Secrets of Successful Navigators:
5 tips for using crucial audience awareness and analysis to direct your content creation

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But first, who is NREL?
NREL’s innovation drives our nation’s economy
We are **Transforming Energy** through Science

NREL advances the science and engineering of **energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, and renewable power technologies** and provides the knowledge to integrate and optimize energy systems.
NREL at a Glance

1,800 Employees, plus more than 400 early-career researchers and visiting scientists

World-class facilities, renowned technology experts

nearly 750 Partnerships with industry, academia, and government

Campus operates as a living laboratory

$1B annually

National economic impact
NREL’s Science Drives Innovation

**Renewable Power**
- Solar
- Wind
- Water
- Geothermal

**Sustainable Transportation**
- Bioenergy
- Vehicle Technologies
- Hydrogen

**Energy Efficiency**
- Buildings
- Advanced Manufacturing
- Government Energy Management

**Energy Systems Integration**
- High-Performance Computing
- Data and Visualizations
How is NREL Highly Regulated?
Communications & Public Affairs at a National Laboratory
Our Teams

- Laboratory Communications
- Science & Technology Communications
- Web & App Development
- Graphic Design & Multimedia
- Scientific Publishing
- Library
Our Keys to Success

- Strategy
- Cultivating Relationships
- Content Strategy
- Audience Analysis
- Measurement

Storytelling
These 5 Keys to Success Help Us Effectively Navigate Storytelling
1. Strategic & Aligned Communications

“Strategic communications planning is the process of driving alignment between the communications function and the organization’s core objectives. It is about deliberately engineering plans, tactics and message to help fuel an organization’s performance.”

– Fast Company
2. Cultivating Relationships

“Relationships are the heartbeat of all businesses; therefore, developing healthy relationships is crucial to long-term success.”

– IBM
The new business competency, storytelling, is a strategy used to educate target audiences, including employees, and form an emotional connection that leads those audiences to brand loyalty.
How can we become better storytellers?

- Ongoing Collaboration
- Audience Analysis
- Platform Evaluation
- Content is King
- Measuring Impact
Your Audience Determines Your Content

If you’re trying to talk to everybody, you’re not reaching anybody...
But how are we communicating to our NREL audiences?

And who are our audiences...
NREL’s Audiences

Tier 1: Decision-Makers
Those audiences that are critical to our mission and growth.

Tier 2: Science Drivers
Those audiences who are highly-influential in how our brand is represented and recognized.

Tier 3: Ambassadors
Those audiences where there is opportunity to promote our brand and engage, to gain traction and ambassadorship.
How to think about stakeholder tiers

• Shows level of emotional engagement, from full on partner (Tier 1) to very little engagement (pull communications for Tier 3)
• Depict levels of energy and resources appropriate for each Tier
• Helps put you in their mindset
Tier 1: Decision Makers

What do they need?
Frequent information on NREL’s research, programs, and accomplishments to preserve and fuel funding opportunities, diversification, and growth to benefit NREL’s future.

What we will provide:

Media
- News releases
- Media coverage
- News features
- Relationship building

Digital Media
- Social media
- Website updates
- Energy.gov website assistance

Relationship Management
- Regular interactions
- NREL fact sheet, overview video, overview presentation
- Customized VIP Visits
- Weekly/monthly tours

Audiences who are critical to our mission and growth – congressional leaders and staff, EERE and DOE, NREL business partners (existing and potential), NREL executive and leadership teams
Tier 2: Brand Influencers

Audiences who are highly influential in how our brand is represented and recognized – media, Alliance and advisory boards, energy industry leaders, NREL senior managers, employees

What do they need?
Consistent information that fosters an understanding of NREL’s mission and helps influencers position the laboratory as the leading resource for advanced energy and energy efficiency.

What we will provide:

Media
- News releases
- Social media
- Website/program news
- News features
- Relationship building

Advisory boards and industry leaders
- NREL fact sheet and impact information
- NREL overview PPT and video
- NREL corporate exhibit
- Customized VIP visits

Senior managers, C&PA, and employees
- TheSOURCE (enterprise plan)
- Digital workplace
- Internal social networking tools
- Email (guidance for globals)
- NREL Headlines
- Digital signage
Tier 3: Brand Ambassadors

Audiences where there is opportunity to promote our brand and engage, to gain traction and ambassadorship – Denver metro/local elected, regional business leaders, academia, local community groups

What do they need?
Interactive in-person and virtual opportunities to learn about our research, programs, and accomplishments that inspire ambassadorship.

What we will provide:

Denver Metro/Local Electeds and Regional Business Leaders
- Semi-annual open house
- Participation in business chambers
- Participation in economic development corporations
- Customized VIP visits

Academia and Local Community Groups
- Education Center programs for students and adults
- Science fairs
- Student competitions
- NREL Giving Campaign
- Employee volunteers
- Event sponsorships
- Community email list
- NREL.gov; NREL Academy
- Monthly public tours
- Non-profit board memberships
- Periodic postcard communications
But we should be open to how we tell our story

I’m a great believer that any tool that enhances communication has profound effects in terms of how people can learn from each other.”
– Bill Gates

Visuals express ideas in a snackable manner.”
– Kim Garst, CEO, Boom Social
5. Measurement

You can’t manage what you don’t measure

At its core, communications is still about great storytelling but the future is about creating a shareable experience. Measuring only media coverage is a way of the past. Communications professionals must now target to engage their audience(s) and have them be a part of the news cycle.

– Fast Company
We measure web, email, social events, media, video & publishing
Want to see it in action?

Case Studies: Bill Gates & Hawaiian Electric
Case Study #1: Bill Gates & NREL
This @TIME article on @NREL highlights just one example of the amazing work that goes on inside America’s national labs.
How did this happen?

Proactive media relations
So, what did we do in response?
That single tweet prompted a firestorm...

Between Gates’ original tweet, NREL’s video response, and Gates’ subsequent retweet, the post reached an audience of over 100 million Twitter Users.

103,120 Video Views
First NREL tweet to ever exceed 100k video views
(In just 48 hours)

10,432 Engagements
First NREL tweet to ever exceed 10k engagements

24% Increase in traffic to NREL.gov web pages

805,354 Impressions
First NREL tweet to ever exceed 100k impressions
Case Study #2: Hawaiian Electric
Hawaiian Electric Wants to Increase its Renewable Energy Electric Grids

How can a state achieve increased renewably sourced electricity by 2045, especially when that state is an island, unable to rely on neighbors for support? That’s the challenge that the Hawaiian Electric Companies (HECO) face, and the reason they reached out to NREL for technical support.

• For more than 5 years, NREL has partnered with HECO on cutting edge research to solve the technical challenges of integrating unprecedented amounts of renewable energy onto their grids. This work has resulted in the application of new tools, models, and standards in Hawaii, which have then been adapted and replicated in other leading renewable states such as California and New York.
NREL helped the Hawaiian Electric Companies respond to new stability challenges with the rapid addition of solar power and other renewables to Hawaii’s six isolated grids.

Now, the utility is working proactively to modernize those grids. Learn more about continuing to support their efforts in part 2 of our story “NREL and Hawaii Navigate Uncharted Waters of Energy Transformation”.

Get the rest of the story at http://bit.ly/2Oi5cFZ

NREL and Hawaiian Electric Navigate Uncertainties with Testing in Hawaii


February 12, 2015

Inverter load rejection overvoltage (LR-OV) tests completed by the Energy Department’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory as part of a cooperative research agreement with SolarCity have proven so successful that a testing partner, Hawaiian Electric Companies (HECO), has proposed to double its hosting capacity for solar energy.

The Inverter Load Rejection Overvoltage Testing at NREL (ILR-OT) examined ways to quantify transient LROV, which is one of the main technical barriers to allowing more distributed energy, such as solar and wind, onto the grid. Results of the testing are discussed in the report “Inverter Load Rejection Overvoltage Testing: SolarCity/CRADA Task 3 Final Report”.

Based on the results of these tests, HECO announced in January a plan to allow more renewable energy onto the grid. The utility intends to increase its renewable energy portfolio to 20 percent by 2020.
We leveraged several channels

- Press Releases
- Feature Articles
- Web Content
- Video
- Social Media
- Newsletters
- Media Relations
The future of NREL Communications

A brand refresh
Shifting Focus from Science to...
Questions?

www.nrel.gov