How Do We Communicate Climate Change

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Don’t just do green things. Turn your behaviour into an influencing campaign.

Use opportunities and communication multipliers to magnify the impact of your pro-climate behaviours.
How we decide

**System 1**
- Easy way
- Intuitive
- Emotional
- Unconscious
- Reflexive

**95%+ decisions**

**Behaviours**

**System 2**
- Hard way
- Analytical
- Conscious
- Reflective

**rare**

**rationalisation**
System 1 tools

System 1

Easy way
Intuitive
Emotional
Unconscious
Reflexive

95%+ decisions

Behaviours

rationalisation

VALUES
HEURISTICS
FRAMING
Prospectors – outer directed: need for success, esteem of others then self esteem. Acquire and display symbols of success.

Pioneers – inner directed. Need to connect actions with values, explore ideas, experiment. Networking, interests, ethics, innovation

Settlers - need for security driven: safety, security, identity belonging. Keep things small, local, avoid risk

Values: unconscious drivers and behaviours – unmet needs
Heuristics – work more often than not

- Liking
- Effort
- Social proof
- Consistency
- Exchange

Lots more
Framing- unconscious categories

“First we see – then we understand”

Walter Lippman

Plastic as litter or plastic as pollution?
The power of the child over adults - parents
#2 of 90 identity choices

http://threeworlds.campaignstrategy.org/?p=1903
Researchers left 240 wallets on the streets of Edinburgh 42 per cent of the wallets were posted back in total. (No money but clear id/address)
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Mercury is nearest the sun

But it’s av. temperature is -50°C: very thin atmosphere with CO2 all locked underground

Venus has a thick 96% CO2 atmosphere and av. temperature of +420°C

Earth’s average is (was) 15°C with 0.03% CO2

Once upon a time the communications challenge was finding ways to explain climate change
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Eg framing research showed metaphors are a better at helping people grasp the science than data

Heat-trapping blanket metaphor

When we burn fossil fuels for energy, we add more and more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This buildup acts like a blanket that traps heat around the word, which disrupts the climate.

Too cold

Too hot

Just right
But now climate change is communicating itself - providing its own evidences.
People believe it’s real and it’s bad.
And that it’s already happening
The communications challenge now is to drive both feasibility and urgency.

We’re not on track globally.

UK says net zero 2050.

XR say by 2025.

Others somewhere in between.

We need top down and bottom up action.

Change comes in repeated steps, driven by urgency, then feasibility. Feasibility - solutions, public acceptance.

The communications challenge now is to drive both feasibility and urgency.
Events are driving the urgency

Communicating our own actions can help drive the feasibility.

“It can be done” is as important as “it needs to be done”.

Feasibility - solutions, public acceptance

Urgency, need
Values: unconscious drivers and behaviours – unmet needs

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(Plus point - designer)

“It’s the best. Greenest, most planet friendly. Most ethical. Least damaging.”
(Plus point: most interesting fridge.)

“Same behaviour. Different reasons.

It’s the best. Officially approved [authority]. ‘Guaranteed’ safe, certain, reliable. Most economical.”
(Plus point: local)
Overall, there has been a small reduction in the UK's carbon footprint in the post-recession period as increases due to total spend and population have been more than outweighed by cuts due to energy efficiency, carbon intensity and changed need.

If the effect of total-spend increases can continue to be outpaced by improvements in the carbon content of energy supplies, production efficiencies and consumers choosing “greener” baskets of goods, then the UK’s carbon footprint will continue to reduce.

However, as our previous article explains, the current pace of reduction is well short of that needed to meet the Paris Agreement.' [Anne Owens, Carbon Brief]
Can policy and govt action make a difference? Yes it can!

Fossil fuels are falling in UK primary energy use, as is total energy use (left)

Renewables overtook fossil fuels in electricity generating in 2019 (below)

Both the result of using government policy levers

(Emissions fell about 10% on a footprint basis 1997-2016 and ca 40% on a Climate Act basis 1990 - 2017. UK peak ‘carbon’ emissions was 1973).
Transport is a major target for emissions reduction. Electric cars are going to be important.

“It’s the best. Terrific warranty. Saving me a fortune on petrol. No fumes to make children sick.”
(Plus point: local dealer)

(Plus point: looks)

“It’s the best. Greenest, most planet friendly. Most ethical. Least damaging.”
(Plus point: most interesting model.)

Same behaviour. Different reasons.
Don’t just do green things. Turn your behaviour into an influencing campaign

Tell your friends, family, colleagues.
Share it online.
Hold a new car party.
Take them for a ride.
Park it where the neighbours will see it.
Offer someone a lift to the next Extinction Rebellion or School Strike. Start a club of other e-car users to do the same ...

Scale up. Friends of the Earth have produced a 50 point Climate Action Plan for Local Authorities. Find three other electric car users and get involved to promote the points related to e-cars, taxis and buses.
Use opportunities and communication multipliers to magnify the impact of your pro-climate behaviours.

Opportunities

@home
@work
@play

2020
Time
Money

Eg choices for diet, holidays, recreation, gardens, transport, energy, clothing, tech, services, investments, pets, building ...

Pro Climate Actions

Informal channels

F2F Community

Friends & family = most trusted messengers. Heuristics of social proof, liking, authority, similarity, values matching – all encourage contagion & norming of ideas and behaviours.

Organised channels

Media
Recreational and affinity groups

Local councils (265 of 408 Districts + 8 unitaries have declared climate emergencies)

Professional & trade associations, unions

Schools, Universities and colleges

MPs > Westminster

Campaigns eg XR, FFF, SCN, P&P, 38 Degrees, FoE, Greenpeace, WWF, NFWI, WT, TWTs, 350

Bigger & strategic targets and innovations, internationalization, leverage on govt and corporates, aggregation

potential impact
CAN WE
DO IT?
YES
WE CAN