Beyond Climate Denial

The Public Relations Industry’s Role in Obstructing Climate Action

A 2019 advertisement created by BBDO New York for ExxonMobil.

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Special thanks to Kian Kafaie and Maya Jackson | Climate and Development Lab
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INTRODUCTION

Two thirds of Americans want a greater federal response to climate change, yet national policy on climate is largely nonexistent. This discrepancy is often blamed on political gridlock in Washington, an answer which overlooks a major force shaping public and political opinion on climate action: the public relations (PR) industry. Since NASA scientist Dr. Hansen testified to Congress that global warming had begun in 1988, organizations with a stake in climate politics have hired PR firms to build public trust. The case studies included in this report show that PR firms use certain tactics again and again for these clients: promoting misinformation about climate change, greenwashing, creating front groups, and attacking environmental organizations. To maintain their own reputation, many PR firms highlight their work for environmental groups while a large portion of their business is funded by contracts with the fossil fuel industry.

1. Distorting climate science: PR firms have promoted uncertainty in the severity of climate change and its anthropogenic origins.

2. Greenwashing: PR firms falsely portray oil and gas companies as environmentally friendly, often by overemphasizing renewable energy initiatives which only make up a fraction of the companies’ activities or presenting fossil fuels as a safe partner to renewable energy.

3. Front groups and astroturfing: PR firms manufacture the appearance of grassroots support for their client through groups which appear to be led by community members but are run entirely by the firm and its client. This “astroturfing” is especially common when PR firms are hired to defeat environmental legislation, because it creates the semblance of community opposition to regulations instead of just industry opposition.

4. Attacking opponents: While many PR campaigns seek to undermine the opposition, some have gone as far as surveilling environmental organizations and protestors.

5. Playing both sides: Several PR firms have represented both environmental organizations and fossil fuel industry groups, often despite their own stated commitments to sustainability and the goals of the Paris Climate Accords.

PR firms have shifted tactics over time; around the introduction of the Kyoto Protocol, PR companies led efforts sow doubt in climate change. As climate change denial became increasingly taboo, many PR firms used greenwashing to make fossil fuel companies appear ready to address climate change. Although the strategies have changed, these campaigns are ultimately successful in protecting the social license to operate afforded to fossil fuel companies, which allows the industry to maintain significant political influence. Almost every campaign profiled in this report sought a legislative outcome at the federal or state level – and most achieved these political wins.
METHODS

This report highlights PR campaigns which have been particularly influential in climate politics since 1989, the year after Dr. James Hansen testified in front of Congress that anthropogenic climate change had already begun. Each campaign profiled was created on behalf of one or more actors in climate politics listed by Brulle and Werthman.ii

In order to identify which, if any, public relations firm created these campaigns of interest, researchers analyzed O’Dwyers Directories of Public Relations Firms, a directory published annually which includes an index of PR firms hired by client.


Several clients included in this dataset of climate politics actors filed IRS Form 990s. For every applicable client, researchers reviewed the “Independent Contractor” section of IRS 990s to determine which, if any, PR firm had been hired by the client that year.

Researchers reviewed awards granted by the PR industry’s leading awards organizations for all years available to determine if any of the winning campaigns were created on behalf of a client in the dataset. These organizations are The Telly Awards, MarCom, the Communicator Awards, the SABRE awards, Parthenon, Eurobest, the World Media Group, the Reed Awards, Effie, the Webby Awards, PR News, and the Public Relations Society of America.

This process created a dataset of 179 clients involved in climate politics and the PR firms they contracted each year from 1989 to 2020. 11 PR firms most commonly contracted in the oil and gas, utility, renewable energy, environmental, coal, steel, and rail sectors, along with 10 firms which have garnered significant media coverage for their work on behalf of the selected clients were investigated further for their climate-related campaigns. These were Edelman, Ketchum, Charles Ryan Associates, Fleishman-Hillard, Burson Cohn & Wolfe, Cerrell Associates, Hill & Knowlton, Ogilvy, Weber Shandwick, Glover Park Group, Potomac Group, Hawthorne Group, Bonner & Associates, DDC Advocacy, DCI Group, Story Partners and Dittus Communications, FTI Consulting, Kellen Communications, HDMK and Leo Burnett.

This process outlined many influential PR campaigns which sought to shape climate politics; 24 were selected for case study due to their centrality in climate politics. Researchers conducted a literature review of the sources listed above to detail how PR firms conducted these campaigns and their impact. A keyword search of Nexis Uni with firm names and client names found local news stories about PR campaigns. PR firm websites and PR award agency websites revealed more details about specific campaigns on behalf of the selected clients. The client’s Twitter, Facebook and Youtube pages also provided information about specific PR campaigns.

When available, financial details of specific PR campaigns were included in the case studies. This information was gathered from IRS Form 990s for 501(c)(6) organizations, Kantar Media’s AdSpender database, and the literature review.

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1. CLIMATE CHANGE DENIAL

An ad created for Peabody Energy in 2014 by Burson Marsteller

Advanced Energy For Life by Burson Marstellar for Peabody Energy, 2014

In 2014, Burson Cohn & Wolfe subsidiary Proof Communications led the Advanced Energy for Life campaign for Peabody Energy Corp, the world’s largest private-sector coal company. The campaign opposed the proposed Clean Power Plan, and Peabody spent $386,000 on campaign ads in 2014. On a campaign website, Proof promoted “clean” coal energy as vital for global energy security, especially in poor countries. Videos on the website introduce Jeff Holmstead, a long-time coal and energy lobbyist who rolled back environmental regulations while in the Bush EPA, as a climate change leader. The U.K. Advertising Standards Authority asked Peabody to withdraw some advertisements after the World Wildlife Fund filed a lawsuit claiming that the concept of “clean coal” was “misleading” and obscured the environmental damage caused by coal mining.

The Advanced Energy for Life campaign also drew accusations of astroturfing from environmental organizations. At an event Advanced Energy for Life hosted alongside the 2014 G20 conference, it said the campaign was mobilizing 500,000 people to lobby G20 countries on the issue of energy poverty, a number that appeared to come from likes on the campaign’s Facebook page (450,000) and Twitter followers (125,000). The Sierra Club and EndCoal.org accused Peabody of buying many of those likes and followers, pointing to the rapid jump in followers and likes on the campaign’s Facebook and Twitter over three months. Most community engagement with its social media posts are comments opposing the campaign. While the number of followers and likes increased dramatically in the runup to the event, they began to decrease after the event. Peabody reported that online discussions of energy poverty and clean coal increased 50% and 40%, respectively, in the months following the campaign.
Campaign for Friends of Science by FleishmanHillard, 2006

Morten Paulsen and Byron Thomas of FleishmanHillard Canada were the communications contacts and lobbyists for Friends of Science, a Canadian climate change denial group. During the time they worked for Friends of Science, it ran a campaign against Kyoto Protocol standards in which it organized newspaper interviews and speeches for climate change denialists such as Dr. Tim Ball. Friends of Science also ran radio ads, including the following:

“Here's an easy true and false quiz. Ready?

1. Global warming has caused more violent weather worldwide.
2. The earth is warmer today than in the last thousand years.
3. Carbon dioxide is dangerous pollution.

If you said yes, you've been misled. Get the real answers at friendsofscience.org then ask your MPs why they want to spend billions on global warming theories.”

Scientific Inquiries


Here Comes the Sun to Further Cloud Global Warming Theory

Debate on the causes of predicted global warming usually revolves around climate models scientists construct. But can those models account for all the variables the universe has to offer? Not really, according to Dr. Sallie Balanicas of the Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, who puts forth the sun as a variable not to forget.

An archived image of Tech Central Station from June 2001.

Tech Central Station on behalf of ExxonMobil by DCI Group, 2000 - 2006

In 2000, ExxonMobil, Coca Cola, AT&T and General Motors sponsored the newly founded Tech Central Station, a libertarian blog run by the PR firm DCI Group. With host James K. Glassman, an American Enterprise Institute fellow with a background in publications targeted to DC lobbyists, Tech Central Station was “a cross between a journal of internet opinion and a cyber think tank open to the public,” according to an early press release. Since Tech Central Station was not a 501(c)(3) like most think tanks, it did not have to disclose its funding. In 2003, the ExxonMobil foundation gave Tech Central Science Foundation $95,000 for “climate change support.” Once ExxonMobil became a “sponsor,” the website published many articles attacking the Kyoto Protocol and the science of climate change, like one titled ‘Top MIT Expert to TechCentralStation: Global Warming Report “Children’s Exercise;” Kyoto Agreement “Absurd’.” A 2004 article published by Tech Central Station by Willie Soon refers to the consequences of climate change as “an exaggerated hype.”
An article published on the site by Pat Michaels, who became famous for denying climate change, asserted that Antarctica's shrinking ice sheet was due to “natural variability” rather than global warming. In another of the site’s articles, climate denialist Fred Singer wrote:

“So, to all who worry about global warming, to all who think that people threatening to blow up millions to get their political way is no big deal by comparison, chill out. The science is settled. The "skeptics" -- the strange name applied to those whose work shows the planet isn't coming to an end -- have won.”

DCI Group involved its *Tech Central Station* staff in conversations with ExxonMobil and ExxonMobil funded think tanks on how to oppose environmental regulations. Specifically referenced as a climate denial tool in a 2006 letter to Exxon from Olympia Snowe (R-ME) and Jay Rockefeller (D-WV) in which the senators urged the oil and gas giant to "end any further financial assistance" to groups “whose public advocacy has contributed to the small but unfortunately effective climate change denial myth.” In 2016, DCI was subpoenaed by the U.S. Virgin Islands U.S. Attorneys’ Office “for records relating to [its] role in helping ExxonMobil with climate change denial” after investigations by InsideClimate News and the LA Times/Columbia School of Journalism alleged that Exxon had been aware of the dangers of climate change for several decades, yet continued to fund groups which questioned climate science.

**Global Climate Information Project ad which ran in the New York Times on Nov. 20, 1997**

*Global Climate Information Project* by Weber Shandwick for the Global Climate Coalition

In 1997, the Global Climate Coalition hired Weber Shandwick, then Shandwick Public Affairs, to create a PR campaign opposing the United States’ ratification of the Kyoto Protocol. This $13 million campaign drew support from the fossil fuel, manufacturing, chemical, transportation, and agriculture trade associations, including the National Association of Manufacturers, American Petroleum Institute, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Weber Shandwick’s ads declared the Kyoto Protocol would
increase gas prices by 50 cents and increase consumer goods prices, even though these claims were disputed. xxx Weber Shandwick ran ads in the Washington Post and The New York Times opposing ratification during U.N. negotiations which were addressed to “Mr. President” and U.S. senators. xxxi The campaign’s website emphasized the uncertainty of climate science, even including a section on “Other Sites on Climate Change” which linked to other denial groups’ websites, including the GCC, Cooler Heads Coalition, and The Science and Environmental Policy Project. xxxii The campaign was ultimately successful: President George W. Bush decided not to sign onto the Kyoto Protocol in 2001, citing one of the campaign’s main messages that the climate agreement was unfair because developing countries were not included in binding emissions reductions. xxxiii

2. GREENWASHING

“The Energy from Shale” campaign for API by FleishmanHillard, 2011-2016

The “Energy from Shale” campaign used print, TV, radio, and digital advertisements in order to promote natural gas and fracking. xxxv This campaign cost the American Petroleum Institute $28,598,400 between 2011 and 2016; xxxvi FleishmanHillard has received $96,594,882 from API since 2011. xxxvii The campaign included a website, energyfromshale.com, which frequently referred to natural gas as “clean burning natural gas,” xxxviii as well as a verified Twitter account, @EnergyFromShale, which claimed, “Turns out wind & solar have a secret friend: Natural gas.” xxxix An advertisement from the campaign featured on FleishmanHillard’s website highlights a family-owned ranch which allowed fracking and features one of the owners of the ranch saying, “With all the stories out there, some people were surprised we allowed fracking on our land...Guess what? It’s safe. Safe for our land, water, and the air.” xli
“Miniature Science” campaign for Exxon by BBDO, 2019

BBDO has been the primary agency for ExxonMobil since 2011. In November 2019, BBDO New York ran the Miniature Science ad campaign on behalf of ExxonMobil. Targeting a younger audience, the ads highlighted low emissions energy research projects by ExxonMobil. One of the ads, called “Power Plant Conversion,” shows natural gas being substituted for coal in a miniature power plant. Over the video, the advertisement writes, “Natural gas generates cleaner electricity with less CO2.” Another ad shows algae-derived biofuel fueling miniature cars, planes and ships. The ad closes with the statement “Algae could fuel the trucks, ships and planes of tomorrow.” Mark Girand, BBDO’s senior creative director, explained how the ads targeted Gen Z: “This was an opportunity to talk to an audience with no brand predispositions and pull them in with creativity.” BBDO’s ads were featured on Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook and YouTube, and in less than 6 months the YouTube videos amassed over 250,000 views. “Our Gen Z target consume videos primarily on their phones. They are visual learners, and they care about authenticity. They refuse to be ‘sold to,’ and they are also extremely design conscious,” Girand told Muse by Clio. Additionally, four short films featuring research into low emissions fuel were created for the digital and social media campaign.

Miniature Science ran alongside another ad campaign targeting an older audience, Algae Potential, with corporate brand advertising at the 2019 World Series, NBA games, NFL’s Sunday Night Football, and college football games. “ExxonMobil is growing algae for biofuels that could one day power planes,” says the narrator in the campaign’s TV ad, which was seen 1.9 billion times and cost $24.2 million for its two and a half month run. The ad was produced by Euro RSCG and Universal McCann. Print ads also ran.

“Unexpected Energy” T Brand Studio ads for ExxonMobil

With a similar message as the Algae Potential campaign for ExxonMobil by BBDO, the New York Times’ in-house advertising shop created several ads for ExxonMobil starting in 2018. T Brand Studio creates ads displayed on the New York Times website with “PAID POST” atop the content to delineate it from newsroom or editorial content. When a segment of this “PAID POST” banner is clicked, the user is taken to the ExxonMobil-funded website Energy Factor, which displays the BBDO ad “The Tiny Organism.” One advertorial had the headline
“The Future of Energy? It May Come From Where You Least Expect,” with the subheading “How scientists are tapping algae and plant waste to fuel a sustainable energy future.”xlviii Another video ad overemphasized the estimated impact of ExxonMobil’s algae research, saying “[algae] can produce bio-oil that could one day fuel our transportation needs,”xl ix but the company’s own reports only hope for 10,000 barrels of algae biofuel a day by 2025, compared to its 4 million barrels of oil and gas produced per day in 2021.li

The New York Times has drawn attention for its relationship with ExxonMobil in the past; a 2017 editorial noted that the Times had published at least 36 “advertorials” between 1989 and 2004 casting doubt on climate change science.iii

**The Human Energy Company for Chevron by Wavemaker, 2020-2021**

Wavemaker has represented Chevron for more than 19 years, and in 2019 it was reported that the WPP subsidiary retained the $60 million account through 2021.iii Wavemaker won an award from the Internationalist Awards in Media Innovation in 2019 for its “We Live Here Too” ad created for Chevron.iv In 2020, Wavemaker created a series of ads explaining Chevron’s renewable energy investments.

The 2020 “Butterfly” TV ad created by Wavemaker on behalf of Chevron was seen by over 115 million people.iv It aired on political TV shows including ABC’s This Week with George Stephanopoulos and cost about $1 million. This ad was also shown on Youtube, Twitter and Facebook. A narrator says “Over the past 10 years, Chevron has spent over $1 billion dollars on carbon capture projects and is investing in startups looking to transform carbon into new forms of energy.” In July 2021, Chevron acknowledged that its Western Australian gas plant, which it had described as the world’s largest carbon capture and storage project, had failed to meet its carbon capture goal due to technology failure. Chevron had promised to bury 80% of its carbon emissions from the gas plant, but has only buried 30%.lv

**Go+ and Make the Future for Shell by Wunderman Thompson, Edelman, others, 2016-2021**

Wunderman Thompson has been the lead agency for Shell since 2013 and is the lead agency for Shell’s digital campaigns.vi In 2019, Wunderman Thompson U.K. won a Bronze
Automotive award from the Data and Marketing Association for its Go+ campaign, a loyalty program for Shell.\textsuperscript{ix} The award noted that the campaign drove more customers to Shell’s gas stations and customers filled their gas tanks more after Go+’s introduction. In early 2020, an ad for Go+ which read “Make the Change: Drive Carbon Neutral” and “Shell Go+ members are now driving carbon neutral, helping to protect and replant forests. Join them today!” were referred to the U.K.’s Advertising Standards Authority after complaints from the public. While the complaints were rejected for the print and digital ads, the ASA determined that one of the campaign’s radio ads misled the public into believing Shell’s fuel was carbon neutral.\textsuperscript{x}

Multiple PR firms have also been involved with Shell’s Make the Future campaign, which highlights the oil and gas company’s “alternative energy efforts.”\textsuperscript{lxii} In 2017, Hill + Knowlton Strategies placed ads on London city buses that read “Your coffee can now help power buses: Shell.”\textsuperscript{lxiii} The campaign reached 11.8 billion people and earned media attention from BBC, Bloomberg, and the New York Times.\textsuperscript{lxiv} J. Walter Thompson, Mediacom, and Colloquial are credited in a video about the campaign on Hill + Knowlton’s YouTube channel.\textsuperscript{lxv}

In 2018, Oath (now Verizon Media Group) and MediaCom also partnered with Shell on Make the Future. The PR firms sought to engage younger audiences and created an interactive animation and music video posted to Shell’s Tumblr page which promoted the oil company’s cleaner energy initiatives.\textsuperscript{lxvi, lxvii, lxviii}

Edelman, which has had multimillion dollar public relations contracts with Shell since 2005, has also organized part of the Make the Future campaign since 2016.\textsuperscript{lxix} In 2018, Edelman handled PR for Shell’s Make the Future event, where huge interactive screens showed what Shell thought the future of energy could be - namely, net-zero global emissions by 2070.\textsuperscript{lx} Edelman also managed Shell’s endorsement of the South Pole Energy Challenge in 2018, which showed two explorers reaching the South Pole using solely renewable energy.\textsuperscript{lxxi} The campaign, which included footage from the explorers’ visit to a Shell Technology Centre, reached 21 million people. An Ipsos study conducted for Shell showed that people were 31% more likely to see Shell as committed to cleaner fuels after seeing the campaign.\textsuperscript{lxii}

“Possibilities Everywhere” ad for BP from May 2019, created by Ogilvy and Purple Strategies.\textsuperscript{lxiii}

Possibilities Everywhere for BP by WPP subsidiaries Ogilvy, Purple Strategies, & Mindshare Media, 2019
BP has relied on Ogilvy for over two decades to create campaigns advertising the oil corporation’s commitment to renewable energy including the “Beyond Petroleum” rebrand from 2000 to 2008. In 2019, Ogilvy New York and Purple Strategies, both subsidiaries of WPP plc, created BP’s largest global campaign in nearly a decade, Possibilities Everywhere. Ads on TV, newspapers, billboards, and social media showcased the oil and gas company’s wind and solar energy endeavors. Mindshare Media, another WPP plc subsidiary, has also contributed to the campaign with ads showcasing BP’s windfarms and advocating for the combined use of natural gas and renewable energy. Other ads created by Ogilvy and Mindshare state, “By producing cleaner-burning natural gases, solar and wind power and faster charging for electric vehicles, BP says that there are possibilities everywhere for continued advancement.”

Still other ads highlight BP’s partnership with Fulcrum BioEnergy, which claims to turn garbage into jet fuel.

In December 2019, environmental law group Client Earth filed a legal complaint against BP in the UK which argued Possibilities Everywhere violated OECD guidelines by misleading consumers “given its focus on clean energy investments, when in reality more than 96% of BP’s annual spend is still on oil and gas.” Client Earth hired PR firm Huddle Creative to undermine the Possibilities Everywhere message, which it did by recreating WPP’s ads with a large disclaimer on top saying that fossil fuels cause climate change.

In February 2020, BP announced that it would stop Possibilities Everywhere and other forms of “corporate reputation advertising” as a part of its larger plan to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

Ads created by Story Partners to oppose Proposition 112, a 2018 ballot measure in Colorado

Campaign against Proposition 112 by Story Partners for Noble Energy, 2018

Noble Energy, one of the biggest oil and gas companies in Colorado, hired Story Partners in 2018 to combat Proposition 112, a proposed ballot measure in Colorado which would ban oil and gas drilling within half a mile of homes. The campaign used a variety of digital, print and TV ads to promote the safety of Noble Energy’s extraction techniques. The campaign also advertised that the ballot measure would cause job losses and jeopardize the energy independence of the U.S; some of these ads ran under the Consumer Energy Alliance name or local Chamber of Commerces. In total, industry-backed opposition to the ballot measure
toted $33 million, which was the highest amount raised on a single ballot measure in Colorado’s history. Proponents of Proposition 112 pointed to the fact that there had been over a dozen fires, leaks, and explosions of oil and gas facilities in the area since 2017 and framed the ballot measure as a possible way to decrease air pollution around schools. In a huge win for Noble Energy and other oil and gas companies in Colorado, Proposition 112 was ultimately unsuccessful.\textsuperscript{\textsc{lxxxvii}}

\textbf{How America came to lead the way on cleaner energy}

\textit{By Mike Sommers, President and CEO, American Petroleum Institute}

December 11, 2019

The natural gas and oil industry is reducing emissions while fueling a modern way of life globally

Those of us in the energy industry know that to power our modern way of life, we always must be agile and innovating to meet the world’s ever-increasing need for affordable and reliable energy. We know, too, that the energy powering our world must be cleaner.

\textit{An API ad, posted on the Washington Post website.}\textsuperscript{\textsc{lxxxviii}}

\textbf{WP Creative Group for the American Petroleum Institute}

In February 2019, readers of the Washington Post website were shown an ad from the American Petroleum institute that looked identical to the Post’s articles. “Low and no-carbon future starts with natural gas,” read the “native advertisement,” a phrase for ads that mimic news articles to appeal to their target audience. Another ad, posted on the Washington Post website on May 10, 2021, has the headline “Tackling Climate Change with a Collaborative Approach” and is formatted like a news story with the blurb “Together, we can build a lower-carbon future.”\textsuperscript{\textsc{lxxxix}}

The ads’ formatting and placement on the Washington Post website were especially effective at mimicking the Washington Post’s news articles because they were created by the newspaper’s ad studio. While the ads had a disclaimer at the bottom of the article that the Washington Post newsroom had no part in their creation, WP Creative Group advertises its service “influencing the influencers” as particularly valuable because of its access to the Washington Post’s readership: “Our formula is simple: Find the brand’s story, then tell it with exactly the blend of words, images and immersive activity it requires. We’ve learned that’s what it takes to get a Washington Post reader emotionally and intellectually engaged.”\textsuperscript{\textsc{xc}} WP Creative Group advertises its work for BP, Chevron, Shell and the American Fuel and Petrochemical Manufacturers. Many of these ads mirrored the messaging WP Creative Content designed for API, like one advertorial for BP with the headline “Lessons from the oil and gas industry could power wind energy’s future.”\textsuperscript{\textsc{xci}}
3. FRONT GROUPS AND FAKE GRASSROOTS SUPPORT

The Empowerment Alliance by HDMK, 2019-Present

The Empowerment Alliance (TEA) is a front group run by PR firm HDMK which represents the fossil fuel industry’s first coordinated effort to undermine the Green New Deal and other calls for large-scale action on climate change. Founded in September 2019, TEA operated in the run up to the 2020 election and advocated for the use of natural gas. TEA’s current campaign frames the United States’ increased natural gas consumption as integral to creating and preserving high-paying jobs and protecting the environment. Moreover, TEA claims its efforts will “forge a more realistic, rational, and effective approach to energy consumption and environmental conservation than the risky tax scheme known as the ‘Green New Deal.’”

HDMK’s TEA campaign includes digital outreach through Twitter and YouTube accounts, grassroots outreach, traditional ad buys, and plans to include earned media placements and lobbying in the future. HDMK’s talking points for The Empowerment Alliance include statements such as:

- Natural gas is “the cleanest of fossil fuels.”
- Natural gas is critical for national security: “radical proposals” like the Green New Deal “would devastate our country’s position as the world’s lone superpower” by “taking us back to energy dependence.”
- Poor families will be hurt the most by policies that increase the price of energy.

Tweets from the Empowerment Alliance Twitter account, August 2021.
An EID website promoting Truthland, a rebuttal to Gasland, a 2010 documentary critical of hydraulic fracking.xcvi

Energy in Depth by FTI Consulting for the Independent Petroleum Association of America

Energy in Depth (EID) is a campaign launched in 2009 by Dittus Communications, a subsidiary of FTI Consulting, a global consulting firm which has created several grassroots groups for the fossil fuel industry. EID was created for the Independent Petroleum Association of America (IPAA) to oppose environmental regulations on hydraulic fracturing. IPAA privately stated that Energy in Depth is “A state of the art online resource center to combat new environmental regulations, especially with regard to hydraulic fracturing.”xcvii Though EID claims to be formed by independent “mom and pop” natural gas producers in an attempt to connect to everyday Americans, a memo released in 2009 includes a statement from IPAA president Barry Russel thanking the largest oil and gas producers, including BP, Halliburton, Chevron, Shell, and XTO Energy, for “enabling the creation of Energy in Depth.”xcviii According to the New York Times, EID’s “content had direction from Exxon Mobil, one of the major clients of the FTI division that worked on these oil and gas campaigns.”xcix EID’s connection to ExxonMobil was hidden; its website only notes a relationship with a trade association of which ExxonMobil is a member.c

EID has shifted to respond to more recent threats to the oil and gas industry. A recent ad on Twitter reads “Baltimore's #climate plan includes removing bike lanes, tearing up trees to make room for a speedway, and filing baseless litigation against energy companies.”ci

FTI also worked with IPAA to create DivestmentFacts.com, which claimed that divestment from fossil fuels could cost organizations millions of dollars. According to the New York Times, “At least six academic papers published on Divestmentfacts.com were by professors who, in addition to their university jobs, were also working for Compass Lexecon, the FTI subsidiary.”cii

America’s Natural Gas Alliance by Hill + Knowlton, 2009 - 2015

Hill + Knowlton’s website credits its managing director Bronwyn Wallace for “helping establish America’s Natural Gas Alliance.”ciii The Alliance appeared to be closely managed by Hill & Knowlton from its founding in 2009 until 2015.civ The biggest names in the natural gas
industry (including Anadarko Petroleum and XTO Energy, bought by ExxonMobil in 2010) pledged $80 million to ANGA to oppose the American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009. cvi Hill + Knowlton lobbied for ANGA from at least 2009-2011 through its lobbying shop Wexler | Walker. cvii Through this PR campaign, full page advertisements signed by ANGA ran in the Washington Post and banner ads ran alongside natural gas reporting on NPR’s website. cviii “Natural Gas is twice as clean as coal. Eureka!” declared one such ad. cx This advertising campaign targeted the political elite as well as the larger public. Politico’s “Morning Energy” newsletter included this message from 2009 - 2010:

“A message from America's Natural Gas Alliance: When used for power generation, natural gas is twice as clean as coal when it comes to carbon emissions. It has 80% fewer NOx emissions and virtually no sulfur dioxide, particulate matter or mercury.”

Energy Citizens and Energy Nation for API by DDC Advocacy, 2012 - 2017

Energy Citizens and Energy Nation were two front groups run by DDC Advocacy and funded by the American Petroleum Institute (API). To counter opposition to fracking and additional energy taxes, DDC used Energy Citizens to give a community face to oil interests, especially as the EPA held public hearings on natural gas extraction on the Marcellus Shale formation in Pennsylvania. Through Energy Citizens, DDC recruited 2,300 people in support of fracking on the Marcellus Shale, who then testified at EPA hearings in favor of fracking. DDC convened five meetings between Energy Citizens members and congressional representatives and created 170 personal letters of support to a state commission evaluating the plans. cx

Energy Nation is another group created to support natural gas extraction, claiming to be “made up of hundreds of thousands of Americans, who are determined to see our nation develop balanced energy policies that support American jobs, economic growth and national security,” and which has argued that proposed taxation of natural gas production would “threaten jobs, stall economic growth, and harm our communities.” cxii In reality, the webpages for Energy Citizens, Energy Nation, and other front groups are run directly by DDC Advocacy and receive their funding from major industry players via API. cxiii

Energy Citizens by Edelman for API, 2009 - 2012

From 2005 to 2016, Edelman and its subsidiary Blue Advertising led the public relations for API. From 2008 to 2012, these contracts were worth $252.2 million. cxiv In 2009, as part of its contract with API Edelman created Energy Citizens, a third party organization that Edelman described as a “nationwide alliance of organizations and individuals formed to bring together people across America to remind Congress that energy is the backbone of our nation’s economy and our way of life.” In the summer of 2009, Edelman organized about 20 rallies through Energy Citizens to create the appearance of grassroots opposition to the American Clean Energy and Security Act, which had passed in the House of Representatives in June. The hundreds of individuals at the rally were oil company employees who were brought to the rally during their work lunch breaks. cxv The protests were strategically held in states with Democratic senators who had not supported strong climate legislation, such as Sen. Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Sen. Mark Begich of Alaska. cxvi The bill failed to make it to the Senate.

American Automobiles Manufacturers Association by Cerrell for Chevron, 1994 - 2002
In 1990, in an effort to reduce car emissions, the California Air Resources Board (“CARB”) mandated that by 2003, 10% of all cars sold must be ZEV (Zero Emission Vehicles). Chevron hired Cerrell in 1994 in order to fight the ZEV mandate. Cerrell’s tactics included a “letter writing campaign, bused-in retirees, [and] focus groups.” Cerrell estimated that automakers put $500,000 in the effort to oppose CARB’s ZEV mandate in the first six months of 1995. By 1996, much of CARB’s ZEV mandate had been repealed.

Instead of running ads under Chevron’s logo, Cerrell created the American Automobiles Manufacturers Association to separate individual car companies from the campaign. The president of Cerrell Associates, Hal Dash, said in 1996, “People sometimes create groups that try to fudge a little bit about what their goals are. They want to create a patina of good guy-ness.” He went on to say he spent time trying to come up with a name for his auto industry clients interested in opposing fuel standards. "But we decided in our case it was silly, and the best thing to do was be the American Automobile Manufacturers Association," Dash said. "The press has spent less time worrying about a front group and more focusing on the issue."

While Dash insisted that AAMA was not engaged in astroturfing, he confirmed that it shared a common goal and information with Californians Against Hidden Taxes and Californians Against Utility Company Abuse, front groups largely funded by the Western States Petroleum Association.

In 2001, The Holmes Report reported that Cerrell won the Automobile Alliance of America account “to address electric vehicle mandates.” The American Automobiles Manufacturers Association had dissolved by 2002.

**Campaign for Entergy by THG, 2018**

Entergy is a New Orleans-based electric utility engaged primarily in electric power production and retail distribution operations. In 2018, Entergy hired Hawthorn to work with a company called Crowds on Demand that hired actors to attend a city council hearing in New Orleans to create the illusion of local support for a proposed Entergy natural gas plant. Actors were paid $60 to appear and participate, and $200 for “speaking roles.”

**4. PLAYING BOTH SIDES**

Many PR firms, including Ogilvy, Ketchum, and Glover Park Group, outwardly espouse environmentally friendly agendas while simultaneously working for both environmental groups and fossil fuel organizations.
Ogilvy

Ogilvy was contracted in 2013 by the United Nations to work on its Momentum of Change campaign, which highlighted actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change as part of the UN Climate Change conference in Warsaw. This followed years of climate change campaigns led by Ogilvy on behalf of the UN, including the 2009 “Hopenhagen” campaign ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen to build support for a replacement to the Kyoto Protocol. Ogilvy also created OgilvyEarth in 2009. Their website opened with the statement “the world isn’t hoping for a sustainable future, it’s already chosen it.” The OgilvyEarth website also highlights the awards won for its campaigns, including work contracted by the Environmental Defense Fund.

However, Ogilvy has simultaneously partnered with BP for nearly two decades on various greenwashing campaigns, including Possibilities Everywhere (see above) and Beyond Petroleum, despite BP continuing to grow its production and profits from oil. Beginning in 2000, the Beyond Petroleum campaign aimed to demonstrate to consumers that BP was concerned for the environment, to acknowledge the oil industry's impact on climate, and to highlight the company’s efforts to seek alternative energy sources. Notable aspects of the campaign include “BP on the Street,” which aimed to connect with investors and policy makers in Chicago, New York, and D.C. and featured conversations surrounding the need for and cost of receiving energy with random individuals interviewed on the street. Another part of the campaign promoted the concept of a carbon footprint, which sought to divert attention from the fossil fuel industry by reframing climate change as an issue of individual responsibility. This branding was met with several accolades including PRWeek’s 2001 “Campaign of the Year.”

Ketchum
Ketchum has longstanding fossil fuel industry ties; it has worked for natural gas companies since the 1920s\textsuperscript{cxxxvi} and has represented industry giants BP, ExxonMobil, and Chevron.\textsuperscript{cxxxvii} However, Ketchum has more recently emphasized corporate social responsibility and sustainability, although the firm remains linked to opponents of climate action policies, including Exxon.\textsuperscript{cxxxviii} Barri Rafferty, CEO and president of the agency until June 2020, has authored op-eds arguing that climate mitigation should be a business priority, while participating in the sustainability task force of the World Economic Forum.\textsuperscript{cxxxix} Ketchum was also a lead agency tasked with global PR in the Hopenhagen advertising campaign promoting the UN’s 2009 Copenhagen Climate Change Conference.\textsuperscript{cxli} In September 2014, a Ketchum spokesman told The Guardian that the agency “does not take on clients or campaigns that deny the existence and the threat posed by man-made climate change,” but the agency has continued contracts with clients promoting climate denial and delayed climate action, including ExxonMobil.\textsuperscript{cxli}

**Glover Park Group**

Glover Park Group (GPG) has worked to promote both climate change legislation and natural gas. GPG promoted Al Gore’s 2006 film on climate change, *An Inconvenient Truth*,\textsuperscript{cxlii} and worked for the Alliance for Climate Protection (ACP), which was the non-profit environmental organization founded by Al Gore in 2006 to increase public awareness and civic action on climate change.\textsuperscript{cxlii} GPG also worked alongside the CNA Corporation, now known as CNA, to help push for climate change legislation by redefining the issue as a national security threat.\textsuperscript{cxliv} GPG helped develop and disseminate a 2007 report *National Security and the Threat of Climate Change*, which encouraged the U.S. to “commit to a stronger national and international role to help stabilize climate changes at levels that will avoid significant disruption to global security and stability.”\textsuperscript{cxlv} However, GPG was also America’s Natural Gas Alliance’s (ANGA) highest paid independent contractor from 2010 to 2014,\textsuperscript{cxlv, cxlvii, cxlviii, cxlix, cl} with ANGA paying GPG a peak of over $2.9 million in 2012 for research and advertising.\textsuperscript{cl} ANGA’s major campaign during this time, entitled #ThinkAboutIt, aimed to improve public perception about natural gas by positioning natural gas as a necessity to both the American economy\textsuperscript{clii} and people’s everyday lives.\textsuperscript{clii}

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**5. ATTACKING ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS**

**Surveillance of environmental organizations for Dow Chemical by Ketchum, 1998-2000**

While working for Dow Chemical, Ketchum hired Brown Beckett International (BBI), later rebranded as S2i, a security firm consisting of former and then-current Secret Service and CIA personnel who often worked with local law enforcement contacts to surveil environmental activists from at least 1998 to 2000.\textsuperscript{cliv} BBI interfered in the activities of a range of environmental organizations including Greenpeace, the Union for Concerned Scientists, Center for Food Safety, Friends of the Earth, the Sierra Club, and local anti-toxics and environmental justice coalitions, as well as Fenton Communications, a PR firm known for its work for environmentalist groups.\textsuperscript{clv} These activities included searching their target’s trash, intruding into offices, attending internal meetings on false pretenses and planting operatives within
organizations, wiretapping and hacking computers, as well as gaining access to confidential
documents, financial records and staff social security numbers. BBI operatives billed their
work to Ketchum on behalf of its client Dow, and regularly produced intelligence reports for
exclusive use by Ketchum, anticipating future campaign actions and reporting on areas of
friction amongst environmental organizations. Greenpeace’s Global Warming Strategy and
Climate Campaign Ship Tour Draft Schedule were among the documents obtained.

**PRESSURE Campaign Components**

**Detailed Background Research on Key Opposition Groups:** We will prepare a research
profile of key opposition groups by examining public records (including financial disclosures,
legal databases and legislative records), traditional media sources (news databases such as
Lexis-Nexis and Factiva) and social media (Facebook, Twitter and other relevant sites). All
relevant findings will be compiled in a written, fully documented report, to include a summary of
findings and an assessment of strengths and weaknesses. Areas of focus will include:
- Operating and financing structure
- Key locals and affiliated organizations

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**Identification and Engagement of Potential Allies:** While TransCanada projects an important
voice and will be a large part of this program, we should not be the only ones telling our story.
Third-party voices must also be identified, recruited and heard to build an echo chamber of
aligned voices. We can work with the Community Relations team to develop a list of third-party
experts and credible community voices with whom we can form strategic relationships and
possibly enlist to author op-ed pieces, blog posts or letters to the editor. In coordination with
Community Relations staff, we will identify and vet potential allies to determine their viability and
level of interest. Then we will match messages to identified third-party allies and engage them.
We can also leverage third parties for both Promote and Respond activities.

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*Excerpts from Edelman’s 2013 proposal to suppress opposition to TransCanada’s East Energy pipeline*

**East Energy Pipeline campaign by Edelman for TransCanada, 2013**

In 2013, Edelman advised TransCanada on how to suppress opposition to its proposed
Canadian pipeline East Energy, which served as an alternative to building the unpopular
Keystone XL pipeline. In a document leaked to the Guardian, Edelman advised Keystone to:

“Promote: Actively promote the positive East Energy story to key audiences...;
Respond: Anticipate and respond rapidly to unfavorable coverage/conversation,
charges and negative attacks...;
Pressure: Work with third parties to pressure Energy East opponents. Add layers
of difficulty for our opponents, distracting them from their mission and causing
them to redirect their resources.”

Edelman recommended recruiting at least 35,000 supporters and planned to utilize third-
party voices to “build an echo chamber of aligned voices.” When this proposal became public,
TransCanada terminated its contract with Edelman.

**FTI Consulting posed as journalists on behalf of the Western Energy Alliance, 2019**
The Western Energy Alliance is an oil and gas trade alliance that represents companies from the Western United States and promotes fracking. Allegedly, WEA has an Exxon executive on its board. In 2017 and 2018, the Western Energy Alliance paid FTI Consulting $217,317 and $243,000, respectively. WEA and FTI jointly run Western Wire, a website which claims to be “the go-to source for news, commentary and analysis on pro-growth, pro-development policies across the West.” In 2019, two FTI employees who were listed as writers for Western Wire posed as journalists in an attempt to gain information about a lawsuit against Exxon from an attorney involved in the case.


5 Ibid.


Shell (2017, Nov 24). The South Pole Energy Challenge - the world’s first expedition using only renewable technologies has begun! Less talk, more walk. It’s game on! [Tweet].


Fahrenthold. Trade Group Asks Oil Companies to Recruit Employees.


Ibid.


