



Do Diligence Sounding Board Report

To: Interested Parties

From: Eric Eckl, Water Words That Work, LLC

Re: Results of an evaluation of WWF's "Take Action for Polar Bears, Tigers and Marine Turtles" email

Date: 2/25/2010

Water Words That Work, LLC is preparing to launch a new market research service -- tentatively titled the "Do Diligence Sounding Board" -- for nature protection and pollution control organizations to use to evaluate marketing materials and messages.

The purpose of this forthcoming service is to allow you to **quickly** and **affordably** pre-test materials *before* they are final -- giving you an opportunity to improve your piece before you release it into the wild. Once the service launches, Water Words That Work, LLC will provide DDSB feedback to our clients in complete confidence.

As part of our field trials for this service, we tested 6 "issue advocacy" pieces published by not-for-profit environmental organizations. This report summarizes what 25 everyday citizens have to say about the "Take Action for Polar Bears, Tigers and Marine Turtles" email produced by World Wildlife Fund. To see the piece, point your browser to: <http://bit.ly/9osyOv>

The true purpose of the Do Diligence Sounding Board is to evaluate draft materials before they are published. Reviewing already published materials is just part of our "shakedown cruise." Clients who engage this service will receive their results in complete confidence.

By the Numbers

Overall, this email received above-average marks from the panel.

Statement	1-Strongly Disagree	2-Somewhat Disagree	3-Somewhat Agree	4-Strongly Agree	Average for this Piece	Average for similar pieces
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The piece gets my attention	0	8	7	8	3.00	3.03
The piece has a clear message	2	2	5	14	3.35	3.36
The piece is believable	0	5	6	12	3.30	3.38
The issue important to society	1	4	4	14	3.35	3.18
The issue affects me or somebody I care about	2	3	5	13	3.26	2.51
It is urgent to address this issue now	3	4	6	10	3.00	2.86
I could take this action if I chose	0	2	5	16	3.61	3.29
I am confident that it would make a difference if I did	4	11	3	5	2.39	2.46
If I take this action, I'm confident that others will do their part	2	13	6	2	2.35	2.46

Their Initial Reaction

Question: "Pick one word that summarizes the feeling this piece evokes in you:"

They answered:

- "empowered"
- "confused"
- "concerned"
- " Hopeful"
- "Frustrated"
- "un-provoked"
- "annoyed"
- "Scammed"
- "hopeful"
- "Happy"
- "sympathetic"
- "na"
- "United"
- "Hopeful"
- "good"
- "Disgusted"
- "Action"
- "informed"
- "happy"
- "hopeful"
- "connected"
- "unimpressed"
- "Excited"

Your Message in Their Words, Part I

Question: "In your own words, what is the issue here:"

They answered like this:

- "Global warming is threatening species across the globe. WWF is organizing an earth hour where people across the globe can turn off their lights and demonstrate their support of the cause of fighting global warming"
- "The issue is global climate change that impacts endangered species"
- "The issue here is to raise public awareness of the problems being caused by global warming"
- "It is about climate change and how it is affecting people and animals. They are asking you to join in and turn lights off for one hour on a certain day and time. They are asking for unity around the world to try and combat this issue. They are providing us with a website to learn more and to really understand how important this is to our future"
- "Climate change and its effects upon wildlife"
- "The piece is delivering two separate issues. Granted, while climate change is a sub topic of focus for any event headed "Earth Hour" there is no smooth transition that melds the two as one cause for this specific piece."

- " The WWF is promoting an Earth Hour at 8:30pm on March 27th, 2010. During this hour, electric lights will be turned off to raise awareness about global climate change. Turning off the lights will emphasize how our profligate use of energy is impacting the world and the attempts off groups to conserve wildlife areas for the future"
- "Turning off the lights for Earth Hour 2010 to save power worldwide."
- " Earth Hour is an event to show global unity about issues of climate change and the environment."
- "Global Warming"
- "The issue is climate control and how global warming is endangering certain species, including polar bears, tigers and marine turtles."
- "n/a"
- "the issue is about Earth Hour."
- "Getting people involved in Earth Hour 2010 to bring awareness or climate change."
- "making the planet better by combatting climate change. turn off your lights on earth day 2010."
- "The issue is climate change, with Earth Hour being promoted as some sort of non-solution solution"
- "That everyone should turn lights off for one hour one day to help send a message about climate change"
- "the effects of climate change upon the ecosystems of our environment"
- "Preserving national monuments"
- "The WWF wants to make people more aware of the impact that our ever increasing consumption of energy has on our world. Earth Hour is meant to make people more appreciative of the comfortable lifestyle that the majority of American's live."
- "Climate change affects everyone, and we all need to do our part to help the environment."
- "The issue here is that by conserving energy we can help fight the effects of climate change and the resultant affects on certain animals."
- "The issue of this piece was controlling climate change and responsibility of conserving our environment"

Your Message in Their Words, Part II

Question: "The group that produced this piece is encouraging you to exercise your rights as an American citizen. In your own words, how can you influence the outcome of this situation?"

They answered like this:

- "By joining in the demonstration, using less energy and trying to motivate our politicians to take this seriously."
- "I can turn out my lights during a national 'lights out' event. I can support the organization that is sending the message."
- "The piece urges people to turn off thier lights on Earth Hour, which this year will be on March 27 at 8:30 pm. This action will get people thinking about the effects of global

warming and hopefully get them more involved in lobbying government officials to take action now to try to combat global warming."

- "By spreading the word locally about the Earth Hour 2010 and by becoming as involved as possible in the local sector."
- "Well I could choose to turn off my lights for Earth Hour 2010 to send a statement. I could also get involved on a much larger scale if so inclined to do so. I could assist in getting out the message."
- "I think my influence could best manifest itself by my physically be on the spot at one of the monuments reconizing "Earth Hour"
- "You can opt to use less energy on your own in order to make less of an impact on the environment. You can write to your Congressman to ask that they take action, or you could give money to causes that seek to help other people to be less wasteful with energy."
- "I could possibly slightly influence the outcome of the situation by turning off my own lights, however, I don't really believe in the cause all that much."
- "Visit the website to discover how I can participate. Learn more about the issues."
- "By supporting their cause we can show the politicians of the world that this is something we care about, and in the US, as our elected officials, they also need to be concerned"
- "By taking part in Earth Hour and making my voice heard at the designated website, the address of which eludes me but I think it was earthhour.org or something similar."
- "na"
- "We can tell our friends and family and try to follow our pledge"
- "By taking part and trying to involve others."
- "turn off my lights on earth day"
- "Your idea is to have me go to earthhour.org to influence the outcome. Ultimately, turning my lights (90% of which are CFLs) off won't make any difference. Plus, since the vast majority of people won't participate, no one will notice."
- "By participating in this event "
- "by participating in a group action designed to emphasize a particular common viewpoint"
- "I don't think I, as just one single person, can influence it. I still like the idea of preserving such national treasures."
- "Participating myself and encouraging others around me to participate. Also, taking the idea and going further with it, maybe trying to reduce my overall consumption for instance."
- "Every little bit counts."
- "I can turn off my lights for an hour at the specified time for Earth Hour and I can also sign up and get others to do so by posting on twitter about it and posting on facebook and recruiting people I know to get involved with this. This will help to let politicians know that we need to have some course of action to help with this cause."
- "By participating in their efforts to turn out the lights for an hour. Also by joining their cause and recruiting more people to follow.

Implications for Self or Family

Question: "Please share your thoughts on how this issue has or hasn't affected you or someone you care about:"

They answered like this:

- "Global warming affects all of us, but it won't affect us directly any time soon. That's the problem, as we need to start addressing it immediately."
- "I feel very remote from the general message...it seems very jumbled. Though well written, it seems to bring together unrelated issues (or, at least, their relatedness has not been explained well). Endangered species, global warming and conservation of energy (electrical lights) ... all worthy issues, but almost used like a come-on (listed, but nothing cohesive portrayed or tied to the group's work)."
- "Global warming affects everyone on the planet. Ocean levels are rising, polar ice is melting, critical habitat for polar bears and other animals is shrinking, and the long-term consequences for the planet are devastating if we don't take action. We're all going to be hurt in some way by the effects of global warming."
- "So far I feel no effects from this issue. I am not aware of anyone that has been affected either. That does not mean it is not happening, it just means I do not have first hand experience yet."
- "Personally, I doubt the entire concept of man made global warming. I believe that it is a political hot button and it is another thing that could be used to have more control over people and their actions and their monies. It affects me when Pelosi is more concerned over someone infiltrating the emails of certain climate scientists than she is about perpetrating a hoax over the global community."
- "With climate change being intertwined with the complexities of politics, economics and personal feelings, I would really have to delve into those matters prior to coming to any legitimate thoughts "
- "Global climate change is a long term trend that is unlikely to have a large impact on me during my life. As such, it is hard to see the benefits of action in a concrete manner. Those who live at higher latitudes will likely see more of an effect sooner than I ever would.
Attempts to pass a carbon tax or cap-and-trade legislation would directly me in my life, as do laws promoting or requiring conservation. These laws generally impact me by making my life more difficult, though they often do provide savings on energy costs. These savings come about because of the more efficient options now available for me to choose from."
- "Nobody in my family is interested in this issue that much. We don't feel it will make much difference, but we participate in other causes that this group supports."
- "Climate change affects us all."
- "well, I'm currently looking at a foot of snow in Dallas, Tx - the largest snow fall ever recorded. Considering the effects of Global Warming have shown to affect all weather, not just making the planet warmer (as it is widely believed) I think I'm seeing the effects of global warming right now."

- "This issue hasn't personally affected me at this point in time, at least as far as I can ascertain."
- "na"
- " This has affected me and made me aware about the problems. I will follow my pledge and try to help."
- " I was already aware of this issue and took part in it last year."
- "our planet affects us all. we all need to make a difference."
- "This hasn't affected anyone--it's a non issue"
- "Climate change is affecting all of us and wildlife and wild places. One effect is it is making weather more variable."
- "the most noticeable things here are reductions in brown bat populations and also reduced honey bee populations. also, i am concerned about cell phone towers causing environmental damage."
- "It has not affected me personally or anyone I care about."
- " Energy prices are through the roof, including gas and heating oil. This means that my bills for travel, heating, and electricity have all gone up and negatively affected my ability to live the lifestyle that I had become accustomed to."
- "Climate change affects everyone, but it isn't necessarily an immediate thought in all of our minds."
- "To my knowledge, it hasn't affected me or anyone I know, it's just that some of the animals facing extinction are ones which we have seen in zoos and just expected to be around forever, not become extinct in our lifetime or that of our children."
- "Climate change affects every person on this Earth. If we continue to pollute and disregard our environments there will be nothing left for our children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren."

Shop Talk vs. Plain English

Question: "Imagine that your friends, coworkers, or family member are looking at the piece themselves. If there are any words or phrases that might be difficult for them, please share them below:"

They answered like this:

- " None."
- " None."
- "I did not think that there were any words or phrases that were unfamiliar or difficult."
- "The article is pretty clear and is written in an easy to understand format and does not use big words that people would not understand. I see nothing that would be difficult."
- "I think that it seems written at an appropriate level for adults."
- "Not Applicable.
Thanks! "
- " None"
- "none that I can think of."

- " In my opinion the piece is well written with language that anyone with an 8th grade education should be able to grasp."
- "na"
- "No, seems like pretty easy vocabulary"
- "None, it is very clear, I think"
- "none"
- "No problems--it's pretty simply and straightforward"
- "climate change"
- "ecosystems"
- "Can't think of any"
- "I think that the piece was written in language that the majority of people can understand. The point of the article is to make more people aware of the issue, and I feel that it did just that."
- " I think overall this is weak and unimpressive. It wouldn't confuse anyone, vocabulary-wise, but some people I know will always associate the WWF with wrestling."
- "None."

Strengths of the Piece

Question: " In your opinion, what is the strongest or most compelling thing about this piece?"

They answered like this:

- "The fact that so many people joined in the cause last time around."
- " The WWF logo"
- "The strongest thing about the piece was the statement that one billion people participated in Earth Hour last year. That shows that this issue is important and should encourage people to participate this year."
- "I think the damage it will do to our animals first of all and then to the people."
- " we have tirelessly to bring the international community, governments around the world and corporate leaders to the brink of breakthrough action"
- "the initial intro to Earth Hour "
- "The numbers quoted about world wide and American participation seem quite compelling."
- " It is only a one page ad for the cause, I wasn't very compelled."
- "The sheer numbers, a billion people participating."
- "To show the politicians that this issue must be addresses"
- "The most compelling facet is the possible extinction of animals that do their part in the grand scheme of things hwere the earth and life on it is concerned."
- "na"
- "The strongest par is when they talk about how when we are united we are the strongest."
- " Last years results."
- "the easy idea of turning off your lights"
- "Nothing, really."

- "Getting everyone to participate"
- " i like the idea of everyone turning off their lights for an hour, if everyone did it the effect would be noticable "
- " The drive to save such national treasures that are so much a part of our history."
- "The fact that people are willing to come together for that one hour but we can't seem to come together for the long haul. I mean that if most people are willing to go without lights for an hour, why can't we all agree to search for an alternative to oil? Why can't we work together to clean up the air and sea?"
- " The goal is admirable, and it makes people think about the issue. Telling us about how adorable animals are being affected can only help bring the issue to a head, as there is something visceral about people's connections to nature."
- "The strongest is that they got the Las Vegas Strip to turn off its lights for an hour, at night, and the other landmarks too. Also compelling is the fact that a billion people worldwide took part in this but only 80 million in the US."
- "They have support from big name places such as the Las Vegas Strip and the Empire State Building".

Weaknesses of the Piece

Question: " In your opinion, what is the weakest thing about this piece?"

They answered like this:

- "should have more info about other ways to make a difference."
- "The writing."
- "The weakest thing about the piece was not specifying which time zone was being used for "8:30 pm". Should people participate at 8:30 pm in their own time zone? It seems to me that Earth Hour would be a more dramatic statement if one time zone were chosen and that everyone turned off the lights at the same time."
- "It sends a clear message. I can not think of anything or see anything that is weak about it."
- "greatest challenges facing our planet"
- "the lack of the article to follow through and inform me of sufficient knowledge about all of the goals and hopes for Earth Hour, while climate change is widely touted, this is the first I have heard the mention of Earth Hour and the piece failed to give me much insight into Earth Hour after peaking my initial attention."
- "The weakest bit is the whole idea of it. Turning off lights for an hour doesn't really do anything except kind of annoy people. It also seems to conflate people taking action on climate change, which I think is good, with people participating in turning off their lights for an hour. I support doing something, but I think the Earth Hour thing is not the right approach."
- "The entire thing."
- "It's unclear if the event had any significant impact."
- "Our politicians have shown us that the issues that are important to us are not always very important to them. Especially is the issue will be difficult to handle, or cause major changes to the businesses and PAC that give them their money."

- " It lacks a statistic. A tangible fact that people can wrap their minds around might make a bigger impact. Especially if it is related directly to the human race."
- "na"
- " In the opening, you should try to target the main focus a little better."
- "Nothing"
- "too much copy. the idea is buried . the call to action should be obvious"
- " The dependence on "climate change" as a justification. Plus, it's about as meaningless as the boycott buying gas for a day email."
- "No message on the real dangers of climate change "
- " the date, I wish this was on Earth Day, but I can't remember when it is, sometime in April I think, anyway Earth Hour would be great on Earth Day"
- " How they're going to go about achieving their goals."
- "We the reader are not given any concrete evidence as to what impact this Earth Hour really has? How much energy is saved in that hour? "
- "It was a little bit preachy, or at least had connotations that it was such."
- " It's a mighty big stretch to get from turning your lights off for an hour to protecting animals that are facing extinction. A few facts, not vague statements like "visible in every ecosystem where we work", we don't know where they work. If Vegas shuts off the light for an hour, that has to save an enormous amount of energy--say how much and how it might affect climate change on a bigger scale"
- "The explanation is very short and requires you to go to another site to find out more information."

About the Do Diligence Sounding Board

Just whose opinions are these, anyway? The "Do Diligence Sounding Board" is a standing body of U.S. residents who provide feedback on marketing materials and perform related tasks in return for payment.

A major corporation recruits the board members, maintains the system for securing their feedback, and handles the financial transactions. Water Words That Work, LLC pays to access to this service, as do other marketing firms.

The feedback that you receive from the sounding board is different from feedback you receive from your peers, for three reasons:

- The sounding board members who review your materials approach them like actual everyday citizen "in the wild." They are not professionals in the field and have not participated in the drafting of the materials.
- The sounding board members have never met you, and will provide their feedback anonymously. Their feedback will not be influenced by their personal relationship with you.
- The sounding board more closely approximates the demographic makeup (especially race and education) of the U.S. "public" than the staff and board of most nature protection and pollution control organizations.

Demographic Trait	Environmental Professionals	Do Diligence Sounding Board	Traditional Telephone Poll, U.S. Sample	Actual U.S. (Census)
4 Year College Degree	95% or higher	~50%	~40%	24%
White/Caucasian	95% or higher	~80%	~80%	79%

All sounding board answers are verbatim -- including spelling and typographic errors.

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