



The Three Parts (and Several Steps) of Spreading the Word about the Cool Rochester Challenge

Part One – Get Comfortable with the Message

To deliver a message effectively, you need to understand that message. Spend some time familiarizing yourself with the basic elements of the story: climate change, energy efficiency, and the Cool Rochester Challenge.

- **Climate Change** – No one's asking you to be a scientist, but you should understand the underlying problem, and you should develop an effective story for describing it. Some studies suggest that the most effective image is a "heat trap": "Through our use of fossil fuels, humans are wrapping the planet in an ever-thickening blanket that traps heat; our Earth is already showing signs of heat stress."
- **Energy Efficiency** – Increasing energy efficiency means producing the same results with less; it is not the same as conserving energy (although it may produce that result), which connotes ascetic sacrifices. **Cool Rochester Challenge** – Cool Rochester's innovations are to provide (1) an open space for many different groups and organizations to address climate change together and (2) a mechanism for keeping track of the results. Familiarize yourself with the website. Know how it works. Understand that your final check on whether your message has been received is a pounds-of-CO₂ pledge at www.CoolRochester.org.

Two Cautions:

- **Focus on the challenge not on the science.**
- **Never debate a climate skeptic; just tell them where to find more information.**

Part Two – Rethink the Message for Each Audience

An effective message about a matter as complex as climate change must do five different things:

- 1) **Explain** the problem in a way that is immediately intelligible and compelling but not overwhelming.
- 2) Make the problem directly **relevant** to the lives of your listeners.
- 3) Provide your listeners with an **immediate and effective response** to the problem.
- 4) Demonstrate to your listeners that this **action can be taken** at a reasonable cost in time, energy, and/or funds (i.e. they can afford to take action).
- 5) Connect your listeners' response to a **larger, societal response** to the problem (i.e. make the listener feel that they are part of a larger effort to address the problem).

Some of these tasks clearly require a better understanding of one's listeners than others. General claims might work for the first (the heat trap), fourth (energy efficiency), and fifth (by inviting your listeners to take the Cool Rochester Challenge you are bringing them into the larger response to the problem of climate change) points. But to make a problem directly relevant, or to identify immediate steps that can be taken, one must know some specific things about the lives of one's listeners. (Where in the region do they live? Do they rent or own? If they own, do they own a condo, a coop, or a home?) Politics may be relevant as well. Not everyone is an environmentalist; try to identify the concerns (energy security, social justice) that matter most to them.

Here's a sample message that incorporates all five elements. (Note that points one and two have been reversed.)

- 1) Did you see the report last week that predicted more violent storms and yet an increased likelihood of drought for the mid-Atlantic region? And these are just the effects predicted for "manageable" climate change.
- 2) The CO₂ emissions from the fossil fuels we burn—for driving, for the electricity we use in our homes—are contributing to the heat trap that is producing these climate effects. We need to change course now.
- 3) The solution is to use energy more efficiently. When we use less energy to achieve the same result—for lighting, for heating and cooling, for transport, etc.—we reduce the amount of CO₂ we contribute to the heat trap. Here are several quick steps you can take to become more energy efficient: . . .
- 4) Many of these steps will save money—some almost immediately, others within 2-3 years. Striving for energy efficiency also spurs technological innovation and economic development. Being energy efficient also has health and lifestyle benefits. When we buy locally grown and organic foods, for example, we reduce food miles and support local farmers. (Note: When speaking to a business audience, you would highlight commercial benefits.)
- 5) 5) Cool Rochester Challenge is a community effort to reduce the Rochester regions CO₂ emissions by a billion pounds by the end of 2012. There are many ways you can contribute to this effort, but the best way for you to get started is by taking the energy challenge at www.CoolRochester.org.

Part Three – Use Your Networks to Find New Audiences for the Message

Here are two basic approaches:

- (1) Reach out through your friends and colleagues.
- (2) Canvas your neighborhood or local community.

Resources for Communicating Climate Change

Online Resources:

Campus Consortium for Environmental Excellence

Climate Change Communication: Tuning the Message

<http://www.c2e2.org/climatechange.htm>

Communicate Climate Change Initiative

<http://www.climatechallenge.gov.uk/communicate.html>

URL for downloading *Climate Change: Your Guide for Inspiring Action*

<http://www.climatechallenge.gov.uk/multimedia/guide.html>

The Frameworks Institute – Global Warming Project

<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/clients/climatemessage.shtml>

The Frameworks Institute's *Comprehensive Toolkit*

<http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/strategicanalysis/FramingPublicIssuesfinal.pdf>

Institute for Public Policy Research – Two Relevant Reports

- *Positive Energy: Harnessing People Power to Prevent Climate Change: Exec. Summary*

- *Warm Words: How Are We Telling the Climate Story and Can We Tell It Better?*

<http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publications.asp?title=&author=&pubdate=&policyarea=9&search=search>

Open Democracy

Miller, Jon – "Selling Climate Change" (05.22.05)

http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-climate_change_debate/sellingclimatechange_2533.jsp

Retallack, Simon – "Ankeloh & Beyond: Communicating Climate Change" (05.17.06)

http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-climate_change_debate/ankelohe_3550.jsp

Books:

De Rothschild, David. ***The Live Earth Global Warming Survival Handbook: 77 Essential Skills to Stop Climate Change***. Emmaus, PA: Rodale Books, 2007

Isham, Jonathan & Sissel Waage. ***Ignition: What You Can Do to Fight Global Warming and Spark a Movement***. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2007.

Moser, Susan & Lisa Dilling. ***Creating a Climate for Change: Communicating Climate Change and Facilitating Social Change***. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Sources for the Science

- **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change** – Fourth Assessment Report:
<http://www.ipcc.ch>
- The **EPA's** Climate Change Directory: <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/index.html>
- **Union of Concerned Scientists'** Science of Global Warming:
http://www.ucsusa.org/global_warming/science/science-of-global-warming.html
- **World Health Organization** on Global Environmental Change:
<http://www.who.int/globalchange/en/>
- "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We're Not Wrong" – **Naomi Oreskes**
 - Article: <http://www.ametsoc.org/atmospolicy/documents/Chapter4.pdf>
 - PowerPointPresent:
<http://www.ametsoc.org/atmospolicy/Presentations/Oreskes%20Presentation%20or%20Web.pdf>

Tools for Dealing with Climate Skeptics

- **Grist's** How to Talk to a Climate Skeptic: <http://gristmill.grist.org/skeptics>
- **RealClimate's** Responses to Common Contrarian Arguments:
<http://www.realclimate.org/index.php/archives/2004/12/index/>
- **Royal Society of London's** Simple Guide to Climate Change Controversies:
<http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/page.asp?id=6229>
<http://www.royalsoc.ac.uk/downloaddoc.asp?id=4085> (pdf file)

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