Writing Your Sustainability Story
A communications checklist

As you're drafting your commitment to sustainability narrative, keep the following communications strategies in mind. We can dive deeper into any of these strategies during our coaching sessions—so you can improve your narrative across your profile, website, social channels, and beyond.

1. Understand what your audience cares about and speak to their priorities, not yours.
   Questions to answer before you start writing: Who's our audience? What do they care about? What do they think about us now? What do we want them to think?

2. Tell a story with a beginning, middle, end, and a why.
   Resources: Why Science Needs Stories; Steal These Storytelling Strategies

3. Avoid sustainability buzzwords, technical terms, and empty jargon.
   Resources: Step Away from the Buzzwords; Talk Like a Human

4. Root out polarizing language and sub in terms that are neutral.
   Resources: How to Talk Climate with Conservatives; Communicating Sustainability Without Accidentally Polarizing; Packaging Sustainability for Conservative Audiences

5. Avoid climate catastrophizing—focus instead on optimistic realities.
   Tip: Using terms like "climate emergency" and "climate crisis" can be demoralizing—and polarizing. Use empowering, motivating, and positive language that's grounded in reality and solutions.

6. Bring your story down to local terms so it feels more relatable.
   Tip: Messages about local impact perform better than those focused on global consequences.

7. Recontextualize large numbers and figures so they're easier to grasp.
   Resource: Why Big Numbers Break Our Brains

8. Skip macro-level statements in favor of specific details.
   Tip: Avoid sweeping statements, far-off timeframes, and systemic change ("save the planet," "net zero by 2040"). Instead, make your messages specific, concrete, and focused on today.

9. Talk about people more than concepts.
   Tip: People care about people, not abstract concepts. Show how everyday people in your community will benefit from the changes you're making.

10. Bring in your brand voice and personality so your sustainability narrative sounds like you.
    Resource: Manage Your Brand's Mood Swings

11. Be honest about your progress—what you've accomplished *and* where you still have work to do.
    Resource: Make Vulnerability Your Communications Power Move