



# 7 Communications Tactics to Transform the Oil & Gas Sector Post Covid-19

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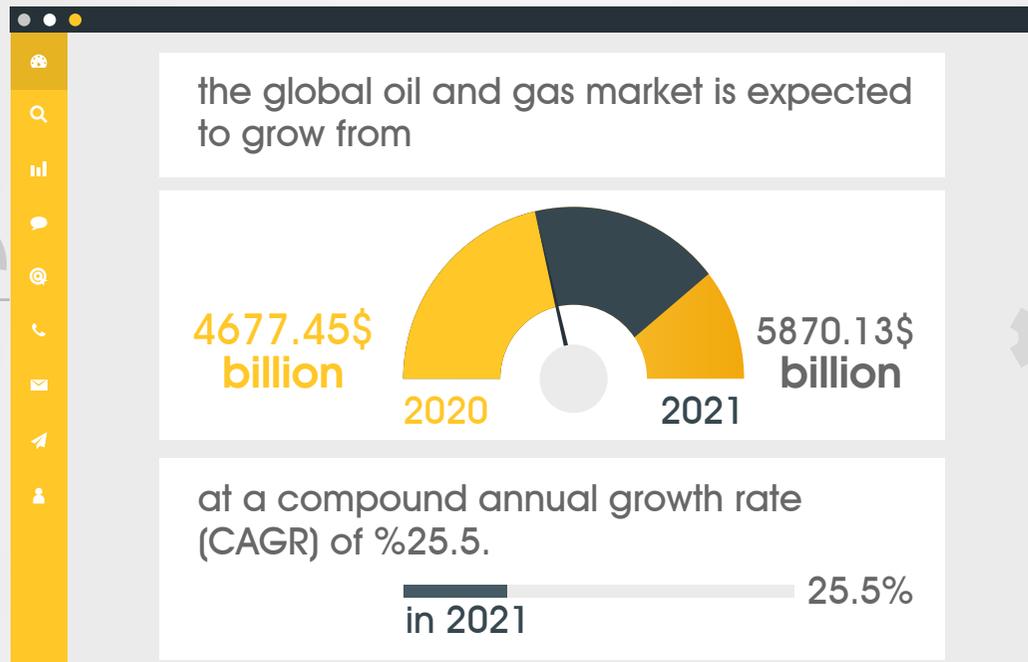


## 7 Communications Tactics to Transform the Oil & Gas Sector Post Covid-19

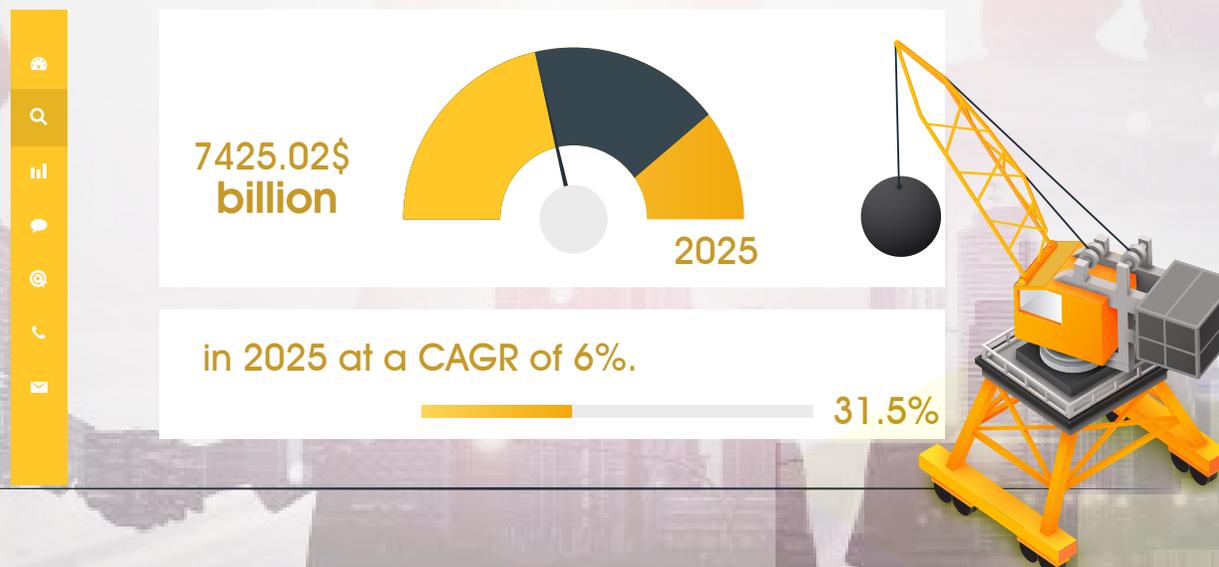
The collapse in demand due to **Covid-19** restrictions on travel and the global decline in economic activity had a historic impact on the oil and gas industry. While the pandemic has created challenges for the oil and gas sector, it has also given the industry the opportunity to reshape the sector in the efforts to create a more sustainable and resilient future by integrating sustainability into their corporate strategies and contributing towards the energy transition. Communication strategies for oil and gas companies need to focus on promoting mutually beneficial relations between all stakeholders and actors at a time when pressure from investors to improve returns and environmental, social and governance (ESG) performance has increased.

## Post COVID19- Growth

According to the Oil and Gas Global Market Report 2021: **COVID 19** Impact and Recovery to 2030,



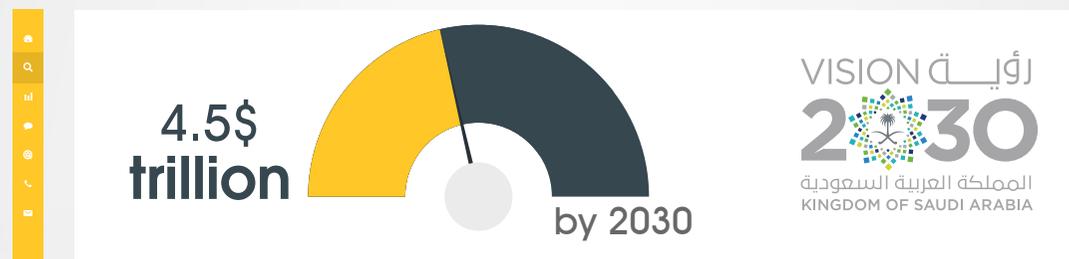
This growth is mainly due to companies rearranging their operations and recovering from the **COVID-19** impact, which had earlier led to restrictive containment measures involving social distancing, remote working, and the closure of commercial activities that resulted in operational challenges. The market is expected to reach



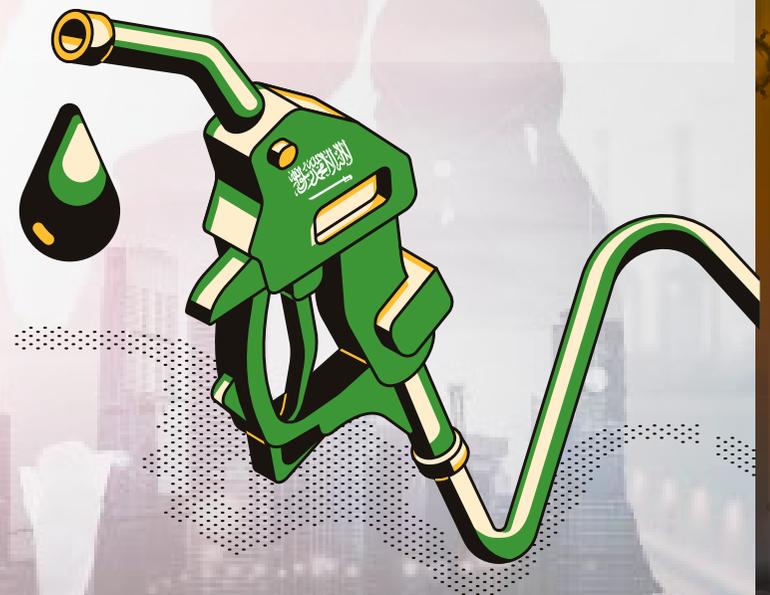
# Adopting the Circular Economy

The oil and gas industry is adopting the development of a circular economy to make its operations more sustainable and help address climate change. The circular economy is an alternative to the traditional linear economy (i.e., make, use, and dispose) in which resources are kept in use for as long as possible, maximum value is extracted from them while in use, to then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of each product service life. The circular economy keeps goods in use as long as possible through recycling and reuse, thereby decreasing the need for raw materials. This, in turn, reduces carbon intensity and footprint.

The circular economy presents a unique market opportunity upwards of



Accelerating this transition relies on the uptake of innovative new business models and disruptive technological innovation. Saudi Arabia, for example, has used its year in the G20 presidency to promote its circular carbon economy scheme. As part of the **Vision 2030** program, largely focused on diversification from an oil-based economy, the Kingdom is the first country to export blue hydrogen for zero carbon power generation. Saudi Arabia is targeting to take supply leadership in the rapidly growing hydrogen market.



# 7 Steps to Better Oil& Gas Communications

Public opinion has always played a large part in the oil and gas industry around economic, environmental, community and safety issues. Effective communication is therefore critical as a vital tool for companies to differentiate themselves from competitors and demonstrate credibility, expertise, and trustworthiness. Employees, customers, the industry, the community, and other audiences need to hear from you now more than ever. As part of W7 WORLDWIDE's "Covid-19 Resource Centre", the agency has partnered with OFSAC, the Saudi International Oil and Fire Safety Conference, to produce a seven step guide for communications strategies in the oil and gas sector:

## 1 Environmental Social Governance (ESG)

Transitioning to a holistic Environmental Social Governance model is critical to reducing environmental degradation and prioritizing biodiversity and nature, while also delivering on future competitiveness. Leaders in the oil and gas sector need to adopt climate-focused ESG principles into their business models; organizing messaging to markets, governments, and the public about both the energy transition and the expected need for oil and gas for decades to come, as well as the value of oil and gas companies in building the next generation of clean energy resources and technologies.

There are multiple drivers of this shift post Covid-19, and they include pressure from the public, regulators, shareholders, and even employees. The oil and gas sector has the potential for substantial new business opportunities in developing cleaner energy solutions. It is up to the industry to do a better job at explaining the important role for oil and gas to shape the future and how it will adapt to a lower carbon economy.

Effective communication of the value oil and gas companies can bring to emerging technologies and business models in the energy transition, through application of expertise in supply chains, capital allocation, and technological deployment, will help position companies against the creeping anti oil and gas sentiment. In doing so, companies can go beyond making the case for oil and gas to also explain their value and contribution in a time of rapid energy transition.

## 2 Stakeholder Mapping & Management



A multitude of stakeholders are involved throughout all various stages of an oil and gas project. The main objective is to keep all interested parties well informed and to engage them to create positive outcomes for everyone. To ensure that your communications strategy will be successful, alignment of the stakeholders' interests is paramount. It is important to interact positively and involve the relevant stakeholders at each touchpoint with the right messaging and approach.

Stakeholders are any individual or organisation who is either directly or indirectly affected by your company's actions or who can impact or influence your decision making. Typically, these include governments and regulators, shareholders, lenders, analysts, suppliers, contractors, communities, NGOs, the public, and your employees. Monitor the interactions with these groups to identify and understand priority stakeholders and ensure to engage with them appropriately. This includes identifying and mapping their level of influence, capacity to engage, major concerns and channels of communication.

Identify the big issues surrounding the sector, such as climate change, regulation, and green energy to know where to target your influencing and engagement with the right messaging and content.

## 3 Expand Your Influence in the Industry



As the energy sector undergoes a seismic transformation, accelerated by **Covid-19** and the global response to climate change, navigating this rapidly shifting landscape requires a strong understanding of key trends, economic parameters, policies, and technological advances. Leaders in oil and gas are changing how they operate, anticipating innovation, government regulation, energy transition, and digital disruption. Developing communication outlining the value oil and gas companies can provide in a decarbonizing energy system is an important opportunity to establish thought leadership and develop compelling narratives for all stakeholder groups.

Educating both the industry and the public will see your organization's perception shift from operator to thought leader and change-maker. Facts, survey results, statistics and other insight will separate your organisation from others in the field and the perception of expertise is what will help you build new business and projects. Dispel myths and misinformation surrounding the industry and build trust with the public by championing the positive aspects of the oil and gas sector.

## 4 Government Relations with Integrity



Maintaining and managing relationships with government is crucial for companies operating in the oil and gas sector due to the highly regulated nature of the sector. As part of your stakeholder mapping exercise, you will need to identify the right government stakeholders and their individual agendas and drivers. Take a strategic approach to government relations to create value for your business and support overall business objectives.

Build and strengthen your reputation by conducting your government relations with integrity. Engage in meaningful advocacy and lobbying to be part of the conversation and drive towards post **Covid-19** policies linked to the low carbon transition and climate action. The oil and gas sector has an existential interest in these policy frameworks. Companies need to manage relations with government in a wide variety of situations to win new business, maintain their license to operate, reinforce a strong reputation, and managing change. To learn more about the tools and tactics to deploy in your government relations strategy, see also **W7** WORLDWIDE's "Public Affairs Towards **Covid-19** Recovery" Guide.

## 5 Digital PR with Strong Content



**Oil & gas on the edge: How edge computing enables digital transformation**

A single failure can spell disaster for oil and gas companies, so reliability is key in any platform used to track, analyze and control operations. In this webinar, we bring Saudi Aramco, Edge Computing expert Stratus Technologies together with AVEVA, to discuss how to keep businesses up and running, making data and information continuously available.

**Speakers:**

- Khalid Alghamdi  
Head of Digital Strategy & Growth, Saudi Aramco
- Carla Sertin  
Editor  
O&G Middle East
- Greg Hookings  
BD Head, Digitalization  
Stratus

**Monday  
23 November**

**Riyadh, 13:00  
Dubai, 14:00  
London, 10:00**

To appeal to today's talent, publics, and customers, you must meet them where they are, and that is online. Oil and gas companies need to move their branded messaging away from the technical jargon and instead present compelling information that resonates.

The key is in crafting powerful PR content beyond press releases and delivering it to your audience via the various channels where they receive their information. This involves producing quality content useful to your audience that is also rich in the popular keywords they search for online. From recruitment to persuading and building relationships with the media, to announcing new initiatives and even damage control, social media is a tool that the oil and gas industry needs to put to good use. B2B interactions on Social Networking sites build thought leadership and strengthen the brand.

Use social media to launch and support new solutions and partnerships. Use the mixed media formats available to your benefit, such as videos for C-Suite messages, infographics for statistics and benchmarks, eBooks for in depth analysis, text posts of updates and engage audiences with your CSR activities.

## 6 Crisis Avoidance & Management



With the **Covid-19** pandemic, the kind of emergencies and crises the oil and gas sector is used to dealing with have changed and become more wide-ranging. The way you communicate with different stakeholders will also have changed. There are many topics with the potential to turn into a crisis and the first step to effective crisis management is preparedness. The corporate communications function needs to be up-to-date on potentially critical topics to prepare a communications strategy, establish key messages, train media spokespeople and brief management on how to respond to these topics. Be proactive in telling your organization's story on an ongoing basis in a way that solidifies relationships with local communities, national governments, campaigners, and the media to make your brand and reputation resilient.

When a crisis happens, there is no time to waste. Communications need to be streamlined, intuitive, and as rapid as possible. It should also provide two-way communications with both outreach and response capabilities, so leaders can quickly assign tasks and receive feedback on the status of the situation. Crisis managers are quick thinkers who know how to communicate an issue, they can manage teams and delegate tasks. They understand every media channel so they can tell which problem may need a press conference and which can be resolved with a single social media post.

Oil and gas facilities are among the most complex and dangerous industrial operations. During a crisis at one of its locations, the number one priority for an oil and gas operator is to make sure everyone is safe and accounted for. After crisis managers have determined the status of personnel, they can engage workers and responders to get updates from the scene and assign tasks to resolve the situation. This combination of personnel accountability and effective communications drives a fast and effective crisis response. For more advice on producing a crisis communications plan, please download **W7** WORLDWIDE 's Guide to "Handling **Covid-19** Crisis Communications".

## 7 Employee Engagement



The oil and gas sector is currently facing the twofold challenge of sustaining operations and managing their workforce. The industry has long been grappling with high employee turnover and attracting talent to often remote or difficult locations. In the current downturn, employee engagement to retain and attract the best talent has therefore taken centre stage in the industry. In addition, when employees become disengaged, safety incident rates increase, productivity drains to a halt, and turnover rates rise steeply. Business success therefore depends on people's engagement in the company culture.

As energy leaders look towards the future, a digitally-driven approach to enhancing internal communications and employee engagement is needed to solve the industry's most pressing challenges. Organizations are increasingly turning to intranets and digital technology to unite their teams and strengthen engagement levels. A strong corporate culture are the foundation for improving employee engagement. By presenting your company in the best light possible, you will create a workforce of talented employees who produce inspired results and play a powerful role in advocating on your behalf. It is important to demonstrate your environmental and social commitments, with climate change as one of millennial workers' top concerns.

Help people see the bigger picture by regularly communicating the goals and direction of the organization and how employees contribute towards achieving them. Celebrate achievement of objectives within your organization and recognize individuals who exhibit superior performance. Energy companies are turning more and more to their employees for innovative ideas, crowd-sourcing the best ideas. Leadership can also communicate their best practices and inspire employees to engage in the mission, vision, and values of an aspirational company culture.

Corporate PR and Communications can no longer be considered a support function to the oil and gas sector. Sustained public relations campaigns will help drive the organizational and business strategy change imposed by Covid-19, build public perceptions around safety and sustainability issues, and drive reputation with key stakeholders. Taking on an industry leadership role is vital to maintaining the company's brand, relevance, and place within the industry.



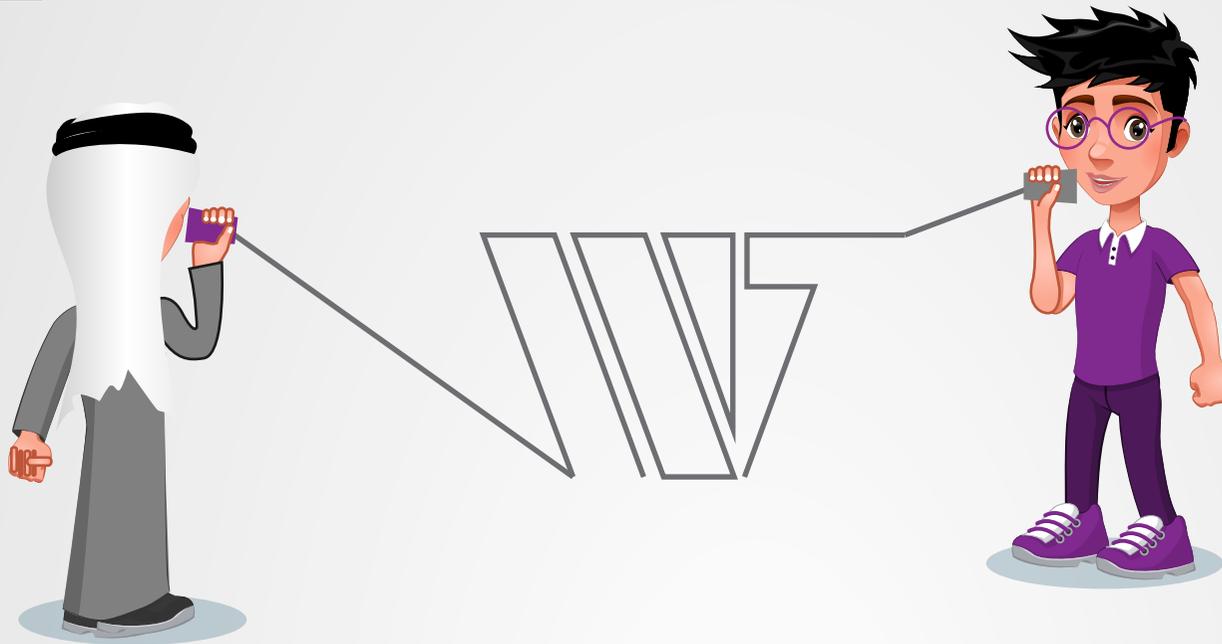
Nowhere are corporate values more at stake than in the oil and gas industry and communicators must seize the opportunity to present the changing value of the sector as part of the global 'green economic recovery' efforts. The oil and gas industry will invariably play a significant role in achieving sustainable economic development, putting the sector at the heart of the solution. PR Practitioners need to capture this historic moment in time to foster better understanding and positive sentiment among relevant target audiences.

## Successful Communications: A Case Study



Saudi OFSAC is a unique concept in the Middle East, conceived to show-case latest technologies, engineering, equipment, software, designs, and services in the field of Oil and Gas Fire Safety. The aim is to create synergy and strengthen collaboration between technologies, engineering providers and the Oil and Gas Industry. The First Edition of the Saudi International Oil Fire Safety Conference took place in Riyadh, from 16 to 18 September 2019, under the Patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Minister of Interior, President of the Higher Commission for Industrial Security.

# About W7 WORLDWIDE



**W7** WORLDWIDE is an independent communications consultancy based in Saudi Arabia. Our understanding of the local market converged with our global reach and knowledge enables us to bridge our clients with their audiences effectively. We are aligned by the objective of filling the gap in communication that exists in the local market. Therefore, our specialty lies in building bridges that sustain relationships and create brand reputation and value through innovative approaches. Our array of services includes, but is not limited to:

- Corporate Communications Strategy
- Stakeholder Mapping
- Crisis Management
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Internal Communications
- Reputation Management
- Media Relations
- Public Relations
- Public Affairs
- Social Media
- Marketing & Brand Solutions

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