

# Strategic Communications Playbook

Tips for Building Credibility & Authenticity in Your Communications



Warren Buffett once said, “It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you’ll do things differently.” This sentiment underscores the importance of every interaction, decision, and communication in shaping a brand’s trust and credibility. To foster lasting trust, leaders must prioritize authenticity in their messaging and actions.



Consider the tips below as you develop your communications strategy.

DO	AVOID
<p><b>Communicate the Business Case</b></p> <p>Understand and consistently communicate the full range of benefits that make up the business case for corporate action. The business case will have multiple elements, and communication may have to be adjusted to focus on elements of most interest to key stakeholders.</p>	<p>Focusing exclusively on values, which can be perceived as polarizing and political.</p>
<p><b>Establish Communication Cadence</b></p> <p>Establish a regular communications cadence that makes sense for your key stakeholders. Consistency provides a regular flow of information and helps build trust and reliability.</p>	<p>Only communicating during emergencies or when you need something from your audience.</p>
<p><b>Use Consistent Style and Tone</b></p> <p>Be consistent in style and tone to create a recognizable brand image and reinforce key decisions.</p>	<p>Using an inconsistent style or tone can weaken your brand identity and create confusion.</p>

DO	AVOID
<p><b>Tailor Language to Audience</b></p> <p>Tailor your language to resonate with key audiences when appropriate. For example, the way you communicate transition plans and goals to investors should differ from how you present them to consumers.</p>	<p>Taking a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to messaging, as it minimizes impact and may alienate key audiences.</p>
<p><b>Choose Right Messenger and Method</b></p> <p>Carefully consider both the messenger and the approach when planning outreach. Is the chosen messenger appropriate for your target audience? Are there language or cultural factors that should be considered when developing content? Which outreach tactics offer the greatest impact with the fewest barriers? Thoughtful planning in these areas leads to more authentic and effective interactions.</p>	<p>Selecting an inappropriate messenger or outreach method that fails to connect with (or even reach) your target audience.</p>
<p><b>Build Trust Through Transparency</b></p> <p>Be transparent about your efforts, even when they change. Transparency demonstrates honesty, openness, and accountability, allowing people to trust your actions, decisions, and information.</p>	<p>Withholding or delaying transparency can erode trust and credibility. Consumers prefer transparency over perfection.</p>
<p><b>Communicate Interdependencies</b></p> <p>Be honest about external challenges or obstacles that may affect your sustainability efforts, such as policies or regulations. Acknowledging these factors upfront helps manage expectations and reduces potential pushback by clarifying what is within your control. Being candid early on will make communicating any potential missed targets or changes easier. (See figure below for example of how to identify interdependencies)</p>	<p>Mislead through selective omission or greenwashing to compensate for factors beyond your control.</p>
<p><b>Provide Proper Context</b></p> <p>Implement gradual, well-communicated shifts to ensure clarity and consumer trust. Provide context for changes, share progress updates, and engage stakeholders to foster transparency and alignment.</p>	<p>Making sudden changes with little context can be disruptive and confusing.</p>
<p><b>Provide a Clear Path Forward When Plans Shift</b></p> <p>Include details on the steps or actions that will be taken to get back on track when explaining a missed target. Simply reaffirming a long-term goal after missing or rolling back a short-term milestone—without providing context or a path forward—can come across as a “trust me” strategy. To maintain credibility, offer specifics about what will change, why stakeholders should still have confidence in the plan, and how progress will be measured moving forward.</p>	<p>Not providing a clear path forward after missing a target can lead to mistrust and concern.</p>

## Example: BHP's Climate Transition Action Plan

This example illustrates how a company identifies its interdependencies across all three scopes of emissions—what it can control and what it cannot. For factors beyond your control, consider how to navigate them: Can you partner with an organization to drive outcomes? Can you provide thought leadership to help shape the conversation? Identifying this information upfront can help manage expectations and put you in a better position should you need to communicate missed targets or changes.

