

10 Steps to Improving Energy Efficiency Imagery

Looking to improve your energy efficiency imagery? Look no further. The following tips are based on Resource Media's new research into effective imagery for energy efficiency. For more information, contact Debbie Slobe: debbie@resource-media.org.

1. **Show people** using energy-saving technology or making improvements to their homes and buildings, not just the technology or process itself. Use these images as a way to bridge to government or regulatory policies and programs that help facilitate the energy efficiency improvements shown.
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- Images of people taking positive action to save energy can inspire others to do the same. Photo: Kristin Lyons*
2. People's faces and speech (in videos) should reflect a sense of **accomplishment, excitement, and feeling smart and in control**. In this way, energy efficiency programs can be positioned as helping people have more control over their energy use versus mandating energy efficiency improvements.
 3. Wherever possible, show **real people** not models or stock photos. Better yet, people in images should reflect the demographic you are targeting in your communications strategy and/or be participants in the programs and policies you are promoting.
 4. **Showcase business owners/employees** as well as homeowners in imagery. People get excited to know what businesses are doing to save energy, which inspires them to think of ways they could be saving energy too.
 5. **Couple images of excessive energy waste with images showing solutions people are taking or can take to eliminate waste.** While showing energy waste triggers a strong emotional response, by itself it makes people feel angry. And they are most likely blame the waster for being irresponsible and not bridge to policy fixes to address the problem.
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- Show real people, not stock photos, whenever possible. Photo: Jeremy Portje*

6. **Do not politicize energy efficiency in imagery.** People of all political persuasions believe saving energy is everyone's responsibility and that wasting energy is wrong. Unless you are targeting a highly liberal audience, don't pit energy efficiency against fossil fuels in imagery or messages – this will only serve to drive a wedge in people's minds about an issue they already support.

7. **Do not show people looking frustrated** with high energy bills or **uncomfortable** in their homes or other buildings. This turns viewers off, and makes them feel like people aren't taking responsibility for saving energy.

8. **Money talks.** People believe saving energy is everyone's responsibility – but saving money is the #1 reason people actually take action. Messages around imagery should **always make mention of the financial savings achieved** (not kilowatts) and how that is improving people's lives and/or being invested back into the community.

9. Go beyond people imagery and **put signage on homes, buildings, retail stores, new developments,** etc. highlighting the energy and money-savings achieved with a URL for more information on how it was done and who made it happen. Signage can help bring energy efficiency out of the shadows and into the light and show people that energy-efficiency is happening all around them. This is critical to the social norming of energy efficiency – making it seem that everyone is doing it and are proud of doing it.

10. **Capitalize on people's inherent excitement to share energy-saving success stories.** Explore creation of online communities for people to share energy-saving accomplishments and tips via photos and videos. Seed this community regularly with reasons to be there and engage – through prize giveaways, featured stories, polls and contests, etc. This community can be mobilized when needed for online and offline advocacy.



Make a clear connection between saving energy and saving money. Ad by Tennessee Valley Authority



Signage on buildings show people that energy efficiency is happening all around them. Photo: Paul Yao

For more tips on energy efficiency visuals, visit visualstorylab.org.