

# SPEAK

Despite accelerating signs of climate chaos,  
the public resolve is not where it needs to be.

# TO

To reach more people, we need to stop telling  
our sustainability story, and start telling theirs.

# VALUES

# SPEAK TO VALUES

## What to do

### 1 Prioritise your audiences

Depending on the story you need to deliver, you may command the attention of vast crowds of friendly mindsets – or a stubborn core of opposition. Take stock of what, and who, you want your comms to move, and keep those priority audiences in mind.

#### Considerations

- You can't reach everyone: pinpoint segments you need to address to move your strategy forward, and focus there
- Set up a risk/reward matrix to determine the best audience weighting and emphasis for your comms programme
- Consider those you can reasonably hope to move – and who will be most disruptive if you don't bring them onside

### 2 Understand their beliefs

There are a host of models that define segments in various markets, and much work around values and beliefs in sustainability. Avail yourself of this work (we at RY can help). Use it to reach your audiences by connecting directly to what they value most.

#### Considerations

- Consult credible research on the segments you've determined are most important; commission your own research if time and budget allow
- Look for key values that motivate them fundamentally
- Determine the messages that will appeal to those audiences

Science has been leading the story of sustainability for a long time. But how far has that got us when it comes to public engagement?

#### The science of change

Behavioural research demonstrates that people approach questions around sustainability with deep bias, respond more strongly to emotional appeals, and frame their perspective around values and beliefs. It's time we applied the science of that insight and used it to reach more people.

Different types of people have very different values and beliefs. Some believe action should be taken for the collective. Some are all about individual freedoms. Others are triggered by stewardship of the natural world. And many, many more are influenced by social norms – doing what everyone around us is doing.

#### Finding common values

There's been significant research on values and beliefs in major markets like the US, EU and UK that give order and categorise this complex picture. There are commonalities and finding them is key to getting traction. There are also more options for targeting than ever – though this does get complex.

**One thing is clear. To align with values and beliefs, we must stop telling our sustainability story – and start telling theirs.**

### 3 Find common ground

With today's digital channels, deep segmentation is more possible than ever – but it's naturally more complicated to deploy and can be expensive. When you need to reach many segments, look for the common triggers among all the audiences you want to reach, and lean into those.

#### Considerations

- Where multiple segments must be reached, look for the narratives, credible voices, or cultural cues that appeal to them all
- Consider narratives of social unity among groups with shared experience – they're often very powerful drivers of influence

### 4 Frame it for your audience

The Green New Deal went nowhere. Too many who don't align with environmental action riled against the very name of the thing. The Inflation Reduction Act (which was almost identical in intent, though diminished in ambition) focused on the economy – and went forward a piece of industrial policy that's changing the US economy. It's all about framing. Sometimes, that means it's not directly about sustainability.

#### Considerations

- Look beyond sustainability for ways to frame your story – it's often sensible to lead with other, more immediate concerns (like risk to profits, or community) to galvanise support
- Cognitive biases have profound impact on how we hear and receive messages – get to know them. Classical rhetorical devices remain highly persuasive tools