More companies are committing to sustainable practices but communicating the need to change to departments and staff can be difficult. Learn how to convey the need for sustainability while addressing obstacles that climate change communicators often face.
Individuals find it difficult to act on climate change\(^1\) because:

1. Stories of climate disasters feel distant and abstract.
2. Lack of actionable knowledge.
3. Behaviour changes in the short-term are difficult to make even when long-term benefits are evident.
4. High-level disasters seem impossible to avoid based on individual actions alone.
5. Clear direction and next steps are lacking from authorities.

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Tackling these obstacles is a major focus of climate change communicators. A 2022 study\(^2\) found that the most effective results came from combining four communication techniques:

**Make it Simple**
- Avoid technical terms and jargon
- Know the key points you want to communicate
- Use 1-2 relatable examples to illustrate points

**Make it Objective**
- Be passionate but avoid overly emotional language
- Hold broad, objective, and continuous discussions
- Avoid discussions that are forced or motivated by external agendas

**Make it Palatable**
- Don’t blame people for their habits
- Try to change people’s beliefs of issues, not their habits
- Ask what motivates people to change behaviour
- Connect change to human benefit vs. monetary benefit

**Make it Hopeful**
- Use empowering, positive messages
- Acknowledge progress people have made already
- Demonstrate the support you will provide moving forward

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**Which type of climate change communicator are you?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>The Scientist</th>
<th>The Activist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication style</td>
<td>Formal, straight to the point, distanced</td>
<td>Informal, personal, storytelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of persuasion</td>
<td>Facts</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typically emphasises</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>Attitude change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More concerned with</td>
<td>Presenting a balanced, unbiased view</td>
<td>Inciting action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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How to speak to your organisation and staff about sustainability and climate change.

Tailor information to specific demographics and/or departments

Frame the concept of change in their everyday actions:
  a. Day-to-day behaviours
  b. Motivations

Use tangible examples from everyday practices or processes

Highlight problem areas clearly and specifically

Offer simple, actionable steps people can take daily

Demonstrate the support you’ll provide as a leader

Learn more about sustainability concepts and the tools to navigate business, regulatory, and technical aspects in our new programme Leading in Sustainability and Climate Change: Lessons from the Little Green Dot.

References


Further Reading


Visit our website for more details or reach out to NUS at sustainability@nus.edu.sg for enquiries today.