

Case Study:

Advancing Clean Energy Tariff Initiative

Leading Strategic Communications for a First-of-Its-Kind Energy Pricing Model

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Position: Lead Communications Manager | Duke Energy | Charlotte, NC (Oct 2016 - Nov 2024)

Executive Summary

As energy demand surged from hyperscale data center growth, Duke Energy partnered with Amazon, Google, Microsoft, and Nucor to develop a first-of-its-kind tariff structure enabling large energy users to fund new generation, without shifting costs to other customers.

I led enterprise-wide communications for the initiative, aligning messaging across five global organizations, translating a highly complex pricing model into a clear public narrative, and elevating the effort to a national policy platform, including the White House.

The result: coordinated multi-company execution, national media visibility, and strengthened credibility with regulators and policymakers.

The Opportunity

The explosive growth of data centers created unprecedented demand for electricity.

This presented an opportunity to:

- Develop a new pricing model aligned with emerging energy realities
- Partner directly with major corporate customers to co-create solutions
- Position Duke Energy as a national leader in innovative energy policy

The initiative had the potential to influence not only regional markets, but also the broader national conversation around energy infrastructure and cost allocation.

The Challenge

The issue sat at the intersection of business, policy, and public perception. Key challenges included:

- Communicating a highly complex tariff structure across diverse audiences
- Aligning five major corporations with different priorities and communication styles
- Navigating regulatory scrutiny around fairness and cost allocation
- Preventing public perception of cost burden shifting to individual customers
- This required not just coordination, but strategic alignment at scale.

My Role: Enterprise Communications Leadership

I led all communications for the initiative, serving as the central point of coordination across Duke Energy and its corporate partners.

Key leadership responsibilities:

- Directed communications strategy in partnership with executive leadership
- Coordinated messaging across 5 organizations and multiple communications teams
- Authored executive messaging, including remarks delivered at the White House
- Served as the central alignment point across corporate, regulatory, and media stakeholders

I positioned the initiative around a clear and resonant narrative: Large-scale energy users should play a greater role in funding the infrastructure required to support their growth.

Strategic Approach

I approached the effort as a multi-organization communications ecosystem, requiring structure, precision, and alignment.

1. Narrative Development

- Defined a clear, defensible narrative centered on fairness and customer protection
- Simplified complex regulatory concepts into accessible, media-ready messaging
- Ensured consistency across all partner organizations

2. Multi-Organization Communications System

- Built a structured communications ecosystem across five companies
- Established alignment processes, approval flows, and coordinated timelines
- Enabled a single, unified announcement across multiple brands

3. Content & Messaging Architecture

- Developed a full suite of materials:
 - Executive talking points
 - Media messaging and Q&A
 - Press materials and spokesperson strategy
- Ensured message consistency across all external and internal audiences

4. Stakeholder Alignment

- Coordinated communications across:
 - Media
 - Regulators
 - Customers
 - Investors
- Ensured internal alignment across multiple organizations prior to launch

Execution Highlights

- Delivered a coordinated national announcement across five companies
- Elevated executive messaging to a White House-level policy platform

- Established a consistent narrative across highly complex stakeholder groups
- Positioned the initiative within the national conversation on energy demand and clean generation

Communications Impact

- Five company communications alignment across Duke Energy, Amazon, Google, Microsoft, and Nucor
- White House level visibility through executive messaging at a national policy summit
- Tier one and industry media coverage, including Reuters, Utility Dive, E&E News by Politico, and Power Engineering
- Consistent message adoption across coverage, centered on customer protection, voluntary participation, and infrastructure investment
- Strengthened regulatory credibility by framing the tariff as a customer protective solution
- Positioned Duke Energy as a first mover in addressing hyperscale energy demand

Strategic Business Impact

- Supported a communications framework for one of the energy sector's fastest-growing challenges: data center-driven electricity demand
- Helped establish a replicable model for large-customer participation in infrastructure funding
- Reinforced executive confidence in communications as a strategic business function
- Elevated Duke Energy's role in the national energy policy conversation

Key Takeaways

- Enterprise Leadership: Led communications across five global corporations
- Executive Influence: Authored messaging delivered at the national level
- Strategic Storytelling: Translated complex policy into a compelling, defensible narrative
- Stakeholder Alignment: Coordinated high-stakes messaging across diverse audiences
- National Impact: Positioned the initiative within a critical, evolving energy policy debate

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