



# Sustainability communications: the known universe

Communications Camp

April 12, 2012

# uncertain terrain ahead



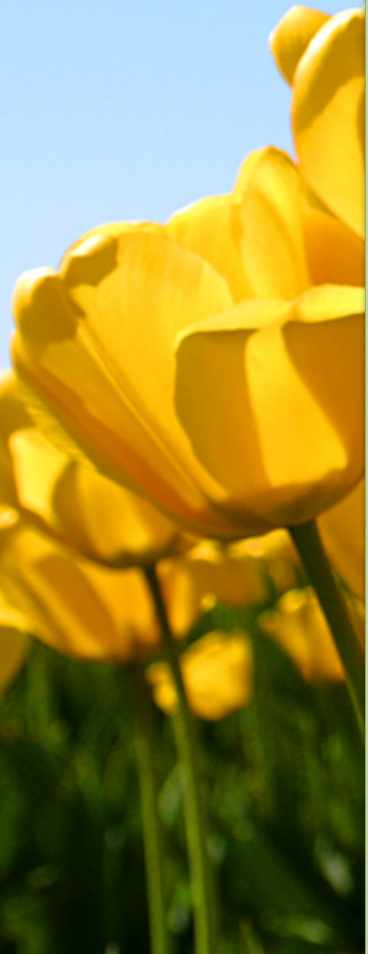
## a new model

- Based on research
- Moving from awareness to behavior change
- Messaging based on local community values
- Integration of communications, programs, public involvement and CBSM

# history of sustainability/climate messaging

- 1970s: Earth Day, local pollution
- 1980s: Greenpeace introduces climate
- 1990s: Rio Earth Summit, “sustainability” & sustainable development
- 2000s: Inconvenient Truth, scientists speak out
- 2007: IPCC report
- 2009: ClimateGate
- 2011: Climate and sustainability fall in priority for public

# from point source to global

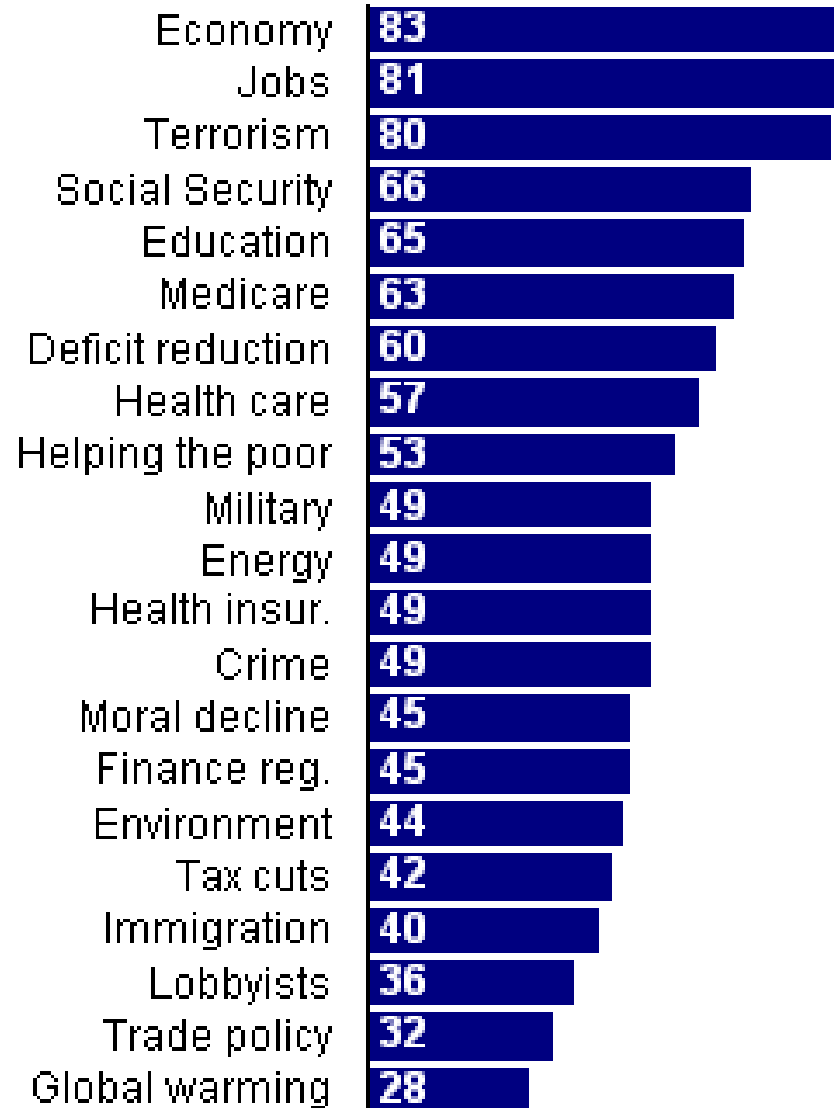


# 2006: green goes mainstream



## Top Priorities for 2010

*% rating each a "top priority"*



# trust in public institutions

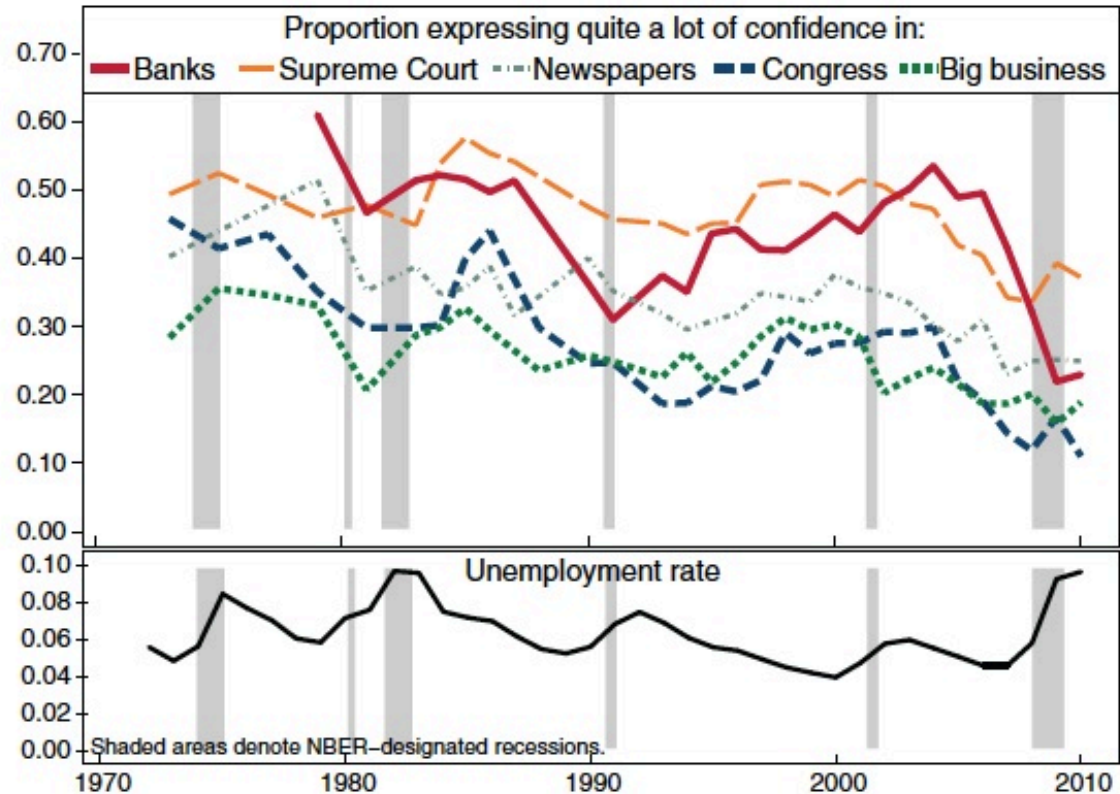


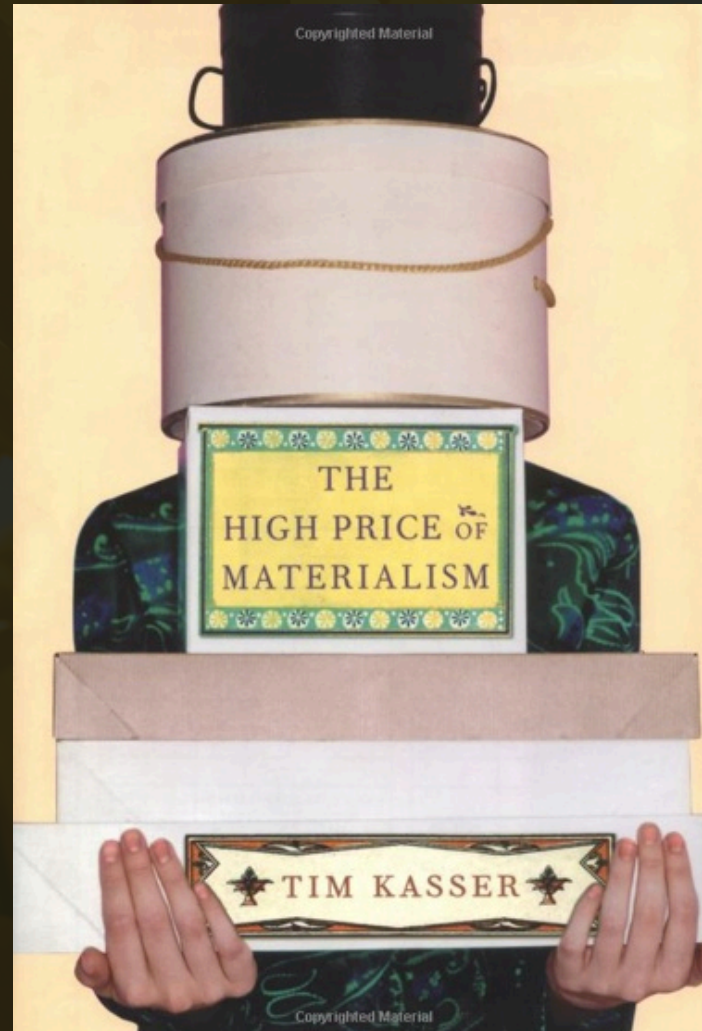
FIGURE 1. CONFIDENCE IN INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES



# behavior: the “say-do” gap

- Structural constraints
- Single-action bias
- Threats to values and self-interests
- The “free rider” effect
- Emotional response

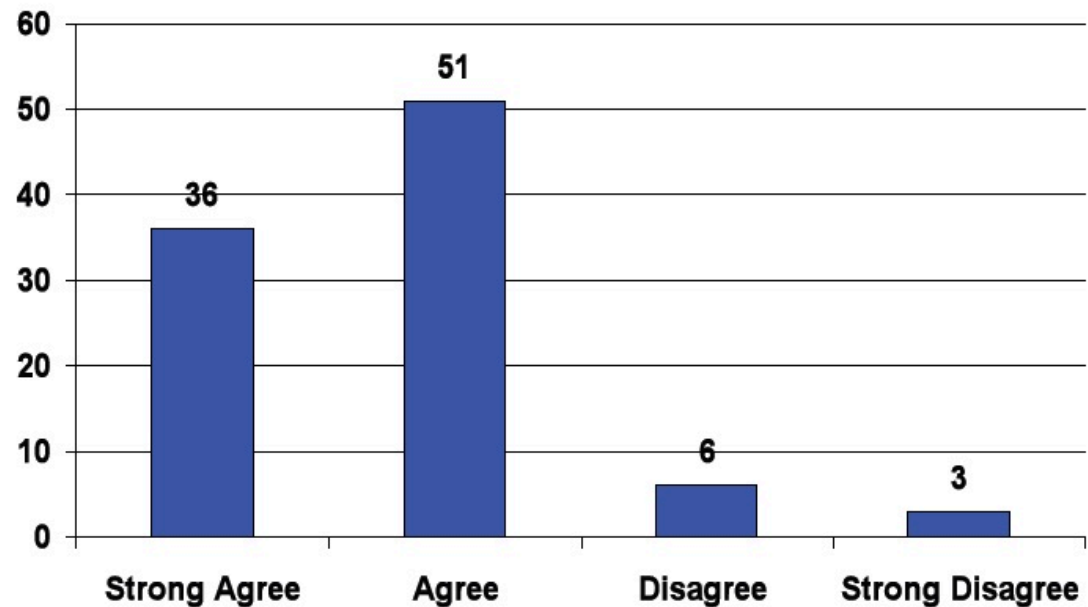
# focusing on consumption



# Bowerman: broad support for reduced consumption

**Our country would be a better place if we all consumed less.**

PI - March 2008 n=400



**“The measure of intelligence is  
the ability to change.”**

**Albert Einstein**

# best practices

- Do your research
- Make solutions local and relevant and urgent
- Connect environment with the economy
- Focus on quality of people's lives

# best practices, continued

- Align messaging with supportive structural change
- Tap into people's identities
- Communicate through trusted, local sources and reach people through their existing networks
- Celebrate local successes

# go beyond the media buy

- Move beyond traditional media campaigns
- Leverage peer-to-peer influence
- Reach people when they're in the right frame of mind
- Make invisible behavior visible

# values-based messaging

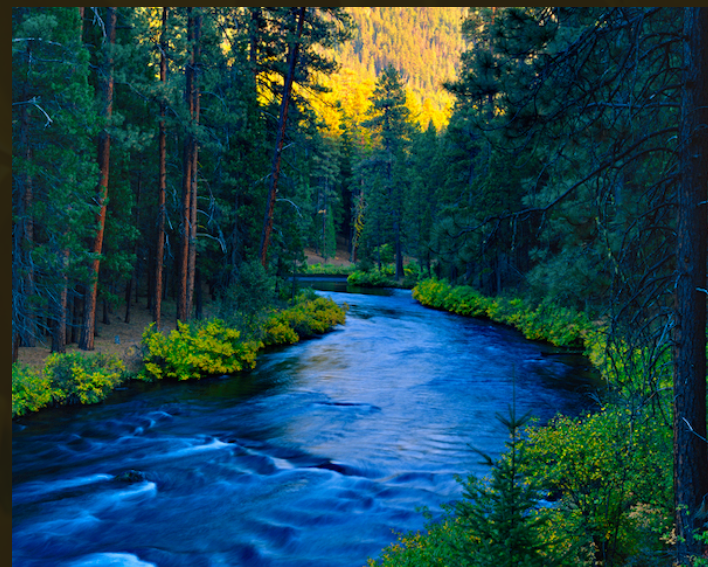
- Well-crafted messages are those that invoke common ground in your audience
- Finding the right values means you need research
- Find the most effective spokespeople (hint: maybe not government)



# examples of local value- based messaging

## value: clean air & water

“Oregonians want to protect our clean air and clean water, and livable communities give us a way to build great neighborhoods while reducing pollution.”



# examples of local value-based messaging

## value: community

“Livable communities allow us to live close to where we work, go to school and shop, making our lives simpler. We will have more time to spend with family and friends—and less time spent alone in our cars.”



# examples of local value-based messaging

## value: health

“Livable communities provide more ways for people to walk, bike and take transit as they go about their daily lives, helping us get more exercise and improving our kids’ health.”



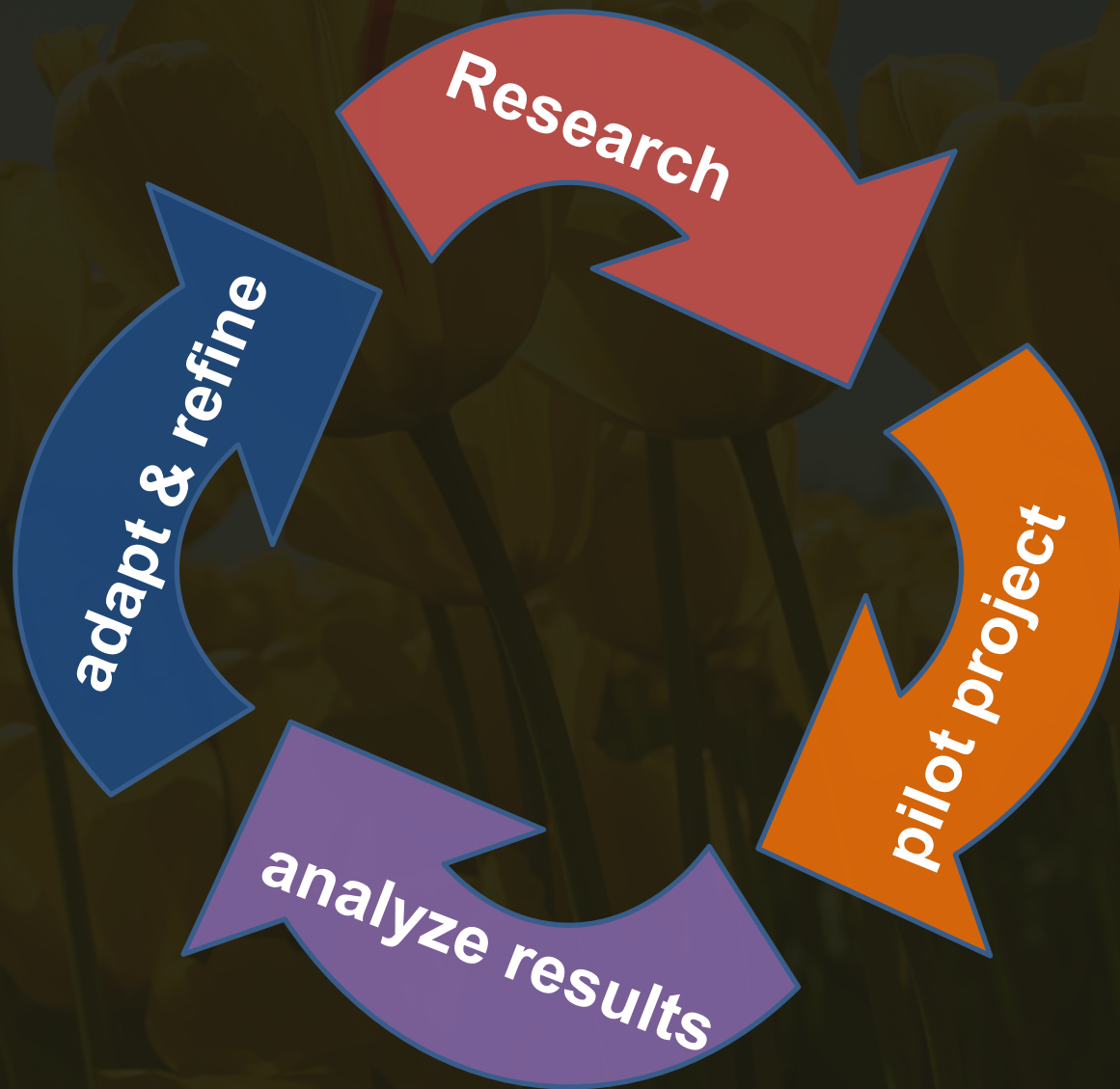
# examples of local value-based messaging

## value: economic growth

“Our community drives less and spends less on gas, cars and car repairs. Our money stays in the local community helping local businesses and creating local jobs, instead of leaving the state.”



# iterative communications



# blend old and new



## data gaps

- Better ways to measure quality of life rather than quantity of stuff (rethink GDP)
- More research into the willingness of people to buy less and do more
- From Green Dividend to “Neighborhood Dividend”

# communications for behavior change

- The days of large, widespread campaigns are over
- Do your research (values, barriers)
- Align with structural change
- Partner with community groups
- Integrate digital with grassroots
- Use CBSM
- Run pilot projects
  - Pilot tests before take to scale
  - Test your results and refine your campaign as you go



# terra incognita?





[www.brinkcomm.com](http://www.brinkcomm.com)

