

## Communicating complex information

Let's face it. Some communication jobs are easier than others. Describing how your employees made this year's United Way campaign the most successful ever? No sweat. Explaining the carbon sequestration provisions of your new agricultural land use policy to dairy farmers? Now that's a little more challenging. When you need to translate specialized material to a broader audience, keep the following principles in mind.

### **1. Make it relevant.**

As we've said elsewhere, [it's all about audience](#). Give your readers a reason to pay attention. How will the research results, policy proposals or legal ruling affect their lives? Keep asking yourself "so what?" until you arrive at a message with real impact.

### **2. Be choosy.**

The details in that 120-page report may be fascinating to a specialist in the field. For a broader audience, however, less is more. Think about what you're trying to achieve. Inspire donations? Influence political decisions? Make a sale? Focus on the key information that will convince your audience to take that action.

### **3. Use metaphors, analogies and concrete examples.**

When UCLA economics professor Roger Farmer wants to help non-economists understand how the stock market influences the economy and vice versa, he describes them as two staggering drunks connected by a long rope: loosely linked and prone to erratic movement. The right metaphor can create a powerful *aha!* moment, as well as a mental picture your readers won't forget any time soon.

### **4. Minimize jargon.**

There's no better way to lose your audience than burying them in an avalanche of buzzwords and acronyms. If you're speaking to a meeting of cardiologists, by all means throw around terms like cerebrovascular occlusion. Otherwise, talk about a blockage in the vessels that supply the brain with blood.

### **5. Think visually.**

Words may be our livelihood at Cadmium Red, but we're the first to acknowledge that strong visuals pack a punch. If you want to show connections, track trends or compare data, a well-designed infographic can save you one heck of a lot of copy. Meanwhile, if you're aiming for emotional impact, images are hard to beat. When Michelin wanted to promote the safety benefits of their tires, for example, they didn't tout their tread design, rubber composition or stopping distances. Instead, they used a photo of baby with simple tagline: Because so much is riding on your tires. Bingo. Message received.

*For more communications tips, visit [www.cadmiumred.ca/resources](http://www.cadmiumred.ca/resources). Need help creating messages that hit home? Call or email us to discuss your next project.*