagara Sustainability Initiative.

laura@lauradunkley.com | 289-821-4651 | @LauraLDunkley | lauradunkley.com



Niagara Sustainability Initiative (NSI) is a non-profit organization, which acts as a catalyst for Niagara's businesses, municipalities and organizations to meet its present needs without compromising those of future generations. NSI's primary service offering is The Carbon Project. Carbon Project Members represent some of Niagara's most environmentally conscious organizations. The program gives members the tools to set targets, make changes as well as measure and track their sustainability progress over time.



info@niagarasustainability.org | 289-786-0970 | @SustainNiagara | NiagaraSustainability.org

View presentation online at <https://www.slideshare.net/LauraLDunkley/promoting-sustainability-avoiding-greenwashing>



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Sustainability Certification & Membership Resources

- Rainforest Alliance - <http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/>
- Canada Green Building Council (CAGBC) - <https://www.cagbc.org/Membership>
- LEED - (CAGBC resource) - http://www.cagbc.org/CAGBC/LEED/About_LEED/CAGBC/Programs/LEED/_LEED.aspx?hkey=01b3d086-d0a4-42cf-9e61-7830d801c019
- Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) - <https://ca.fsc.org/en-ca>
- WELL - <https://www.wellcertified.com/>
- ISO 14001 - Environmental Management <https://www.iso.org/iso-14001-environmental-management.html>
- Fair Trade - <http://fairtrade.ca/>
- GREENGUARD - <http://greenguard.org/en/certificationprograms.aspx>
- Canadian Organic Growers - <http://www.cog.ca/index.php?page=organic-regulations>
- David Suzuki's Eco-Label Guide <http://www.davidsuzuki.org/publications/resources/2010/eco-label-guide/>

