

Print Publication: *Tomorrow*

Author: A.J. Grant

**Title: Five Keys to Effective Communication**



*A.J. Grant, who started Environmental Communications Associates, Inc. in Boulder, Colorado, challenges companies to take communication more seriously.*

A.J. Grant worked for the U.S. Forest Service and environmental groups in the 1970s. switched direction into marketing and design in the '80s and pulled her experiences together by starting Environmental Communications Associates, Inc. in Boulder, Colorado in 1989.

Her philosophy challenges companies and other consultants to take communication more seriously. 'We look at the environment as a diagnostic tool to find where the pressure points are for the company,' explains Grant.

Grant recommends five strategies for keeping corporate communications 'credible and meaningful:'

- 1. Acknowledge and Respect Your Audience.** 'Individuals and the values they hold must be acknowledged by communicators in a non-judgmental way.'

2. ***Validate Feelings and Emotions.*** ‘If the emotional reality of an audience is addressed with respect and understanding, then the audience is given an implicit message –that their experiences and values matter.’
3. ***Emphasize the Process More than the Outcome.*** ‘It may be beyond the scope or ability of corporate communicators to find solutions to public conflicts but if the public perceives the decision-making process (to be) a fair one, i.e., if they believe they are being consulted and that their claims are being heard and considered, they are less likely to be skeptical of a company’s claims.’
4. ***Tell the Truth.*** ‘It may sound old fashioned and elementary but the importance of honesty gets overlooked more than any other principle. Communicators are always more believable when they own up to their own mistakes. Companies which only showcase their good environmental records without acknowledging past errors and their need for improvement will be perceived as less than honest and lacking in integrity.’
5. ***Demonstrate Good Faith Through Actions and Deeds.*** ‘One value which is almost universal is responsibility – and simply put, acting responsibly means honoring your promises.’