CORPORATE NET ZERO TRANSITION

Strategic Communications Playbook

Guidelines for When to Minimize Pro-Active Communications

It's worth repeating that using a lower volume doesn't mean avoiding the work. Instead, it means focusing on essential foundational efforts—preparing, strategizing, and ensuring internal alignment—so that when the time is right, you're ready to turn up the volume and communicate effectively. It also includes quietly rolling out changes (e.g., to your website) to ensure consistency in your efforts and brand before taking a more public stance. Otherwise, you risk scrambling to catch up just when it matters most.

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The following are guidelines to consider when you may not want to shine a spotlight on your efforts:

- **Avoid premature scrutiny:** If initiatives are early-stage, experimental, or the organization is not ready to demonstrate concrete outcomes, going public too soon can invite criticism for lack of results and/or it could invite external pressures that the organization is not ready to tackle.

- **Avoid accusations of deflection:** If the organization is facing unrelated reputational challenges (e.g., lawsuits, labor disputes, regulatory investigations), amplifying sustainability work could be seen as a deflection or public relations tactic. Consider waiting until after the dust settles before communicating your efforts.

- **Consider the political environment:** When laws, regulations, or political attitudes toward sustainability—especially ESG, climate policy, or social impact issues—are volatile or polarized, organizations may choose to keep their efforts low-profile to avoid getting caught in political crossfire or being perceived as taking a controversial stance. This makes it critical to build a strong business case and communicate the full story—emphasizing how sustainability initiatives benefit the company's bottom line, not just the environment. Focusing solely on environmental gains can unintentionally draw attention or politicize an organization that wishes to stay neutral.