

The Energy Efficiency Message: An Extreme Makeover

Green continued to be trendy and climate change has become a focus of concern in households and statehouses around the world. Private industry and the Federal government have driven a dramatic expansion of alternatives in the energy sector. Yet the general public remains uncommitted to the cheapest alternative - saving energy. In response, Livingston Energy Innovations is reaching out to leading behavior and marketing experts who can transform mainstream perceptions and behavior around energy efficiency. We propose to launch a nationwide campaign that builds excitement and desirability around efficiency, similar to campaigns for breakthrough products like the iPhone and iPad. Success can dramatically enhance the impact of existing and proposed energy efficiency programs.

The current challenge

Consumers remain unconvinced of the value of energy efficiency, in part due to skewed perceptions of its true cost. For example, the general public believes that an energy efficient building has an up-front cost premium of nearly 20%, while the actual premium is a mere 0-3% on average.¹

Consumers equate energy efficiency with sacrificing choice, function, comfort, convenience, and aesthetics. Efficiency still bears a stigma from flawed, first-generation versions of products like compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) and electronic ballasts. Despite subsequent technology advances, many skeptics still associate saving energy with the reduced function and high initial cost of those early devices. For these doubters, the lower energy bills, longer product life, and environmental benefits promised by even the latest efficiency advances do not outweigh the perceived drawbacks.

Breaking through the barriers

We see tremendous opportunities to correct these misconceptions. It is time to forge a new approach that guides consumers toward understanding wise energy efficiency choices as appealing, effective, and cost-efficient...

By building consumer awareness and understanding of energy efficiency technologies. The public's skepticism towards energy efficiency stems from a lack accessible, relevant, digestible information. A successful messaging campaign will provide clear and concise information through appropriate channels and at times when consumers need it, and can therefore use and assimilate it.

By understanding and influencing consumer opinions of energy efficiency, including the misperceptions of cost, sacrifice, complexity, and inconvenience. These impressions originate both from a lack of information as well as the disappointing past performance of energy-savings devices such as first-generation occupancy sensors. Repairing these misconceptions requires a

¹ Kats, G., *Greening Our Built World: Costs, Benefits, and Strategies*. 2010, Island Press: Washington, D.C. p. 8-13.

directed effort to uncover user needs, values, and desires, and to use this information to guide positive communications and the user-friendly design of new products and services.

By changing behavior. Habits are difficult to change. Ideally, we design energy efficient solutions using insights about consumer needs and habits, we develop products to fit consumers' lives, and we therefore eliminate the perception of sacrifice. But some efficiency solutions will require different habits. We can help facilitate these changes by providing consumers with easy steps toward energy efficiency goals that also offer other attractive benefits.

By uniting good products with good messaging. Neither a great product nor a great marketing campaign will succeed on its own. A great product with weak marketing will fail. Great marketing for a flawed product will not only fail but have lasting negative repercussions. To succeed, a marketing campaign must have a strong message and promote and support solid energy efficiency products, services, and activities.

Transforming the message

Our nationwide energy efficiency messaging campaign will be simple, specific, personal, and light-hearted. In addition, we must:

Tune the delivery. We need to understand our audience and connect with them on multiple levels. To do this, we must segment our audience, and reach out to them with customized messages through the appropriate channels, such as web, social media, email, and energy bills, as well as TV, radio, and print media.

Make it interactive. We propose to use a range of proven and emerging social media platforms to encourage people to share and respond to messages about energy efficiency. These bi-directional interactions can generate both enhanced consumer awareness and valuable customer insights to inform products, services, and messages.

Revolutionizing energy efficiency

An appealing message carries as much weight as an effective messaging strategy. What makes a product, service, or concept attractive? It must address the user's needs, values, and desires. Like the iPhone and iPad's powerful marketing campaigns that underscored an array of compelling qualities, an effective energy efficiency campaign must highlight benefits that matter to consumers, such as:

- **Aesthetics** – energy efficient products should please the eye. For example, LED lamps look sleek and stylish, and flat-panel computer screens look streamlined and modern, with the added benefit of using less desk space.
- **Comfort, health, & safety** - energy efficient solutions should address the well-being of consumers and their families. Daylight can reduce eyestrain, and greener buildings can offer better indoor air quality.

- **Cost & value** – energy efficiency measures should deliver cost-effective benefits. Occupancy and daylight sensors can adjust lighting systems automatically to save energy and money.
- **Ease & Personalization** – energy efficiency solutions should fit with a customer’s location, situation, and socio-economic status. When set appropriately, programmable thermostats provide a high degree of customization for region and season, save time and effort, and deliver a quick payback.
- **Empowerment** – energy efficiency solutions should provide an array of choices that allow anyone to do something positive for the environment according to their level of commitment. Rebates and tax credits provide incentives for low-cost actions like weather-stripping on up to big-ticket items such as efficient furnaces and central air conditioning units.
- **Fun** – energy efficiency measures should provide enjoyment to those who implement them and for everyone who encounters them. Interactive websites, such as energy use dashboards for the home, can provide visual, real-time feedback to help users understand and make better choices about their energy consumption decisions.
- **Productivity** – energy-efficient solutions should enhance working and academic environments. Efficient lighting and air conditioning can improve comfort and morale, leading to improved business output and sales, and better student performance.
- **Status** – energy efficient products should have a cachet that enhances a customer’s self-image, rather than seeming like a sacrifice. As with solar panels and hybrid vehicles, LED lighting shows promise of becoming a status symbol and a highly visible display of environmental commitment.
- **Sustainability** – energy efficiency delivers lasting environmental benefits that one can equate to tangible concepts such as taking cars off the road. But most consumers do not consider energy efficiency as a personal priority. To break through the barriers that have hampered past energy efficiency campaigns, effective communications must emphasize the range of other benefits outlined above.

Making it happen

Livingston Energy Innovations (LEI) brings decades of expertise to demand-side management strategy, assessment, and education. Our network of expert partners can apply their experience, skill, and connections to craft a sophisticated, national messaging strategy that can revolutionize the way the public thinks about energy efficiency.

To support or get involved in the development and launch of the Energy Efficiency - Extreme Makeover campaign, contact Livingston Energy Innovations at jonathan@livingston-ei.com or 415.383.7480.

For more information about LEI, please visit our website at <http://www.livingston-ei.com>.