

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Vermont Research Company Presents Paper at 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association in Chicago

---

**Burlington, Vermont:** How successful are advertising campaigns when it comes to driving increases in home efficiency? Perhaps not very. That's the argument made by one Vermont researcher in a paper recently presented at the National Communication Association's 100<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, held in Chicago.

Matthew Dugan of Shadow Associates in Behavior Change, a Burlington-based research and production firm, recently traveled to the Windy City to present his recent paper, *Power and Persuasion: Behavior Science in the Energy Conservation Sector*.

Dugan said, "While there is a lot of talk and concern about the environment and limited energy resources, our accomplishments are often falling short of our goals. The problem isn't that people aren't aware that climate change is real or that energy supplies are either limited, costly, or environmentally unfriendly. The problem is that research shows that information is very often a weak motivator."

There is a central irony at the heart of the issue, according to Dugan. "As humans, we tend to flatter ourselves; we think that we act logically and in a linear fashion. Therefore, we tend to create communication campaigns that rely on that fallacy. In other words, because we think we're logical, we keep creating ineffective communication. But, what if we're not inherently logical? Behavior science is full of examples of why we do things, of what motivates us, and it's not logic."

The bright side, said Dugan, is that evidence-based communication can make a significant difference in achieving the kind of change society seeks. "We definitely have the tools; we just need to use them."

Dugan said that while the paper is about a specific process—convincing homeowners to undertake weatherization projects—it is really about a much bigger idea. "If we're to have a chance to combat climate change, the change has to come from individuals each making small changes, and behavior science is where you start--one person at a time, one home or business at a time."

**ABOUT SHADOW ABC:** Based in Burlington, Vermont, Shadow Associates in Behavior Change is a division of Shadow Productions, a communications firm with a 25- year history in Vermont. Shadow ABC is comprised of a consortium of academics, public health professionals, messaging experts and producers. Shadow ABC is focused on conducting qualitative and

quantitative research and using it to create, implement, and measure media messages whose purpose is to bring about behavior change in the areas of health, energy, and the environment.  
[www.shadowprod.com/abc](http://www.shadowprod.com/abc)

**ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION ASSOCIATION:** The National Communication Association advances Communication as the discipline that studies all forms, modes, media and consequences of communication through humanistic, social scientific and aesthetic inquiry. NCA serves the scholars, teachers, and practitioners who are its members by enabling and supporting their professional interests in research and teaching. Dedicated to fostering and promoting free and ethical communication, NCA promotes the widespread appreciation of the importance of communication in public and private life, the application of competent communication to improve the quality of human life and relationships, and the use of knowledge about communication to solve human problems. [www.natcom.org/about/](http://www.natcom.org/about/)

#####

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Leah Stewart

[leah@shadowprod.com](mailto:leah@shadowprod.com)

802-863-2076

or

Alex Ball

[alex@shadowprod.com](mailto:alex@shadowprod.com)

507-990-0670