



# Case Study

## 2020 SILVER EFFIE AWARDS UNITED STATES WINNER

### "THE MOST ENERGY EFFICIENT CAMPAIGN EVER"

California had a dirty little secret. Despite being famous publicly for their eco-progressiveness, in private, individuals didn't do enough to make a difference. While they were aware of energy actions they could take, many didn't act. We needed to do more than talk the talk. We needed to show Californians that their little actions add up when taken together. This led to The Most Energy Efficient Campaign Ever: the first campaign where the ads themselves saved energy. In the end, millions of actions were taken and billions of kWh saved.

**Competition:**  
Effie United States

**Ran in:**  
United States

**Category:**  
Marketing Disruptors

**Brand/Client:**  
Energy Upgrade  
California/California Public  
Utilities Commission

**Lead Agency:**  
DDB San Francisco

**Contributing Companies:**  
OMD  
Ketchum  
DDC  
Alma DDB

**Product/Service:**  
Government and Non-Profit

**Classification:**  
Regional

**Dates Effort Ran:**  
April 15, 2019 - May 26, 2019

**Category Situation:**  
Flat

**Credits:**  
Clemency Beale-Collins  
Aubrey Day  
Stephanie Green  
Ty Kendig  
Mark Krajan  
Sam Peterson  
Sam Renbarger  
Ari Weiss  
Ben Wolan  
Daisy Yee

**Version: Edited**



## Executive Summary

### The Challenge

Old approaches and category cliches of “unplugging” & “turning off” were no longer getting people to take energy saving actions.

### The Insight

Our audience had a desire to act, they just needed to be shown (not told) how their actions mattered.

### The Idea

It All Adds Up: we didn’t just talk the talk, we demonstrated how small actions add up to big change.

### Bringing the Idea to Life

The Most Energy Efficient Campaign Ever: in which the ads themselves saved energy through every media airing, posting, and insertion.

### The Results

Millions more actions taken, and more energy being saved every day.

## Effie Awards Category Context

Our client needed to motivate all Californians to change their behavior and curb the state’s carbon emissions through smarter energy actions. Yet, the past 50+ years of energy efficiency advertising had hardened them to the message - bludgeoning them with boring tips and tricks that no longer held their attention.

To breakthrough, we shifted our approach away from “conventional reminders” and replaced them with “disruptive demonstrations” that got Californians to tune in, re-engage, and ultimately save energy -instead of tuning out and turning off.

## State of the Marketplace & Brand's Business

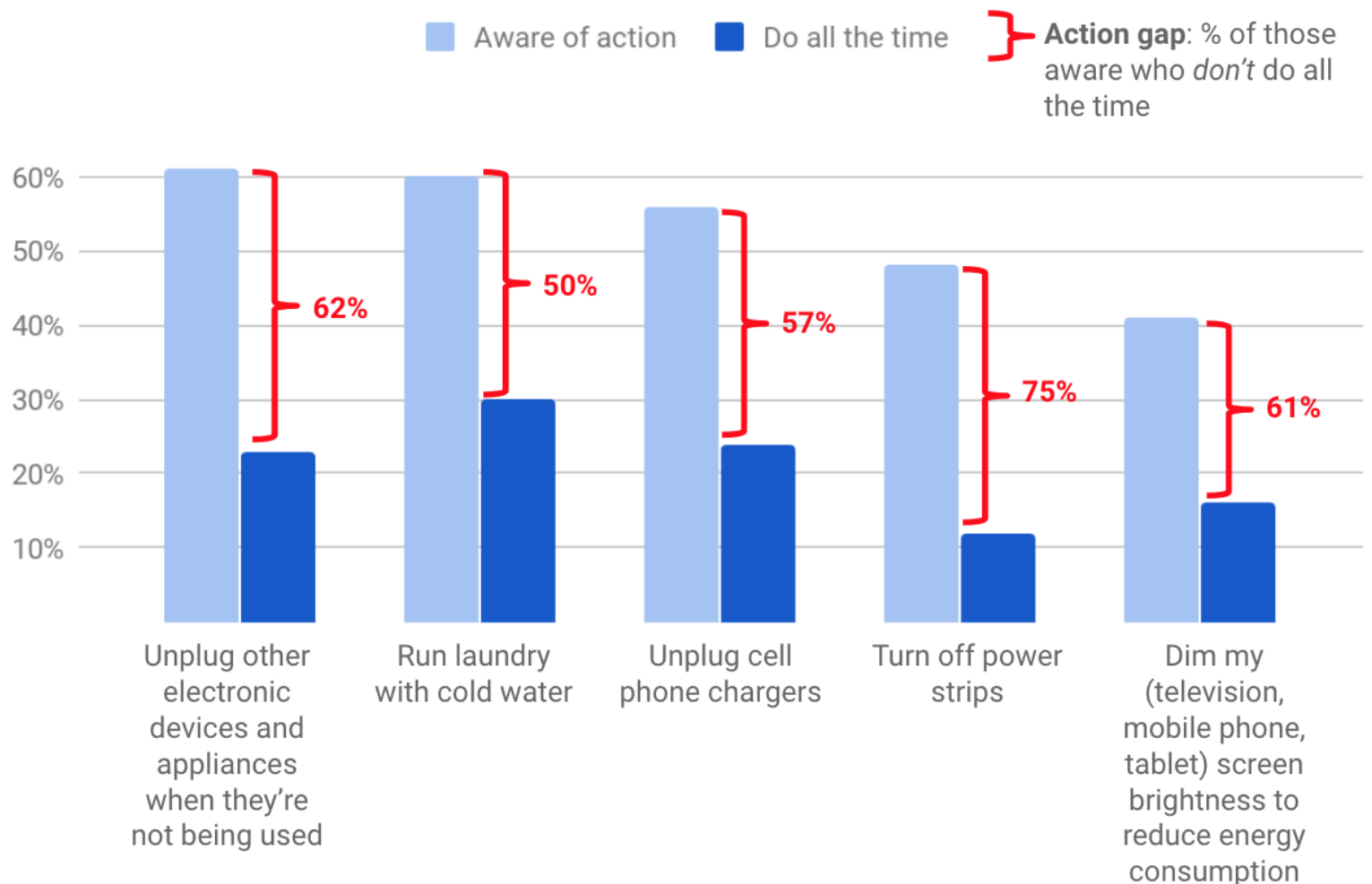
California is a leader in the fight against climate change

The climate crisis is possibly the greatest challenge of our time. As the national administration backs away from the Paris Accord and loosens restrictions on fossil fuels. The 5th largest economy in the world, and the largest state, California, stepped up.

On November 2018, California signed the nation's most ambitious climate policy. Senate Bill 100, which commits the state to 100% clean energy by 2045. This historic piece of legislation was unprecedented and would require massive shifts in energy consumption from a sizable population of California's 39 million residents.

However, for 50 years, energy efficiency advertising used the same old message and tactics. From turning off light switches, to unplugging appliances - the same old messages were delivered the same old way. Through tips and tricks and boring reminders that feel more like nags than invitations to fight climate change.

Despite California's fervent public and policy-level support of clean energy, Californians' energy-efficient actions were embarrassingly inconsistent. We saw a huge gap between what they knew they were supposed to do (unplug, turn off, dim screens, use cold water), and what they actually did. We called this the "action gap".



We had to break through with a fresh approach that cut through the decades of monotony.

# Audience

## Average Californians Were Average Energy Slacktivists

When it comes to reducing energy consumption, it's not about getting a few people to take big actions. It's about getting a lot of people to take little actions.

To make this a reality, we couldn't appeal to just those consumer groups who were eco-warriors, we had to reach as many Californians as possible. For this reason, our campaign aimed to reach the average Californian. The problem was, they were, well, average.

While many imagine Californians to be eco warriors, the average Californian doesn't do enough. The average Californian thinks saving energy is inconvenient, forgets to switch off the lights, or is completely apathetic to the cause<sup>3</sup>.

Our challenge was to show Californians that energy efficiency isn't just nice in theory - it's on all of us to put it into practice.

# Objectives & KPIs

Inspiring average Californians to close the action gap

Converting ideals into action would require us to close the gap between awareness and action, and get as many Californians as possible to take a little extra energy action given our media budget constraints.

#1: Capture their imagination

- KPI: Exceed PR impressions benchmark

#2: Get them engaged

- KPI: Increase web traffic YoY
  - The website included energy-saving tips and tools

#3: Compel them to act (repeatedly)

- KPI: Increase % of Californians taking regular energy efficiency action
- KPI: Reduce statewide energy consumption

### Sourcing:

1: *Los Angeles Times*, "China is now looking to California - not Trump -to help lead the fight against climate change," June 2017

2: *Public Policy Institute of California*, "California & the Environment," Statewide Survey, n = 1711, July 2018

3: *DB5*, *Energy Upgrade California Brand and Attitudinal Tracking*, Statewide Survey, n = 2500, January 2019

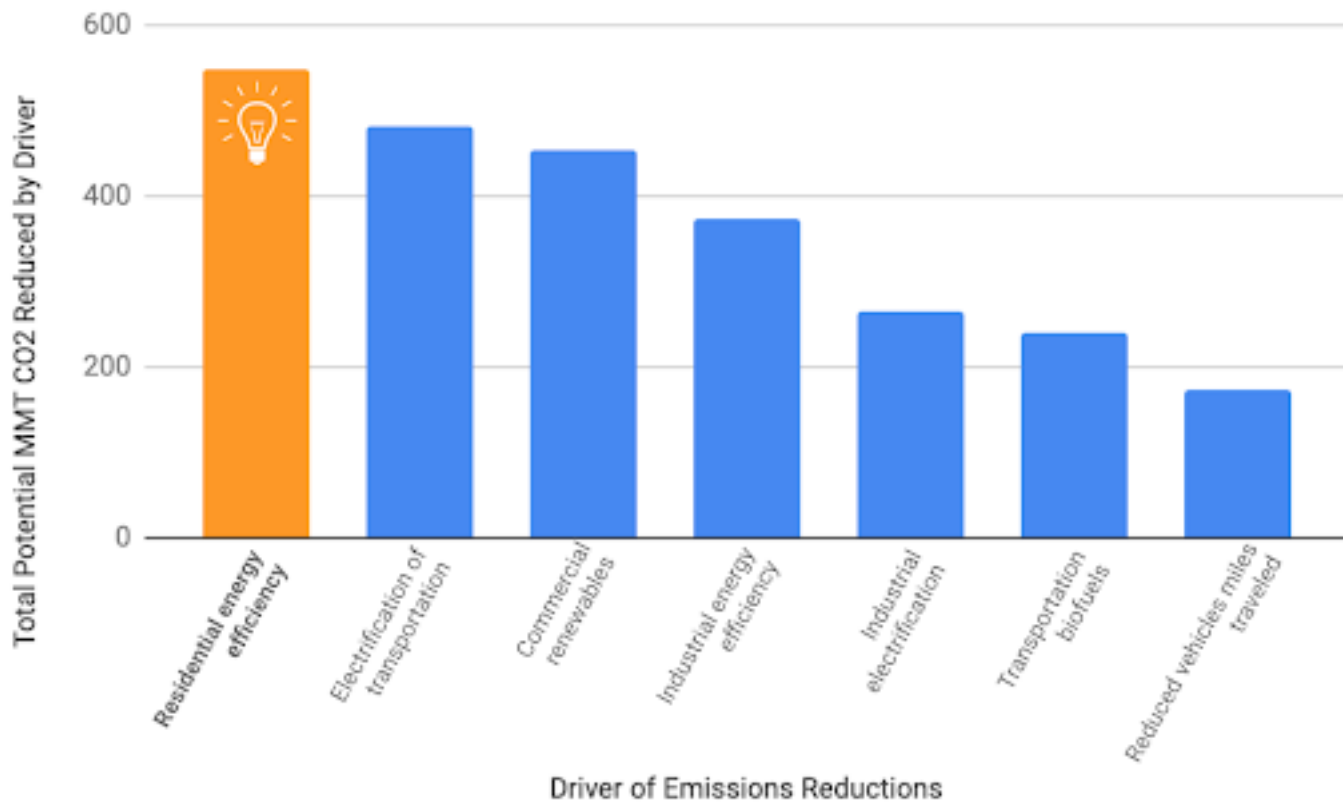
4: *American Lung Association*, "State of the Air Report," April 2018

# Insight

Californians didn't think flipping a light switch could make a difference. Who could blame them? In a category that drones on with rational, uninteresting messages asking you to take light-weight energy-saving actions, it all felt so small and insignificant. Turning off the lights at night could save them a whopping \$1.65 per 1,000 hours<sup>1</sup>. When this is the case for many small energy actions, it was easy to take them all for granted.

However, contrary to popular belief, saving energy at home is one of the best ways to combat climate change. In fact, energy efficiency has been identified as the single most effective way to reduce carbon emissions<sup>3</sup>.

Residential Energy Efficiency Shows the Most Promise in Reducing Carbon Emissions<sup>2</sup>:



These little energy actions multiplied by the most populous state in the nation can make a massive impact. If all 39 million Californians dimmed their TV screens for a month, they could save 193,132 metric tons of CO2 from entering the atmosphere<sup>4</sup>.

Clearly, their actions *do* make a difference. We needed to shake things up from conventional energy efficiency advertising and show Californians their small, individual actions could make a powerful impact.

#### **Sourcing:**

1: Department of Energy: <https://www.bankrate.com/finance/smart-spending/10-ways-to-save-money-on-your-utility-bill-1.aspx#slide=4>  
<https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/save-electricity-and-fuel/lighting-choices-save-you-money/how-energy-efficient-light>

2: EPA

3: Natural Resources Defence Council, "America's Clean Energy Frontier: The Pathway to a Safer Climate Future," September, 2017

4: Equations from spreadsheet - EPA for equivalents

## **The Big Idea**

**Replace energy saving reminders with disruptive demonstrations showing how everyday actions can add up to make a big impact.**

## **Bringing the Idea to Life**

The first energy efficiency campaign in history to walk the walk.

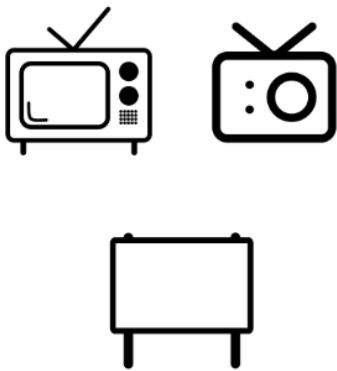
California had been advertising energy efficiency for 50+ years. We needed a fresh way to deliver familiar information.

We discovered advertisements themselves have the potential to save energy. For example, just by dimming the screen of a TV ad, you can save up to 20% of the energy used to watch that ad<sup>1</sup>.

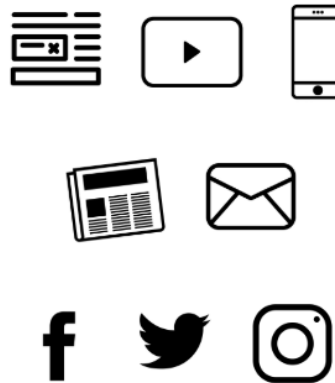
This insight led to a big idea: The Most Energy Efficient campaign ever. For the first time in history, we created a campaign in which every piece of communications saved energy through either its production or transmission. We dimmed the screens of our TV ads to save energy every time they ran. Our print and outdoor used less ink, and required less energy to make. Our radio was quieter, because lower volume saves energy. To reduce screen time, our banners and pre-roll asked you to *not* click on them. We walked the talk.

Our communications strategy relied on three key principles:

**DISRUPT**  
with surprising context  
Surprise them by subverting  
channel expectations



**PRIME**  
through surround-sound  
Make it feel like energy efficiency is  
everywhere, for everyone



**EMBED**  
in culture  
Meet them where they are and  
invite them to demonstrate  
energy efficiency together



1. **DISRUPT with surprising context:** We leveraged the context of our communications to deliver an “aha” moment and subvert channel expectations. Where viewers expected bright colorful TV ads, we presented a dimly-lit spot. Where walkers were used to seeing bright digital billboards, we planted a basic sandwich board.
2. **PRIME through surround-sound media:** Tapping into the power of social proof, we made it feel like everyone in California was participating in energy efficiency. We created a surround-sound, high-frequency campaign so that wherever Californians listened, watched, walked or scrolled through a social feed, they’d see energy efficiency in action.
3. **EMBED in culture to spark participation:** To drive Californians closer to action, we inserted energy efficiency into culture and invited our audience to demonstrate energy efficiency together. We put Reddit into Night Mode to show Redditors how to save energy. We leveraged popular Californian influencers to “dim the feed” with artfully-dark Instagram posts. For our finale, we powered down the screens and the speakers at the Oakland Coliseum during the national anthem – and performed it unplugged. By embedding our message in culture and allowing for interaction within the media itself, we brought our audience one step closer to action.

**Sourcing:**

- 1: Dimming screens reduces energy by 20%
- 2: DB5 Wave 5 - pulled by segment (Spirited Promoters) and statewide
- 3: Google Analytics, EUC.ca.org website metrics
- 4: Milward Brown - pulled during campaign period

## Results

Capture their imagination:

- Exceeded PR impressions benchmark

Get them engaged:

- Increased web traffic YoY

Compel them to act (repeatedly):

- Increased % of Californians taking regular energy efficiency action
- Contributed to reduction in statewide energy consumption

## Other Contributing Factors

 Economic Factors

 Weather

There are factors that could have contributed to the statewide decline in energy consumption (weather, population, etc.).

However, several factors point to the campaign having a strong impact on energy efficiency behaviors:

- The key actions emphasized in the campaign (dimming screens, for example) showed the strongest improvement after the campaign.
- The amount of buzz generated from the campaign - earning 500 million impressions through various regional press outlets and national news coverage - exceeded that of any other activity in the category during our media flight period.
- There were no other major statewide energy efficiency campaigns during this time.

### **Sourcing:**

1: Talkwalker, Burrelles, TV Eyes, Cision, April-May 2019

2: Google Analytics, EUC Site Traffic, April 15-March 26 2019 vs. 2018

3: DB5, Energy Upgrade California Brand and Attitudinal Tracking, Statewide Survey, n = 2500, July vs. January 2019

4: California ISO, Statewide Energy Demand Trend, April 15-May 26 2019 vs. 2018

5: Environmental Protection Agency, Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator, 2019



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