



Sustainable Dubuque

viable * livable * equitable

Climate Action
Strategic Communication Plan
for Large Businesses

Sustainable Dubuque: Strategic Communication Plan

Situation Analysis

Sustainable Dubuque, an organization that is currently utilizing a climate plan to reduce GHG emissions in the city of Dubuque, is facing a dilemma regarding funding and promotion of their goals for the public to participate in. Sustainable Dubuque has an achievable goal with their plan and has experienced positive outcomes so far but lacks city-wide recognition and implementation. Two major reasons why Sustainable Dubuque has not achieved maximum success is due to a minimal amount of funding resources and minimal outreach. Finding ways to get businesses to invest their time and money into this plan is essential, due to the necessity of funds this project needs to fulfill future goals and maintain them. Sustainable Dubuque strives to create a sustainable legacy for generations to come. To fulfill this mission, the organization must effectively reach and communicate its sustainability plan with the Dubuque community. Reaching the proper audience and getting them to participate in this plan will make the climate plan easier to reach and allow Dubuque residents to start seeing environmental changes faster than ever before.

The organization currently follows a three-part approach that addresses environmental and ecological integrity, economic prosperity, and social and cultural vibrancy. Sustainable Dubuque prioritizes community engagement and the outreach of private, non-profit, and public sectors. In addition to community engagement, the organization utilizes the Green Vision Education program to promote and teach students about sustainability opportunities and to introduce them to various sustainability goals. As of recently, Sustainable Dubuque conducts community events such as a book club, carbon diet competition, and a complete street bike ride.

They also host a large nationwide conference with learning sessions and keynote speakers. The organization utilizes pamphlets and brochures as their main way of marketing their sustainability goals. Though the organization has composed a deliberate sustainability plan, it is struggling with connecting to businesses and getting them on board with the plan.

Although there are obstacles Sustainable Dubuque has already faced, these are roadblocks to many opportunities to come from this climate plan. So far, some of Sustainable Dubuque's biggest obstacles are inefficient utilization of social media and the inability to reach new individuals to partake in and/or fund the climate plan. Luckily, these obstacles go together with each other and can potentially be resolved with the help of social media adjustments. Social media has become one of the biggest platforms for organizations to use to spread awareness of their plans and goals. Sustainable Dubuque's current content analysis shows that Facebook, X, Instagram and Nextdoor are currently being used. Improving social media presence on these platforms or joining more platforms such as TikTok can allow the climate action goals to become digestible for someone who is not informed about climate change and to reach

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a younger demographic. This provides a terrific opportunity for Sustainable Dubuque to partner with local businesses/groups to promote and host events, such as colleges of the area, farmers markets, etc. Lastly, Sustainable Dubuque should become aware of any opposing group/organization that is trying to hinder their climate plan. This could be large corporate business, protest groups, etc.

Organization Analysis

Sustainable Dubuque's mission statement is: "Dubuque is a viable, livable, and equitable community. We embrace economic prosperity, environmental integrity, and social/cultural vibrancy to create a sustainable legacy for generations to come." So far, Dubuque has done very well at upholding their mission. Sustainable Dubuque has succeeded with research and program partnerships to further their mission.

Their emissions inventory and vulnerability assessment are thorough, and they have a "Climate Action Plan Implementation Matrix," which details everything they wish to accomplish, its priority level, who is responsible for it, and the estimated budget.

The organization has performed well so far with their limited resources, but there is only so much they can do. They only have one communications role for all 30+ departments in the city. Additionally, there are only a few people on the staff for Sustainable Dubuque, so their labor is limited.

Sustainable Dubuque faces a few obstacles to furthering its mission. The primary competition is the Chamber of Commerce, and/or corporate business objectives, and the politicization of climate action. The goals of businesses, which is to increase profit, inherently works against sustainability efforts unless there are intentional efforts otherwise. As Gina stated, the Chamber of Commerce have said they are supportive of the sustainability initiative, but there has not been any clear communication or action. The Chamber of Commerce has the [SMART Series](#), which works to empower businesses through diversity, equity, and inclusion, so they have been progressive with social inclusivity. A similar program could be implemented surrounding the efforts towards sustainable practices within businesses.

The politicization of sustainability efforts is also competition for the efforts of Sustainable Dubuque. Sustainable Dubuque's social media pages receive hate comments, and the necessity of Gina's role is challenged. Overcoming the negative connotations surrounding climate action will be essential to furthering Sustainable Dubuque's mission.

Additionally, citizens are accustomed to their daily lives, which are often not the most sustainable. Transportation by car, overconsumption of food, home gas/energy bills, etc. are all practices that have become normalized. Public perception: What is the visibility of the organization? What is the reputation of the organization? How do you want to affect this reputation?

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Currently, the most knowledgeable public is the 30+ range, however, Sustainable Dubuque seems to cater to them through their media outreach (i.e., Facebook, Next-door app, door-to-door, book club, household challenges, etc.). Sustainable Dubuque has 631 Instagram followers and 2k followers on Facebook, but the engagement on these platforms is lacking. Most of the posts on both platforms receive less than 10 likes. We would like to increase the engagement of the 15-24 age range on social media platforms and through school outreach efforts.

But the organization receives hateful comments on these platforms and some citizens do not see the necessity for a sustainability department. Unfortunately, since climate action has become a political topic, it will be difficult to sway those negative opinions and all that can be done about that is providing data as proof of the need for climate action.

News articles covering Sustainable Dubuque and their actions are sparse and most are from years ago. Ideally, Sustainable Dubuque will increase its news releases to get more news coverage and it will harness more energy into its social platforms, building a digital community that is engaged and informed. It will also be helpful to foster the efforts that the organization is already making with students and to focus much of their efforts on local businesses, which already have an audience of their own.

Targeted Publics

We will be focusing on large businesses within the Dubuque community and surrounding areas. To better target the large business public, defined by those listed under the Major Employers Business Directory on greaterdubuque.org. We will also focus specifically on the manufacturing (John Deere, Sherwin-Williams, Ecolab) and retail businesses in and around Dubuque because of their environmental impact.

The goal of this campaign is to reach new demographics and key publics to help spread awareness and information about the efforts the organization is making. We want to create content and relationships that will reach large business leaders in the Dubuque area that are open and passionate about partnering with Sustainable Dubuque to educate and promote their efforts. We will encourage larger businesses to work with us because research shows that their consumers care about the sustainability of the businesses they support. 88% of consumers say that they check the sustainability of a product before at least some purchases. 72% of respondents reported that they were actively buying more environmentally friendly products than they did five years ago, while 81% said they expected to buy even more over the next five years.

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Key Messages

Key messages for large businesses and corporations within Dubuque will include messaging targeted towards implementing sustainable practices that can improve their business. Each of these messages improves the public perception of a business who supports Sustainable Dubuque and may increase profits and employee satisfaction.

Key Message: Sustainability efforts will boost the company's reputation with consumers and customers, and it will increase sales.

Key message: Shopping and supporting corporations that have pledged their support and effort to Sustainable Dubuque's initiative is a wonderful way for the average individual consumer to make a positive difference in their city and for their planet.

Key message: Employees of the corporations who take sustainable action can feel proud of the place that they work knowing their workplace is actively working towards benefiting the city and the environment.

Goals, Objectives, and Tactics

Goal: to educate and inspire corporations and large businesses located in Dubuque to get on board with Sustainable Dubuque's efforts and initiative.

Objective: Get 5 large businesses to publicly voice their support and commitment to Sustainable Dubuque's mission

Strategy: Within these businesses, we will focus on the CEOs and leadership in the large businesses in Dubuque because they have the greatest outreach and decision-making power, which will consequently reach their consumers – 1 per month

Tactic: create a sustainability tag that participating companies can place on their website and create strategic social media content that generates positive PR.

Goal: to effectively engage consumers in sustainable initiatives through the interaction with various businesses in Dubuque and to effectively communicate the environmental values of each business with consumers to create meaningful B2C connections.

Objective: Organize a large event with 5 or more businesses located in and around Dubuque where they can highlight their products and communicate their sustainability efforts to consumers.

Tactic: create an editorial calendar with social media posts that inform and encourage consumers to learn more about the sustainable businesses in their community