

**Guiding Climate Communication for Hong Kong Businesses:
Supplement Documents**

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Date:

3 March 2023

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Supplement Document A: Authorship Table

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Implications of Climate Change & Climate Communication	Ethan C.	Gautham R., Ethan C.
Climate Communication: A Field Needing Further Research	Kristine G.	Ethan C.
Our Project: Guiding Climate Communication	Nicholas H.	Ethan C.
Negative Impacts of Misleading External Climate Communication	Ethan C.	Ethan C., Nicholas H.
Importance of Strong Internal Communication	Gautham R.	Kristine G., Ethan C.
Impact of a Business's Values on Communication	Gautham R.	Ethan C.
Corporate Social Responsibility of Businesses	Kristine G.	Ethan C.
Implementation of Effective Climate Action Depends on Effective Climate Communication	Gautham R.	Ethan C., Nicholas H.
Ineffectiveness of Climate Communication Guides	Nicholas H.	Ethan C.
Analyse how Employees Perceive Common Climate-related Disclosure Guidelines	Ethan C.	Ethan C.
Analyse how Employees Perceive Climate Communication Practices by Hong Kong Businesses	Ethan C.	Ethan C.
Identify Barriers to Understanding Within Climate Communication	Kristine G.	Kristine G., Ethan C.
Employee Perceptions of Climate-related Guidelines	Gautham R.	Nicholas H., Ethan C.
Employee Perceptions of Climate Communication Practices	Nicholas H.	Ethan C., Gautham R.

Limited Approach to Sustainability	Nicholas H.	Nicholas H.
Lack of Clarity and Consistency in Climate Guidelines	Gautham R.	Gautham R.
Inconsistent Accessibility and Visibility of Climate Action Information	Ethan C.	Ethan C.
Introduce Flexible Methods to Integrate Sustainability	Nicholas H.	Nicholas H., Gautham R.
Establish Sustainability Representative in Each Department	Nicholas H.	Nicholas H.
Clarify Unclear and Inconsistent Rhetoric	Gautham R.	Nicholas H., Ethan C.
Streamline Reporting Guidelines	Gautham R.	Nicholas H., Ethan C.
Standardise Climate-related Terms	Gautham R.	Nicholas H., Ethan C.
Improve Accessibility and Visibility of Sustainability-related Information	Ethan C.	Ethan C.
Present Claims and Evidence Together on Front-facing Platforms	Ethan C.	Ethan C.
Conclusion	Nicholas H.	Kristine G., Gautham R.
Deliverables & Further Action	Nicholas H.	Kristine G., Gautham R.

Supplement Document B: Acknowledgments

This Interactive Qualifying Project is the work of a team of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), sponsored by the Business Environment Council (BEC)'s Policy & Research team. We would like to express our gratitude to the BEC for providing resources and guidance to support our research into climate communication, especially to the employees who provided insight into the Hong Kong business sector and other relevant information. We would also like to thank the participant organisations. Many of them are member organisations of the BEC and provided interview opportunities and climate communication materials as data and information for our research.

Participant Organisations (by organisation name, in alphabetical order)

Centre for Civil Society and Governance, The University of Hong Kong
CLP Power Hong Kong Limited
Earth Production Limited
Gammon Construction Limited
Hysan Development Company Limited
MTR Corporation Limited
Swire Pacific Limited
The Hong Kong & China Gas Company Limited
The Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants
The Hongkong Electric Company Limited

BEC Staff

Merlin Lao	Head, Policy and Research
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Supplement Document C: Sponsor Description

The Business Environment Council (BEC) is an independent, charitable membership organisation in Hong Kong, founded in 1992 as the Centre for Environmental Technology (CET) by Hong Kong business leaders concerned about Hong Kong's air and water quality. In 2000, the CET was renamed to the current BEC, also assuming the roles of the earlier Private Sector Committee on the Environment established in 1989 (BEC, 2022). From here, the BEC began to commit to its current mission to promote “environmental excellence” and advocate “the uptake of clean technologies and practices” to create a sustainable Hong Kong (BEC). Over time, the organisation grew as a force for climate awareness and goals: for instance, the BEC attended the UN climate conference in 2007, and joined the Paris Pledge for Action in 2016 (BEC, 2020). As of 2021, the organisation consists of 52 employees and 201 members. With its community of employees and members, the BEC facilitates connections between their people to foster environmental education, climate regulation advocacy, strategic collaborations, and more. The BEC's vision is for Hong Kong businesses to be recognized as organisations that use environmentally-friendly practices and further progress towards a low-carbon economy. Establishing clean practices that conserve materials, work against pollution, and reduce waste align with the BEC's mission of advocating for climate protection within businesses and their broader communities (BEC, 2022). The organisation keeps their vision and mission in mind with all of their endeavours.

The BEC hopes to work towards positive climate goals, including net-zero emissions for the entire city of Hong Kong. The organisation plans to make progress towards this goal by working directly with the business community, which is made possible by their membership structure. The membership structure is centred around businesses that are “members”, of which there are currently over 200 (BEC). The BEC membership costs vary depending on the level of membership, and provides a number of services. The three tiers of membership are council, corporate, general appeal to a larger demographic which allows the BEC to work collaboratively with businesses with varying degrees of interest for involvement. These involve discounts on their events and fundraisers, as well as more personalised resources to both grow the member business and ensure they are properly working towards climate goals (BEC). These resources include: stakeholder connections, where new businesses can network with all existing members; knowledge transfer, where information on climate-conscious and business positive ideas can be shared to developing members; environmental advocacy, where members can be guided to achieve more difficult environmental goals; and policy framework shaping, where members of the BEC can directly contribute to policy proposals, that sometimes go as high as the Hong Kong government. The organisation's structure also includes advisory groups which focus on specific environmental areas. The advisory groups are composed of advisory group chair, vice chair, and members that collaborate to produce charters and manifestos within their focus. BEC currently has three advisory groups that all members are eligible to join, which provides another opportunity for members to take initiative and collaborate with other businesses to work towards the core goals of sustainability.

Along with maintaining a well-structured community, the BEC works to provide both a public environment for climate ideas and goals. For instance, it holds the EnviroSeries Conference

twice a year where various speakers from Hong Kong along with other places around the world (BEC). The BEC relies largely on the events that they run to fund their operations, with nearly 85% of their revenue coming from “Project and Seminar” (BEC, 2022). Its other sources include membership fees, conference attendance fees, and building management income. In terms of expenses, a majority of their income is spent on paying staff. The BEC has a strong base of economic operations, with its organisation achieving a surplus cash flow of 1.5-2 million HKD (190k-250k USD). Additionally, while the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown significantly negatively affected the work of the BEC, it was able to adapt by moving many of its conferences and training online. Despite the financial challenges presented by the pandemic, the BEC maintained an income of 65 million HKD (8 million USD) in the 2020-2021 fiscal year, which is a nearly 20 million increase from 2019-2020 fiscal year.

As the BEC is working to improve businesses’ climate action, they are concerned about their communication. With a proper understanding of these concepts, businesses would be able to change their way of operation for the better. Two perspectives need to be looked at regarding this: internally with the board and staff and externally with partners and consumers. Internally there are many advisory groups that BEC hosts that provide members with in-depth knowledge about climate action and also help bridge the perspectives between government and business (BEC). The BEC developed a Low Carbon Charter that asks companies to work towards long-term decarbonization and assisted in programs such as the Sustainable Financing Programme to recognize how businesses reduce their carbon emissions (BEC, 2022). The BEC also focuses on external programs and programs targeted towards expanding environmental awareness to the public and environmental knowledge in Hong Kong. Some of the programs take place in school, such as the BEC Low Carbon School Eco-Expo events that raise awareness of environmental issues and allow people to communicate their views regarding current environmental actions. The BEC also connected with the community to help residents in Public Rental Housing grow a connection between residents and the culture of preserving the environment (BEC). BEC conducts these programs to better connect government, business, and community together, allowing them to grow towards environmental sustainability.

Supplement Document D: Informed Consent Agreement for Participation in a Research Study

Investigators: Ethan Chau, Kristine Guan, Nicholas Heineman, Gautham Rajeshkumar

Contact Information: gr-BEC@wpi.edu

Title of Research Study: Guiding Climate Communication for Hong Kong Businesses

Sponsor: Business Environment Council

Introduction:

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you agree, however, you must be fully informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and any benefits, risks or discomfort that you may experience as a result of your participation. This form presents information about the study so that you may make a fully informed decision regarding your participation.

Purpose of the study:

Our project aims to strengthen climate communication for Hong Kong businesses by recommending practices to improve climate rhetoric and promote climate action. The purpose of user interviews is to give insight on how businesses communicate about climate change on an employee level. We want to understand how climate communication is structured, what climate communication messages do employees engage with, and how these messages are framed in communications.

Procedures to be followed:

We will request participation via email. Introduction to each study procedure will start with an introduction to our project, explaining their right to refuse any questions, and recording consent to participate with a digital signature or verbal audio-recorded consent. Participation in the interview should take 30 to 60 minutes.

Risks to study participants:

While many of our questions are informative in nature, there are some that aim to critique the business's communication practices. We will ask if you are comfortable answering such questions in advance.

Record keeping and confidentiality:

Regardless of if the study participant agrees to answer critical questions, we will protect the privacy of our interviewees by keeping all identifying information to our group only for internal team use. This will include the interviewee's name and position at the company. All identifying information will not be disclosed in our final report. Any and all information will be used for research purposes only.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will not result in any penalty to you or any loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. You may decide to stop participating in the research at any time without penalty or loss of other benefits. The project investigators retain the right to cancel or postpone the experimental procedures at any time they see fit. Should a participant wish to withdraw from the study after it has begun, the following procedures should be followed: contact gr-BEC@wpi.edu. There are no consequences for early withdrawal for the subject.

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have been informed about and consent to be a participant in the study described above. Make sure that your questions are answered to your satisfaction before signing. You are entitled to retain a copy of this consent agreement.

Study Participant Signature

Date

Study Participant Name (please print)

Signature of Person who explained the study

Date

Person who explained the study (print)

Supplement Document E: Interview Process Details

Our project aims to strengthen climate communication for Hong Kong businesses by recommending practices to improve climate rhetoric and promote climate action. We will address core issues in both internal and external climate communication, including lack of expertise in climate concepts by employees and greenwashing by businesses to consumers. These interviews will give insight on how businesses communicate about climate change on an employee level. We want to understand how climate communication is structured, what climate communication messages do employees engage with, and how these messages are framed in communications. Before we begin our interview, we will clarify three things: (1) if the interviewee is comfortable having their responses recorded, (2) if the interviewee is comfortable critiquing the business's climate communication practices, and (3) that their responses will remain anonymous in our final report. We would like to record the interview audio on our phones, but will refrain from doing so if requested.

Our interviews will take place in-person or virtually with the interviewee(s) and at least two of our group members. One group member will be responsible for asking questions and maintaining conversation, while another group member will be responsible for taking notes on the interview. Any additional group members present can take on similar responsibilities as necessary. We will collect interview data through audio recording and note taking. Audio recordings will be taken from our phones and will be uploaded to our laptops via email. Once the audio recording is on our laptops, it will be deleted from the phone it was taken on. Notes will be taken on our laptops, and both the audio recordings and notes will only be on our own devices stored on a private Google Drive. All data will only be accessible to the group members and will reflect the confidentiality that interviewees may request.

In case our interviewee does speak critically about the business's practices, we will not disclose any identifying information in our writing. We will collect and use the information from these interviews to inform our recommendations of best practices for climate communication, but the final report and deliverables will omit any identifying information of our individual interviewees, including their name and position at their company. We will only quote or paraphrase specific interview data in our final report as needed, but will exclude the identifying information when doing so. The names and positions of our interviewees will only be known and used internally among our project team.

Supplement Document F: Interview Process Template with Sample Questions

Hello!

Thank you for meeting with us today. We appreciate your time to help in our project. We would first like to introduce ourselves. We are students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, which is a university in Massachusetts, USA that focuses on science and engineering. We arrived in HK early January and will be here until early March, so just about 2 months. We are doing a research project with the Business Environment Council (BEC) as a part of our junior year project that every student at our university does that aims to have students work on a topic outside of their field, and we are so glad to be in Hong Kong for it! Introductions: [order: Gautham, Nick, Ethan, Kristine].

As a reminder, our project aims to strengthen the climate communication for Hong Kong businesses by recommending practices to improve climate rhetoric and promote climate action.

The purpose of this interview is to give insight on how businesses **communicate** about climate change on an employee level, so we will mainly be interested in how you use communication, specifically about sustainability concepts, at work. I will be primarily asking the questions and Gautham Ethan Nick will be taking notes.

Before we begin, we want to remind you again that your responses will remain anonymous in our final report and deliverables and that you are not obligated to answer any question that you are not comfortable with. We would also like to ask if you are comfortable being recorded during the interview. (This record is just for our viewing and will only be used to go back for reference and will not be used in the final report.) [thank you for sending us your signed consent form / do you agree? Verbal, recorded consent is considered a signature too]

Do you have any questions before we begin?
[begin recording]

Interview Questions

General Questions

1. What does your company specialise in?
2. What is your position at [company]
 - a. What department are you in?
 - b. How long have you been there
 - c. What do you like about it?
3. Thinking more bigger picture, how would you describe the structure of your company and where you fall into it?
 - a. What is the size of your company?

- b. Who do you report to? Who reports to you?
4. What does your company value and prioritise?
 - a. Where does climate action fall into these priorities?

More Climate Communication Specific Questions

5. How would you describe the climate action initiatives of your company?
 - a. How are those initiatives communicated around the company? (proposals, reports, meetings, etc.)

[Define communication, mention horizontal/vertical, upward/downward]

6. What types of communication do you have at work, and what is the general subject of the communication?
 - a. What are the common mediums of communication?
 - b. How do these communications travel through the structure of your company? (Do you primarily discuss within your department, sometimes to other departments, etc)

[Define climate communication, give some examples]

7. How would you describe your use of climate communication? (how frequently, with whom, through what medium, etc.)
8. What messages do you emphasise the most when communicating about climate change?
 - a. When thinking about climate communication, what 3 phrases or terms come to mind and feel the most important to include?
9. Do you think climate communication is valuable for businesses? How so?
10. How does your company approach communicating about climate change in its marketing and public messaging (your website, for example)?
11. What are the business's internal standards for communication about climate change? Do they have a guideline or framework they follow?
12. Are the policies/guidelines applicable to the business's communication practices? Do they actually encourage clear and ethical communication?
 - a. Is the specific language used by policy forms about climate communication too unclear, nonspecific, or inapplicable to the work?
 - b. Is there enough guidance on the specific language businesses should use?

Other

- Do you have any questions for us?
- Is there anything else you want to mention? Maybe a clarification or something you wanted to let us know
- If you do have more questions or any concerns you can always email us and we will be happy to respond.

Closing

Thank you again for taking the time to meet with us today. We appreciate your help and support and hope you have a great rest of your day.

End Meeting

Meeting Notes: