

US Air Force 2012 Energy Action Month Campaign

Booz Allen Hamilton and U.S. Air Force Public Affairs AND U.S. Air Force Civil Engineering Center AND Northrop Grumman AND Concurrent Technologies Corporation, Jan 1, 2013

Summary: 2013 Silver Anvil Award Winner — Internal Communications — Associations / Government / Nonprofit Organizations

For the U.S. Air Force, energy is both a critical mission asset and significant expenditure totaling \$9.2 billion in 2012. The efficient use of fuel and electricity by Airmen is a priority that drove an internal communications campaign to increase awareness and encourage behavior change of the more than 600,000 officers, enlisted, civilians and Guardsmen serving globally. The campaign - centered around Energy Action Month - involved 80 bases participating in more than 40 unique outreach tactics that raised awareness across the organization to get Airmen to incorporate energy into all they do.

Internal communications includes programs targeted specifically to special publics directly allied with an organization, such as employees, members, affiliated dealers and franchisees.

Full Text: RESEARCH

The U.S. Air Force is the largest consumer of energy in the federal government, spending \$9.2 billion on fuel and electricity in Fiscal Year 2012. Along with being a major cost, energy is also required to execute every element of the Service’s mission. Thus, an Air Force Energy Plan was developed in 2010 that identified “Change the Culture” as one of three priorities. Part of this effort was to leverage the federal government-wide Energy Action Month (EAM) in October as a focal point for a campaign to achieve two goals: increase awareness that energy is critical to the Air Force and encourage more energy efficient behaviors. The campaign was led by the U.S. Air Force’s Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Energy (SAF/IEN) partnering with U.S. Air Force Public Affairs (SAF/PA) and the U.S. Air Force Civil Engineer (AF/A7C). Background research for the effort included:

Source	Detail	Key Findings
Internal document review	Energy use data, energy best practices, and Air Force energy accomplishments summarized in an Energy 101 brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Messaging focused on Air Force-wide successes vs. Airmen accomplishments and their role in energy • More than 70 energy success stories provided extensive material for outreach materials
2011 EAM analysis	Review of the Energy Action Month media clips, outreach materials, and After Action Report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bases had civil engineer staff excited to educate Airmen about energy but messages and materials were not consistent with Air Force headquarters

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Force Public Affairs conducted effective high-level outreach but did not leverage all available tools including its worldwide public affairs staff
Online Energy training data	Voluntary online energy course collects data on usage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An average of 52 Airmen per month took voluntary online training
Internal Communications Assessment Group (ICAG) survey fielded 8/2012; 11/2011; 1/2011)	Regular group of thousands of Airmen who respond to online survey. 2,045 respondents participated in August 2012 survey (2.2% margin of error)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of understanding of the impact of energy. 88% said energy conservation is important to them personally but 65% of Airmen said energy impacted their work “slightly” or “not at all”. • There are a range of media channels Airmen use to get information on energy issues and each has a different trusted messenger.
ICAG Focus Group (fielded 2/12 – 4/12)	Qualitative research conducted to get additional data on energy issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airmen see energy more as electricity on base than a mission imperative • Energy awareness gets little attention from Airmen. It is lost in the clutter of other issues.

In summary, research illustrated Airmen lacked an understanding of the true impact of energy to the Air Force mission and that messages which were not targeted to Airmen were getting lost in the noise of other issues. Also, Airmen received information from a range of sources that are utilized by different messengers.

PLANNING

The primary target audience for the EAM campaign was the more than 600,000 Airmen, civilians, and contractors around the world. There was no budget for paid media and funding for outreach materials (including printing), travel and events were covered under the existing budgets and planned expenditures of SAF/IEN, SAF/PA, AF/A7C, and the individual bases. There were two objectives of the campaign:

- **Objective 1:** Grow awareness of Air Force energy messaging, as measured by a three-fold increase in use of online training and 20% increase in key ICAG questions.
- **Objective 2:** Decrease aviation fuel consumption by 10% by 2015 (over a 2006 baseline) and energy intensity at installations by 21% through 2012 (over a 2003 baseline)

Analysis of the previous EAM campaign found the civil engineering community in AF/A7C and public affairs officers within SAF/PA had significant interest and resources to promote energy but had not been fully coordinated. The first key to planning was convening a cross-functional

team to meet regularly and bring the unique knowledge, expertise, and networks of these communities to develop plans, messages, and tactics.

ICAG and focus group research, along with input from this cross-functional team, showed that Airmen received information through a range of channels and that messengers at all levels of the organization - from senior leaders to commanders to colleagues -had an impact. To break through the clutter, the team decided to leverage as many communications tools as possible using a variety of messengers during a 31-day concentrated period of time. The team executed 14 unique tactics, provided a list of 25 additional tactics for bases, and encouraged innovation and personalization. These tactics included a letter signed by the senior leadership, speeches by commanders to staff at their base, videos, social media and competitions that made individual Airmen the messengers. These efforts, while not all controlled directly by Air Force headquarter agencies, were guided by the theme "I am Air Force Energy" and messaging that focused on Airmen success stories and practical energy tips. As part of this theme, the team developed a logo and other graphic elements, key talking points, and a packet of resources provided to public affairs and civil engineer staff in August. The packet included a message card, fact sheet, suggested activities, editorial calendar for social media, speech, press release, and other materials.

EXECUTION

On October 1st, the campaign kicked off with a message from the Secretary of the Air Force that went to all Airmen by email. The message was also posted on the Air Force Energy Facebook page, tweeted by SAF/IEN, and promoted by bases around the world through their websites and social media. Each business day during the month, the headquarters office put out a new item on the web and leveraged social media base networks to promote it. Items included eight videos of Airmen recognized for winning energy awards, news stories on major energy initiatives, energy tips, and vignettes on Airmen who went above and beyond to be energy innovators. At 80 bases around the world more than 40 individual tactics were executed. They included 250+ posts to 33 Facebook sites, 64 speeches by commanders, 84 news stories in internal media, 22 stories in external outlets, 14 base energy competitions, and 21 Energy Days with family activities and booths displaying new technologies.

A particular focus was placed on driving Airmen to online energy training. Prior to the start of October, the owners of the online training site added a special dialogue box to help guide Airmen coming to the site to the energy training. The headquarters team focused a day of social media on the training, 19 base websites included links, and seven bases used splash screens that pop-up as staff log-in to their computer each day.

EVALUATION

Information provided from 80 bases illustrated a broad campaign that reached hundreds of thousands of individuals through multiple channels and using multiple messengers. At the micro level, installations like Kirtland Air Force Base saw a 15% reduction in energy use at dorms that participated in an energy competition. At the macro level, the Air Force Energy Facebook page saw a four-fold increase in activity in October and sustained about half that over the following months. Traffic to the online training module increased six-fold - exceeding Objective 1. Most importantly, the Air Force exceeded its goal with a reduction in aviation fuel use of more than 12% and met its installation electricity use goal of 21%. While communication during EAM was not the sole contributor to these achievements, these metrics are the ultimate measurement of IEN's success. The ICAG survey, which will provide a broad measure of increased awareness, is conducted on a regular schedule by the Air Force. The survey is currently underway and analysis is expected in March.

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