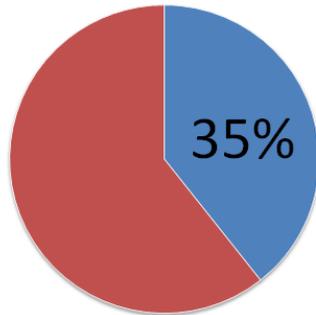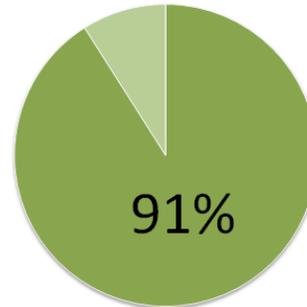**Survey Question**

"The website concisely and easily communicates the organization's technologies."

Existing Website

35%

Consumer-Centric Website

91%

- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

How to Create Powerful, Effective Change

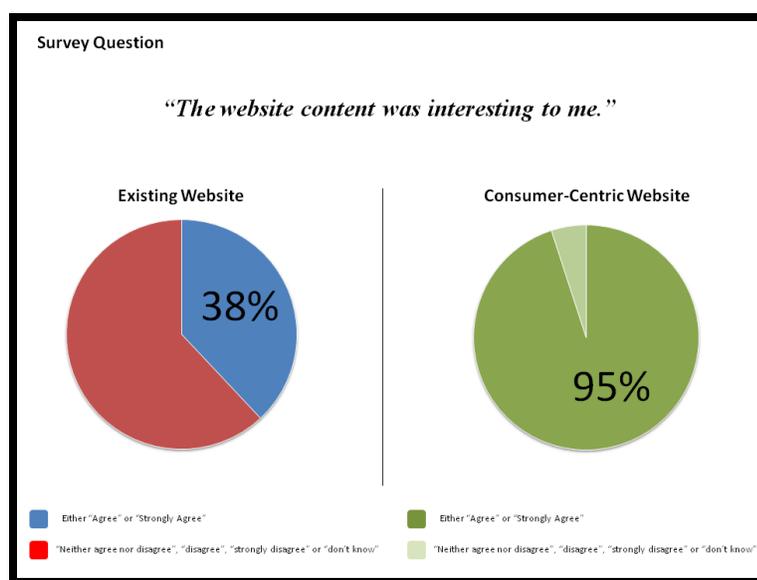## CASE STUDY OF WEBSITE COMMUNICATIONS FOR A GREEN TECHNOLOGY COMPANY

this CHANGES everything!

Questions?
Email Allison Frederick at Info@AllisonFrederick.com,
www.AllisonFrederick.com

*T*his report is written based on the survey results of two website comparisons. One website was the organization's existing business website. This organization produces highly technical machinery that can be applied to a number of pressing environmental and energy-efficiency problems. The second website was a test website prepared by GRIPS, LLC (GReen Idea Protection Strategies). The second site was designed with Customer-Centric Focus (as described in this report). The purpose of the survey was to measure the website visitor's comprehension of the organization's products and services and to measure whether the website visitor was motivated to share information about this organization to others. This report also includes valuable communication approaches and potential environmental consumer psychology which can be applied across a number of industries.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Survey Question

"The website content was interesting to me."

Existing Website	Consumer-Centric Website
38%	95%

■ Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
■ "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

■ Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
■ "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

*C*entral to creating effective change requires understanding how an organization is perceived by industry outsiders and often requires the utilization of existing tools in a different manner than in the past. The solicitation of industry outsiders does not imply that these parties are not potential customers or investors. On the contrary, they include key decision makers such as corporate financial executives, board members, grant approvers, municipal officials, politicians, corporate procurement officers, and green technology advocates. These parties all have either created or have access to established platforms to assist an organization in "spreading the word." The term industry outsider also includes the general public who stand to recognize that an organization can provide solutions to energy and environmental issues important to them. Reaching these audiences through carefully crafted (and low maintenance) communication messages that focus on the **"benefits"** of an organization's technology as opposed to focusing on **"how"** an organization's technology works lies at the core of our recommendations for creating powerful, effective change.

*T*he initial conclusion of our preliminary assessment for how an organization can create more effective change and more easily achieve their corporate goals appears to be a very manageable solution, which would enable an organization's staff to work less but create greater positive impact in less time.

*A*s an organization transitions from a research-based company to a product-based company, it is important that its current communication messages transition as well. Industry insiders can likely connect to the existing communication style an organization employs; however, survey results suggest that while scientists and engineers may claim they understand an organization technology, they likely fail to forge a real connection to the an organization technologies that might lead to a sale, purchase, or contract. We contend that this disconnect stems from a lack of concise, benefit-oriented communication which leads to prospective customers failing to truly comprehend of the value, versatility, and potential impact an organization's technology offers.

METHODOLOGY: Survey Participants

*O*ur survey results suggest that clear messages connecting an organization's technology with having a tangible impact on "hot-button" energy and environmental issues can be a highly-leveraged vehicle for an organization to use to create powerful change consistent with its corporate objectives and the passionate personal objectives of the company owners. Our report is based on our direct communications with the organization featured in this study, data and insights derived from our survey participants, and our cumulative, communications business experience.

*W*e generated a 22% response rate to our survey (28 out of 127 participants). Soliciting a larger pool or participants was not within the time constraints and resource limitations of this project. In an effort to comparably represent the level of education and interest in technology that your current stakeholders have, we deliberately solicited engineers, scientists, and other formally-educated people to take the survey. Forty-six percent of the survey takers hold a masters or doctorate degree.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

We propose a consistent, leveraged approach to an organization's external communication by addressing three foundational prospective customer values:

1. Corporate "WIIFM" ("What's In It For Me?") – Reduced risk and Increased Return on Investment (ROI)
2. Public "WIIFM" – End-consumer benefit and grass-roots initiative stimulation
3. Message Repeatability – Personification of an organization's personality creating a solution-oriented, repeatable "focal point"

RECOMMENDATION ONE: The Organization's Benefits

Corporate "WIIFM" ("What's In It For Me?") – Reduced risk and Increased ROI

The first step to creating effective, leveraged change (or closing a sale) is to reduce risk or the perception of risk. Most people are risk adverse and procurement executives are looking for the "sure thing" – especially executives who have worked their way up in an organization by behaving conservatively. They are used to making decisions that may superficially appear bold and innovative, but deep down they have strong confidence in their "safe bet" of producing increased ROI. If you hear people say, "If your technology is so great, why haven't I heard of it?" what they are really saying is, "Why should I risk my career and my ROI by making a decision to go with your company's less well-known technology?"

Business marketing author, Harry Beckwith contends that "people do not look to make the superior choice; rather they want to avoid making a bad choice."[1] Additionally, they may choose the technology that they believe will have the fewest problems (for them personally), not necessarily the technology that is considered the best.[2] While it is quite possible that an organization's technologies are likely to be the *best choice*, sometimes the word "best" is simultaneously associated with other words of perceived risk such as "expensive" or "new." The word "new" is often associated with perceived risk because of potential "unknown" variables or a lack of "predictability." Beckwith further supports his argument regarding risk-adverse decision making when he quotes executives as saying "After all, no one is ever fired for hiring IBM."[3]

Selling the Invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing (1997), by Harry Beckwith, page 92
Ibid, page 93
Ibid, page 158

Another way to address this question and to mitigate perceived risk in decision makers' minds is to more prominently and more comprehensively boast case study examples and testimonials. Some of the feedback we received from the survey analysis was that there were no examples of successful case studies, which made the claims about an organization's technology seem less credible. If such case studies are present on the existing an organization's website, they were not prominently exhibited, difficult to locate or failed to answer the question: "So what?" Properly presenting successful case studies online builds confidence, trust, and prestige, reduces the perception of risk, and allows prospects to "get to know you" anonymously, on their own terms, and during their own time. It also communicates to prospects who may not choose to directly correspond you even though they may be an integral part of the decision-making process. This is especially true for board members. All of these factors mitigate the perception of risk.

RECOMMENDATION TWO: Public Benefits
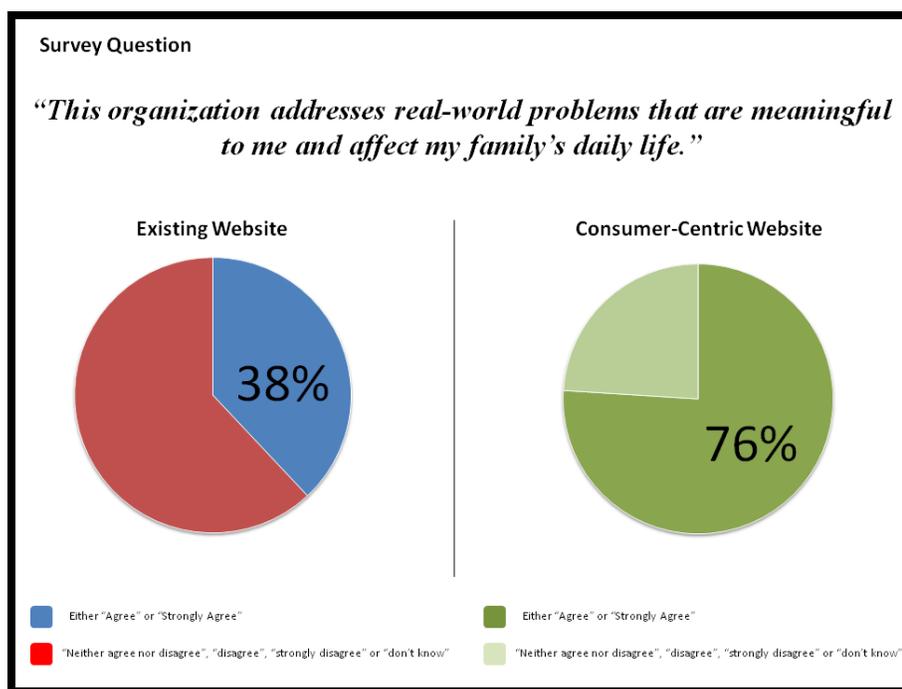
Public "WIIFM" – End-consumer benefit and grass-roots initiative stimulation

One of the best ways to demonstrate to others that you have solutions for their problems is to not talk about you and your company, but rather to talk about what the prospective customer or end-consumer already cares about and then fit your solution into their existing viewpoint. Communicating in this relevant way can create an extremely strong bond between you and your prospective customers, partners, and the public; and it stands to catalyze consumer-driven of grass-root initiatives.

*W*e attempted to create a preliminary connection with prospects by taking "hot-button" energy and environmental issues people are concerned with and showing them how an organization's technology can be applied to those issues to contribute to the solution. The topics we focused on were: 1) climate change, 2) municipal power generation, 3) national security (as it relates to energy production), 4) fuel flexibility in passenger vehicles, 5) cleaner commercial trucks, and 6) wind and solar generation. In an effort to create messages about an organization's technology in a way that can inspire people of a company or the general public to proudly tell others about the work they are involved with or would like to be involved with, we attempted to draft emotional descriptions of these six issues and then indicate how an organization could address the respective problem. This strategy proved quite effective as illustrated by our survey results.

Survey Question

"This organization has a solution to elements of our energy crisis."

Existing Website

52%

Consumer-Centric Website

90%

- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"
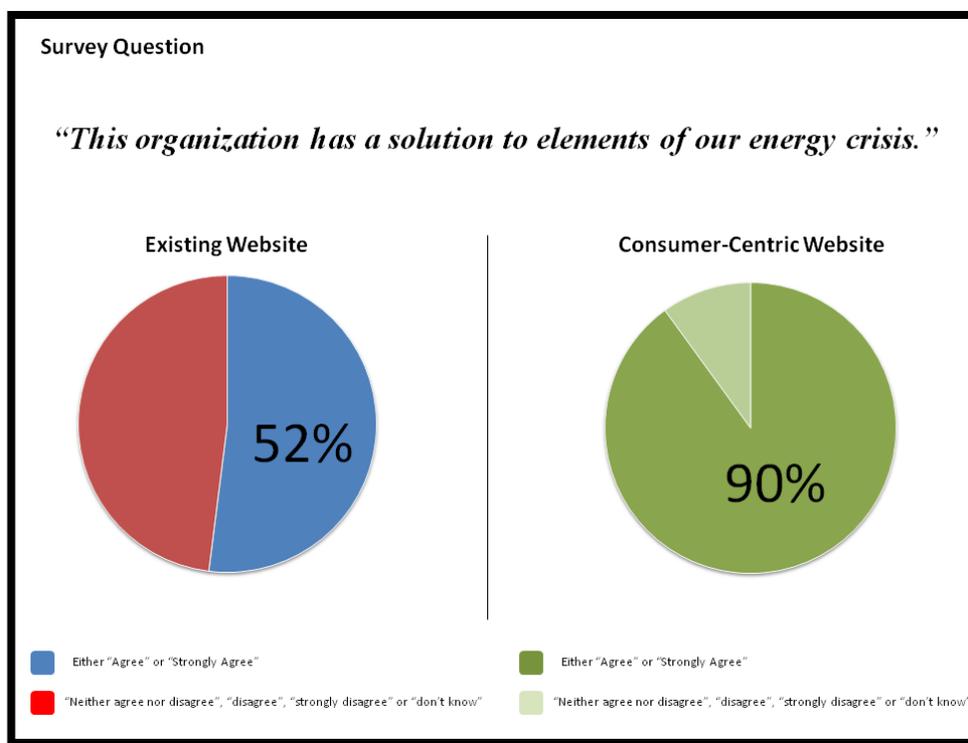
*A*dding some limited discussion of the "how" behind an organization's technology may be valuable to some readers of the materials in helping them truly understand an organization's technologies are a viable solution. However, most industry outsiders simply do not need to understand the working details of a technology to appreciate its value and desire its implementation – just as I do not understand how my laptop computer works, but I still appreciate it and benefit from it daily. Addressing how much "how" should be included in an organization's external communications requires a careful analysis of the needs of the majority of website visitors. Another feature to develop includes "Call to Action" messages.

RECOMMENDATION THREE: Message Repeatability

*I*t is difficult to get excited about a corporation. It is far easier to connect with and get excited about an individual. Apple, Inc. does not have a best-selling book out right now, Steve Jobs does. Similarly, when the economy is bad, the President becomes the focal point of blame, even if the Presidency actually has little influence over the course of an economy. Nonetheless, humans prefer to connect with issues based on singularities (i.e. individuals).

*O*ne way to provide an organization with a personality for people to connect with is by creating an engaging "About Us" page that included pictures of key organizational leaders with other industry influencers. The intent behind such a presentation of data and accolades was to turn the common "Why haven't I heard of you?" objection around on the skeptics to say, "Gee, I don't know why you haven't heard of an organization, after all, look at everyone else who has!"

A company may have a superior product, innovation or service but if the company doesn't communicate as well as their inferior competition (or their brand is not well-known or trusted), they may find the sales process a long, arduous road for each and every prospective client. Beckwith explains that in the "plight of the typical non-branded service" the selling company may require multiple follow-up presentations with one key person after another of the buying company; often spending more time and money in pursuit of the sale than the deal may even be worth. Beckwith continues, "Branded services rarely face that expense (and delay). In fact, prospects routinely choose brand-name services virtually sight unseen."[4] Creating a long-term, low-maintenance, and most importantly – _repeatable_ – "Buzz Campaign," bolsters the brand to shorten the sales process.

Survey Question

"*After reviewing the websites, I'm confident that I could easily and accurately repeat to others what the organization does in a social setting such as at a party.*"

Existing Website — 26%
Consumer-Centric Website — 73%

Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
"Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

Selling the Invisible: A Field Guide to Modern Marketing (1997), by Harry Beckwith, page 156

*"The single biggest problem with communication
is the illusion that it has taken place."*

- George Bernard Shaw (1856-1950)

*C*ommunication is a continuous process with multiple opportunities to fully engage a prospect and plenty more opportunities to inadvertently and unnecessarily alienate a valuable partner or advocate. Many business owners often find themselves struggling to devote time to effectively market and communicate their businesses because they are often so busy simply "trying to keep the doors open." However, without first giving some attention to these important elements, business owners often over-work themselves for years because they failed to automate their communications to work for them from day one.

*T*he right communication strategy can create effective change with less commitment of time, money, and other resources. The right communication strategy can also create a buzz among potential customers and establish a solid foundation to extend the reach of a business to a broader audience. Not only do we want the masses talking about an organization, but we want them to understand how an organization has solutions for many everyday problems faced by nearly all of us. If people understand the <u>benefits</u> of the technologies rather than focusing on the <u>how</u> of the technology, we are confident that more and more prospects will be willing and able to support, champion, and work with an organization.

*O*ur analysis strongly suggests that a modest-to-moderate adjustment to the communication style of an organization would stand to generate substantially more prospective clients, partners and social "buzz" around an organization's technology and its larger scale implementation. This adjustment requires a mental shift in "style" and "focus" of the existing communication efforts.

SAMPLING OF SURVEY RESULTS

Survey Question

"I care more for the environment after visiting this organization's website."

Existing Website

11%

Consumer-Centric Website

45%

- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"
- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

Survey Question

"I am likely to tell others about this organization based on my experience on the website."

Existing Website

21%

Consumer-Centric Website

55%

- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"
- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

Survey Question

"This organization has a solution to many of our environmental problems."

Existing Website

50%

Consumer-Centric Website

85%

- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"
- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

Survey Question

"The website moved me emotionally and inspires me to get involved in renewable energy."

Existing Website

4%

Consumer-Centric Website

24%

- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"
- Either "Agree" or "Strongly Agree"
- "Neither agree nor disagree", "disagree", "strongly disagree" or "don't know"

Survey Question

Please rank in order, from 1 to 6, which applications of this organization's technology that are most important to you.

20%, 18%, 18%, 17%, 14%, 13%

- Climate Change
- Commercial Vehicle Pollution
- Passenger Vehicle Pollution
- Municipal Power Generation
- Wind & Solar Energies
- National Security

Survey Question

Survey respondents' industry

24%, 32%, 11%, 7%, 11%, 14%

- Legal / Scientist
- Engineering / Technical
- Marketing
- Finance
- Non-profit Management
- Undisclosed