



Communication & Marketing Strategies

COMMUNICATION & MARKETING STRATEGIES

Overview

Data shows employees and consumers care about the social and environmental impact of what they buy. You can read more about it in [The Business Case for Sustainability](#) section of this guide.

Rule # 1 is Honesty. There is no perfect path to sustainable fashion, and nobody is totally sustainable. Consumers know this too. Many companies choose not to talk publicly about sustainability (even some companies with big sustainability programs) because they don't want to communicate progress until achieving "perfect sustainability performance." They fear accusations of 'greenwashing' as well as public dissatisfaction with their efforts.

(According to the Okala guide, Greenwashing is making claims that lack real merit or misrepresent facts about environmental performance – do not do it.) ***The industry needs a new paradigm where perfect is not the enemy of good.*** An approach that works well for many brands is to be transparent and honest about sustainability efforts, both successes AND failures. Conscious consumers are good at cutting through the greenwash, but don't forget their end goal is to support you- and haters always gonna hate!

Sustainability shouldn't be a thing we need to point out, it should be inherent to all design. But the thing is, it's not yet. We hope that you will choose to talk about sustainability with your customers instead of not. Engage them in the conversation. Since CFDA designers play an important role in influencing culture, everyone talking about sustainability would lead to a shift in consumer attitudes. We'd argue that honesty and brand story matter more to consumers than sustainability, so just be honest and ask your customers to join you in your journey. Tell the truth. Include your customers in your sustainability journey, and they will root you on!

In this section you will find some suggestions and examples of sustainability communication and marketing. But remember that each brand's sustainability story is unique. Make your sustainability story personal.

MELISSA JOY MANNING

“We all have inherent power. However we want to use our voices, we can all *effect change*. It’s just a matter of standing up and talking about what you believe in.”

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Internal Communication

Internal communication is just as important (*if not more*) than external communication. Sharing your sustainability strategy and goals with your team is important. We've talked about it throughout this entire guide, including The Business Case for Sustainability, Create a Company Sustainability Strategy, Sustainable Buildings & Offices, and more. Why? Internal communication unites the organization on sustainability.

Only when information is communicated through the entire organization can sustainability become an integral part of the company's core business, values, strategic objectives and, ultimately, DNA. Companies need to share leadership's commitment, explain the approach, strategy and targets, and set transparent expectations.

You should consider your suppliers to be part of your extended team and extend the same resources to them. Make it personal!



TOOLS & RESOURCES

Examples

In their words:

[“An Update on Microfiber Pollution” from Patagonia](#)

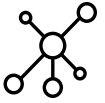
In this post Patagonia talks about a big problem they have not solved and what they're doing about it (microplastic ocean pollution from washing synthetic textiles (such as nylon, acrylic or polyester)).

[Mara Hoffman](#)

“There are options and alternatives in this industry to manufacture responsibly. In 2015, we began learning and uncovering these possibilities and chose to address, change and relay the shifts we were making. With time, we realized that we are always at the beginning - there is always something new to discover and a challenge to tackle. We will continue to set goals to achieve greater levels of sustainability. The aim is to design and manufacture our clothes with greater care and to reduce our impact, generate awareness, and ask you, our lovely customer, to join us in taking action and holding us accountable.”

[Natalie Chanin \(Alabama Chanin\)](#)

“All facets work together to create a collaborative community and idea exchange, healthy growth, and a love of quality goods that last. Our guests can visit to shop with us, eat with us, learn with us (through our workshops), and tour our facility to see the entire operation.”



TOOLS & RESOURCES

Examples

Examples of supply chain transparency:

[Patagonia](#)

On the company website, Patagonia shares its supplier information through The Footprint Chronicles. All textile mills, factories, and farms can be viewed on a map of the world and clicked on for more detailed information about each specific supplier. When looking at a specific product online, customers can see which facilities they came from, linking back to the Footprint Chronicles.

[Eileen Fisher](#)

On the Eileen Fisher website, they provide detailed information about the farms, factories and faces behind their clothing.

[H&M](#)

H&M provides a supplier factory list on their website. It includes first tier manufacturing supplier factories that account for about 98.5% of all commercial pieces produced for the H&M group. It also includes all processing factories, which can be subcontracted by their first tier manufacturing supplier factories for specific tasks. In 2015, they expanded the scope of the list further to be the first major fashion brand to communicate the names and locations of the most important mills that provide their suppliers with fabrics and yarns, making about 60% of the pieces produced for the H&M group.

[Everlane](#)

Everlane's motto is "Exceptional quality. Ethical factories. Radical Transparency." Their #KnowYourFactories webpage shares all their factories. In addition to supplier information, Everlane reveals the true costs behind all of their products—from materials to labor to transportation. They believe their customers have a right to know how much their clothes cost to make.

[People Tree](#)

People Tree's Makers List invites customers to meet the Fair Trade farmers, artisans and producers who make People Tree products.

[Icebreaker](#)

Icebreaker publishes a Transparency Report to share their commitment to build an ethical and sustainable business. They begin with the words, "We're not perfect, and we're always striving for better."



TOOLS & RESOURCES

Tools

Marketing tools:

[The Okala Green Marketing Guide](#)

In this guide, Okala shares guidelines on green marketing claims, as well as information about how to avoid greenwashing.

Transparency tools:

[The Fashion Transparency Index](#)

Produced by [Fashion Revolution](#), the Fashion Transparency Index is a review of 150 of the biggest global fashion brands and retailers ranked according to how much they disclose about their social and environmental policies, practices, and impact. You may find yourself on this list whether you want to or not, but regardless the information and methodology used can be an extremely helpful and informative resource.

INDUSTRY OF ALL NATIONS

“It’s not what we do, but how we do it...” We are inspired by how things are done. We are not creating a new brand just to fill up shelves. In this modern time it is so easy and in everybody’s hands to do most anything, so the most important thing should be how we do these things. We aim to not negatively affect those around us and to provide opportunities to anyone who is out there working locally and well. We work together to develop clean and sustainable industries around the world. We use all this to create products with the most simple and desirable aesthetic. This is the industry of the people, the Industry of All Nations.”
