

# PREFACE

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This handbook is a joint project of the Sustainability Network and IMPACS: the Institute for Media, Policy and Civil Society. It is designed to help environmental groups focus their communication efforts. The work that environmental groups do is difficult, time-consuming and often hard to communicate. Groups struggle with limited resources, competition for media attention and publics pre-occupied with important and pressing issues of the economy, health, social welfare and education.

To succeed in this climate, environmental groups must focus with laser-like intensity on getting their messages out. But to whom? And how? Few environmental groups have the kind of internal resources to reach the general public. The challenge then is to develop the right messages, have those messages delivered by the right messenger, to the right audiences, time after time. Figuring out what those messages are, who should deliver them and identifying the right audience is the focus of this handbook.

Through exercises, worksheets and basic communications theory, this handbook will help any environmental group bring that focus to its communication efforts. We hope this handbook will help environmental groups and environmentalists tell the story about the critical work they do, in preserving our natural heritage. It's an important story, and one that should be shared.

This handbook is the brainchild of Paul Bubelis, Executive Director of the Sustainability Network, whose commitment to providing support for environmental groups drove this project. This handbook is based, in part, on a number of communication skills workshops that IMPACS has delivered to hundreds of not-for-profits over the past four years. The lessons learned in those workshops, and the feedback from participants have provided many of the examples included here.

Donna Barker, founder of IMPACS' training department, wrote much of the original content that formed this handbook. IMPACS Strategic Counsel Amanda Gibbs provided additional material on writing for new media, and Communications Centre Director Catherine Ludgate provided some editorial assistance. This material was woven together with additional content authored by Andrea Cole of Cole Communications, and under her guiding editorial hand, this project became a

labour of love. Shehrina Tabassum of the Sustainability Network copy edited the final product and coordinated production.

The Sustainability Network works with environmental non-profits to make them more effective and efficient. By improving management and leadership skills and fostering organizational development, the Network helps to strengthen the environmental community. The Network is about sustaining the organizations that work on sustainability. To learn more about the Sustainability Network, visit <http://sustain.web.ca>.

IMPACS' mission is to turn up the volume on civil society and to strengthen communications between not-for-profit organizations, government and the media, both in Canada and internationally. IMPACS is Canada's first and only not-for-profit communications skills, services and training organization committed exclusively to increasing the profile of Canadian not-for-profits. To learn more about IMPACS, please visit <http://www.impacs.org>.

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