

Creative Brief & Sample Campaign:

Rebranding Efficiency

Guess what's had **30x** the impact of renewables,
helped the US economy **triple** in size,
cut projected energy use **by half**,
saved consumers **hundreds of billions of dollars** and dramatically
slowed the rate of climate change?

A Call for Designers & Branding Experts to Help Fix the World



the bottom line

TABLE OF CONTENTS

(hyperlinked)

[Intro | What's in a Name?](#) **3**

[Background](#) **4 - 5**

[The 1,000+ Mile Difference](#) **6**

[Demand-Side Economics](#) **7**
[\(Negawatts | Keep It In the Ground\)](#)

[Sample Campaign](#) **8 - 12**
[\("the bottom line" \)](#)

[Bibliography](#) **13**



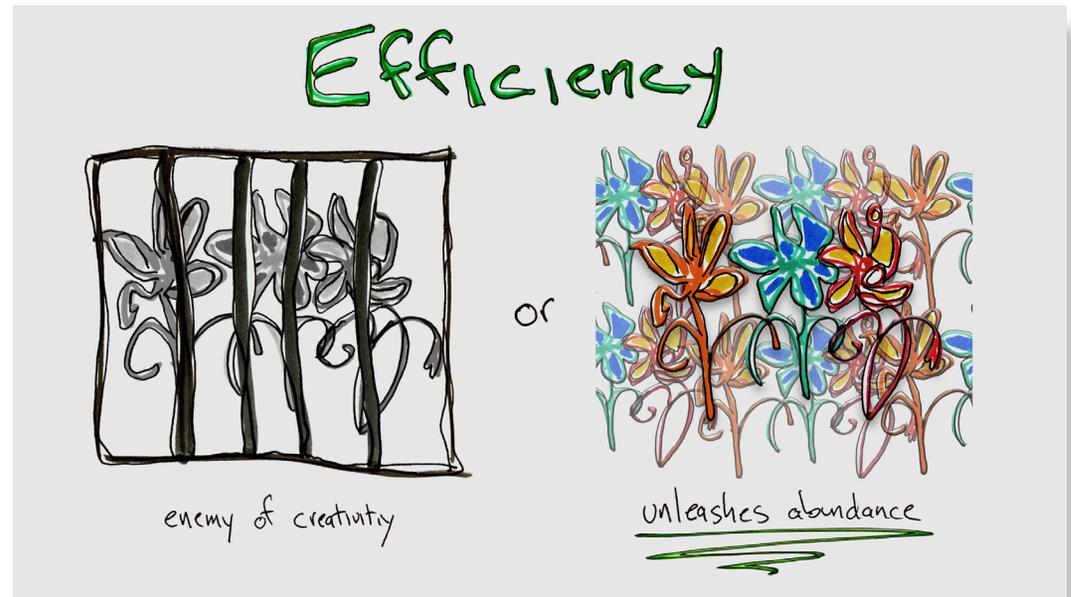
WHAT'S IN A NAME?

My background is in journalism, specifically stories about science and technology. If it has anything to do with microbes, manufacturing, transportation, the environment or energy, I am all over it. I have chased after wolves, bears, horses, viruses and wildlife biologists in the field, hung out in rail yards to see how double-decker freight trains are assembled (it's an art) and once crawled through a giant tunnel boring machine with a guy named Catfish.

I first started covering energy after reading a book called [Natural Capitalism](#) that outlined the tenets of what today is more popularly known as the circular economy: using a whole systems approach to unlock endless value from finite natural resources. The “value” includes cleaner air and water and more fertile soil and biodiversity: nature's bottom lines.

I asked my editor (I was then at *BusinessWeek*) to send me to [Rocky Mountain Institute](#) to interview Amory Lovins, one of the book's authors. My head was soon spinning with all sorts of technical terms and stats, but even though the language was largely foreign, I began to understand. It wasn't only about developing better sources of energy, but also about efficiency—doing more, much more, with less.

Many (most?) creatives I know have a notably bad reaction to the word “efficiency.” They see it as the enemy of creativity, full of arbitrary rules, speedy assembly lines, gray conformity and authoritarianism.



Part of the creative brief may be finding a better word.

Energy efficiency—more than renewables—has kept us from experiencing worst-case climate change *right now*. At its core, efficiency is about good design, whether for products, processes, systems or services. It is about doing things better and smarter to unleash abundance.

In a deeply profound way, *your* insights in how to translate and package ideas are essential. You are experts in making the invisible visible, complexity accessible and in speaking to heart as well as mind.

You can make a difference —perhaps all the difference. Our future hangs in the balance.

Ready to take on the challenge?

— [J. A. Ginsburg](#)

Caveat: I am in the rare position of being able to bridge the gap between scientists / researchers / policy wonks and designers and branding experts.

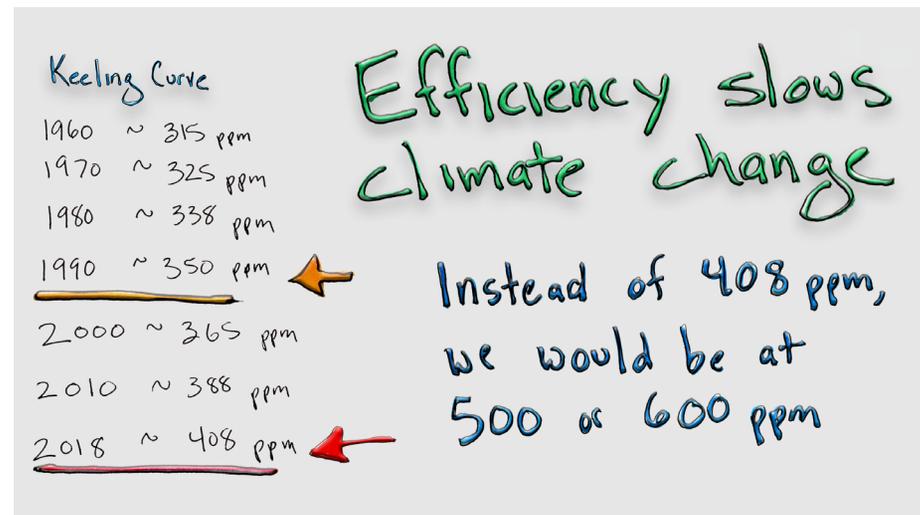
However, I am *not* in a position to create or sponsor a competition. Rather, I hope that by providing background and also a sample campaign, this brief will inspire...

- design organizations such as [AIGA](#) and [Creative Mornings](#)
- publications such as [Core 77](#), [Print](#) and [HOW](#)
- online and crowdsourced networks such as [dribbble](#) and [Threadless](#)
- design and branding programs at universities and art schools
- environmental organizations such as [350.org](#) and [Climate Reality](#)

... to take on the challenge and launch their own competitions and campaigns.

If I can get out my markers and give a try, so can you. And you have talent!

Ok, let's get to it. Time for some science!



BACKGROUND

If not for gains in energy efficiency over the last 40 years, we would be well into worst of runaway climate change right now. It's true. A seemingly prosaic array of products and services—insulation, smart windows, clever thermostats, LEDs, LaaS (Lighting as a Service), energy-miser appliances, new materials, better fuel efficiency, integrative design, blockchain—have, collectively, managed to buy us some precious, critical time.

Efficiency gains have had more than 30x the impact of renewables (solar and wind) in keeping fossil fuel use in check. Indeed, in the US, energy use is half of what was projected due mostly to efficiency. That is very big deal.

A proxy for just how bad things are in terms of climate change is the amount of carbon in the atmosphere measured in parts-per-million (ppm). It has been almost three decades since we were last in the safe zone of 350 ppm.

For many designers reading this brief, atmospheric carbon levels have been dangerously high for your entire lives. Not only is it getting worse, but it's getting worse at an accelerating rate. Right now we are at 408 ppm. If not for efficiency, the number would probably be closer to 500 or even 600 ppm.

That is a future killer.

[If you think global weather is extreme now, it is only a taste of what's to come if we don't get handle on things.](#)

Like efficiency, atmospheric carbon is invisible, but the damage is evident everywhere: melting polar ice caps, rising seas, killer heatwaves, droughts, floods, record-breaking hurricanes and, of course, nor'easters.

A carbon-saturated atmosphere means carbon-saturated oceans, lakes and rivers, too, whose rising acidity is [literally corroding the food chain.](#)

A warmer planet also means [more mosquitoes and ticks](#) and the diseases they spread to animals—including humans. It means more plant pathogens as well, impacting crops and forests.



The transition to clean energy (solar, wind and, on the horizon, hydrogen) is critically important as is the development of better batteries for energy storage. But it has been a collection of technologies under the umbrella of efficiency that has done the heavy lifting in terms of curtailing the use of fossil fuels.

In techie terms, reduced “energy intensity,” a combination of mostly efficiency, but also compositional change (e.g. fewer steel mills means less energy needed to make steel), has had more than 30 times the impact of renewables over the last few decades.

Efficiency—the fastest way to lower greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs)—is one of the most powerful tools to combat climate change.

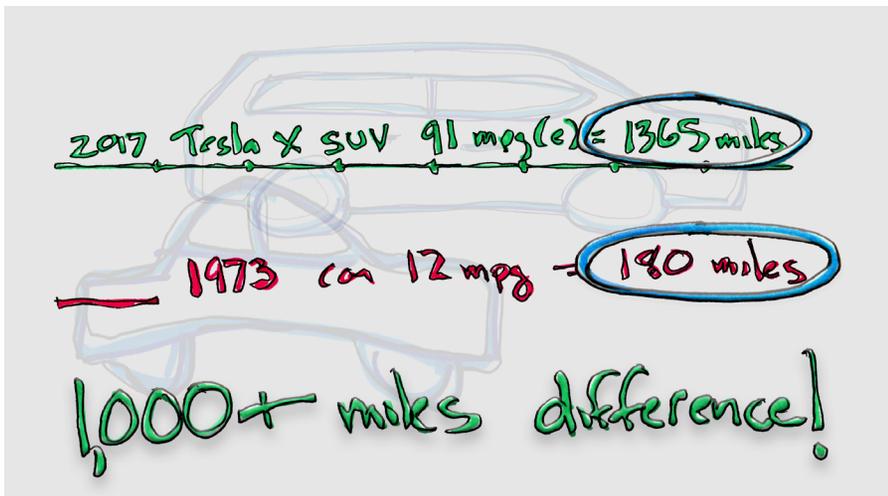
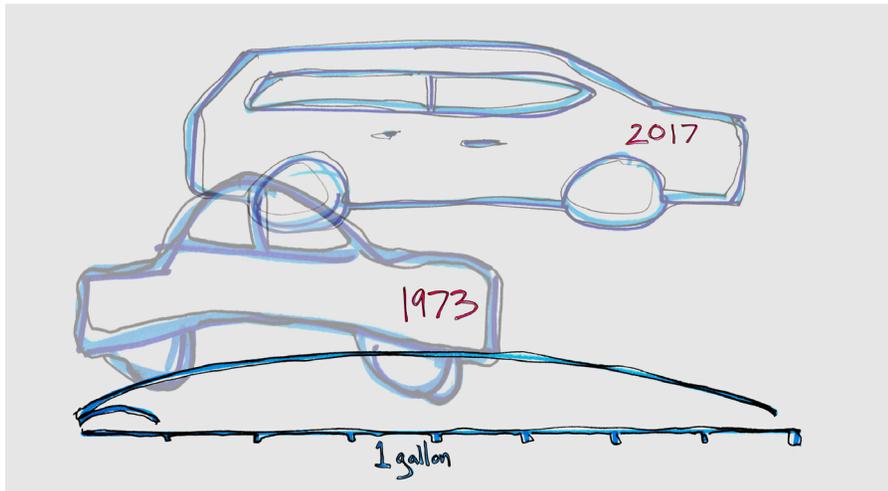
THE 1,000+ MILE DIFFERENCE

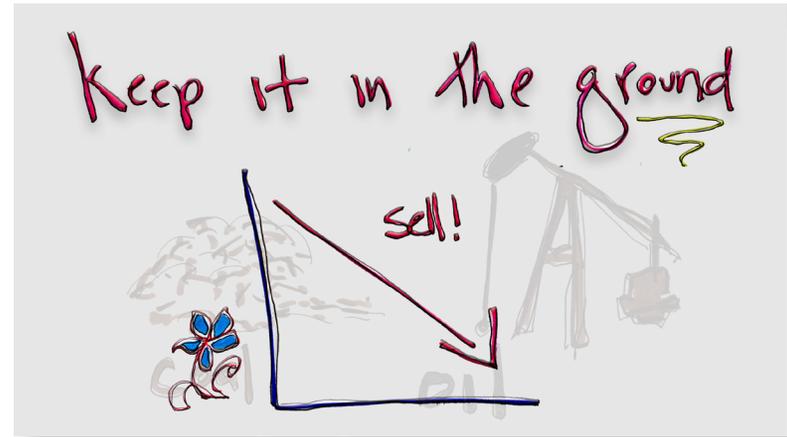
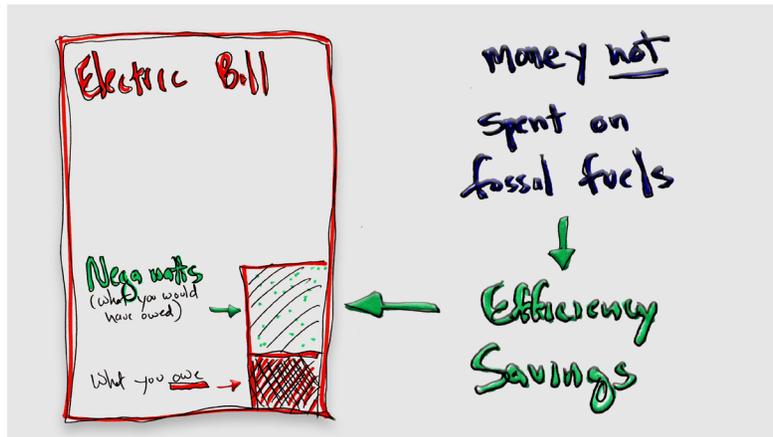
It should come as no surprise that supporters of the coal and oil industries aren't big fans of efficiency. It cuts into their profits because it reduces demand. They would like to see programs such as EPA's popular Energy Star cut. Over the last 25 years, Energy Star, which incentivizes manufacturers to produce better appliances, has saved American consumers an estimated third of a trillion dollars—as much as \$30 billion in a single year.

Likewise, gains in car and truck efficiency have been dramatic. With the cost of batteries expected to halve again by the 2020s, electric vehicles (EVs) will soon be competitive with gas-guzzlers.

Even today, a Tesla X SUV can go nearly eight times the distance on the energy equivalent of a gallon of gas compared to the average car circa 1973. That was the year of the Arab oil embargo that saw prices at the pump quickly spike by more than 50%. Tally that up for a 15 gallon fill up and the Tesla goes more than 1,000 miles further.

Change can happen fast. It took a little more than a decade for cars to replace horses as the dominant mode of transportation a century ago. Fossil fuels can revert to being fossils—left in the ground—just as fast.





DEMAND-SIDE ECONOMICS

Efficiency also plays a key role in growing a modern, competitive economy. By reducing demand, energy efficiency dramatically reduces utility bills. We don't see these “negawatts” on our bills—we only see what we owe. But without efficiency, our bills would on average be perhaps double what they are.

Year in, year out, these unseen savings have put more money—more capital—directly into the pockets of businesses, where it can pad a bottom line or be invested in growth. Savings also boosted consumer spending power.

Rather than a supply-side “trickle down” diffusion of capital, this is a demand-side, highly targeted infusion of capital. Not to put too fine a point on it, but it is also a more efficient way of recycling capital to grow the economy.

In fact, the US economy more than tripled in size while primary energy use was cut in half over the last few decades. Far from being a burden, going clean, green and efficient is an economic boon.

Over the last couple of years, several large investors—pension funds, universities, foundations and sovereign funds—have sold off (divested) more than \$6 trillion dollars worth of fossil fuels stocks. The idea behind the “Keep It In Ground” movement is to undermine the value of fossil fuel companies: to crash the market.

Likewise, many insurance companies have stopped underwriting coal mining operations. The uptick in extreme weather events linked to fossil fuel-driven climate change has cut into profits.

Many of these same organizations have also been very public about shifting to clean energy. If they were to invest in efficiency technologies with same fanfare, that would be even better. Not only would savings drop to their bottom lines, but the capital would help grow the sector, creating lots of local jobs.

When there is no need—no market— or oil or coal, then there is no point for building pipelines, drilling in the Arctic or mining tops off mountains.

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN

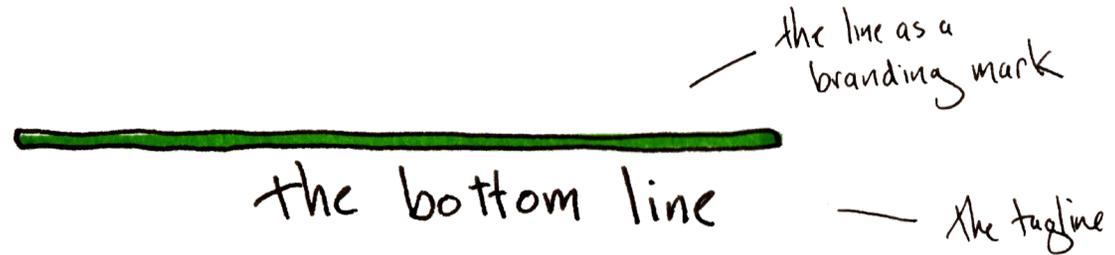
My talents in design and branding are limited. However, while putting together the brief, it became clear that in order to understand the challenge, I needed to try to take it on myself...and I am in awe of your abilities!

The concept of “the bottom line” campaign is to shift the focus from the word “efficiency” to its impact: Like the Nike “swoosh,” the green line serves as an instantly recognizable symbol—and as simple a symbol as one could imagine!

There are a *lot* of bottom lines:

- climate change
- MPG
- economic growth
- keep it in the ground
- savings
- integrative design

I hope this is good fodder for getting started. I am sure you can do better and can't wait to see what you come up with!

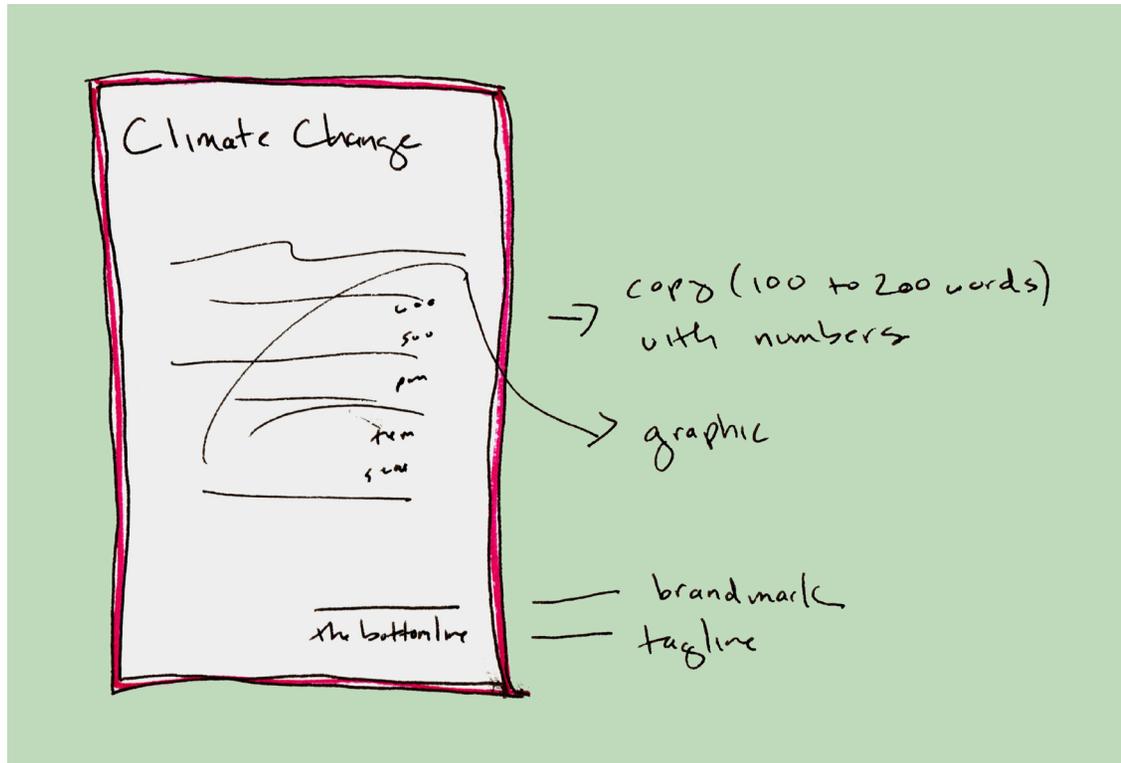


the bottom line



a campaign to
rebrand / reframe
energy efficiency
by focusing on
impact

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN: CLIMATE CHANGE



COPY

Efficiency Slows Climate Change

Since the 1970s, efficiency gains have helped reduce primary energy use in the US by more than half of projections. That means less coal and oil were burned than otherwise would have been, which in turn prevented as much as 200 ppm-worth of carbon pollution.

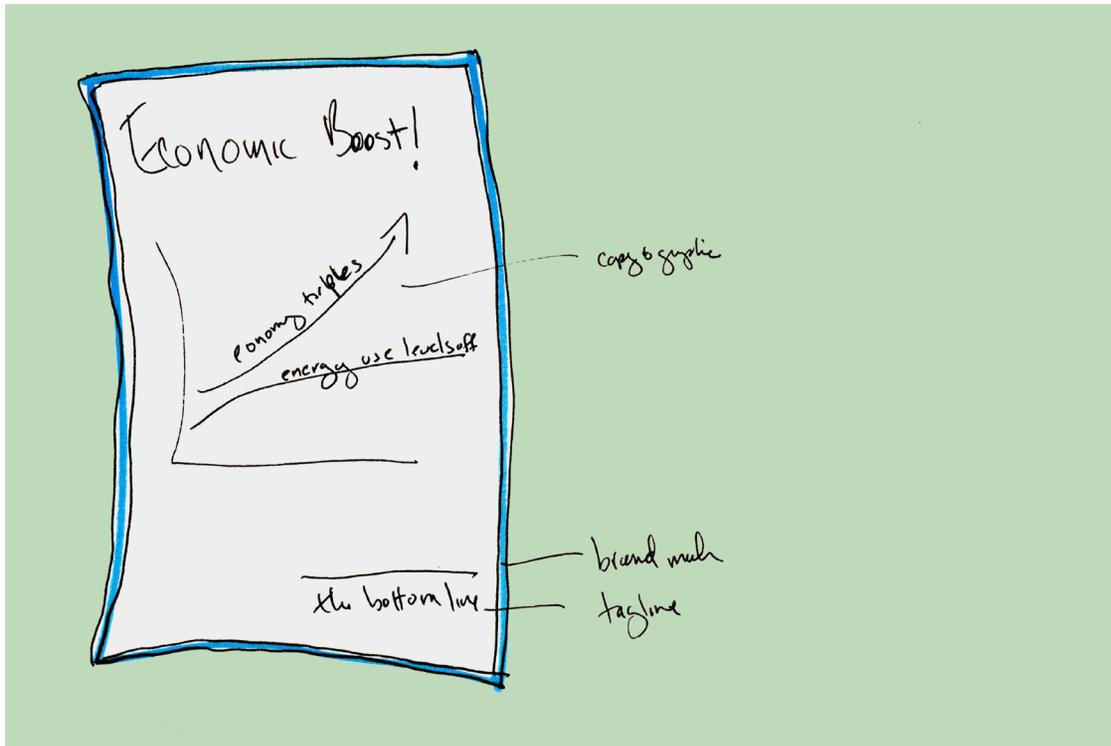
Efficiency—an umbrella term for everything from insulation and LEDs to blockchain tech and smart thermostats—ranks among the most powerful tools to tackling climate change.

And that's the bottom line.

SUGGESTED GRAPHICS

- [The Keeling Curve](#)
- Images, illustrations of extreme weather
- [Costs of extreme weather events](#)

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN: GROWING THE ECONOMY



COPY

Efficiency is Good for the Economy

Efficiency is about doing more—and better—with less. Over the last 30 years while primary energy use leveled off at half what had been projected, the US economy more than tripled in size.

Capital that was no longer needed to spend on energy was available for businesses to invest and grow, and for consumers to spend.

Since efficiency savings continue to add up over time, the aggregate impact is significant.

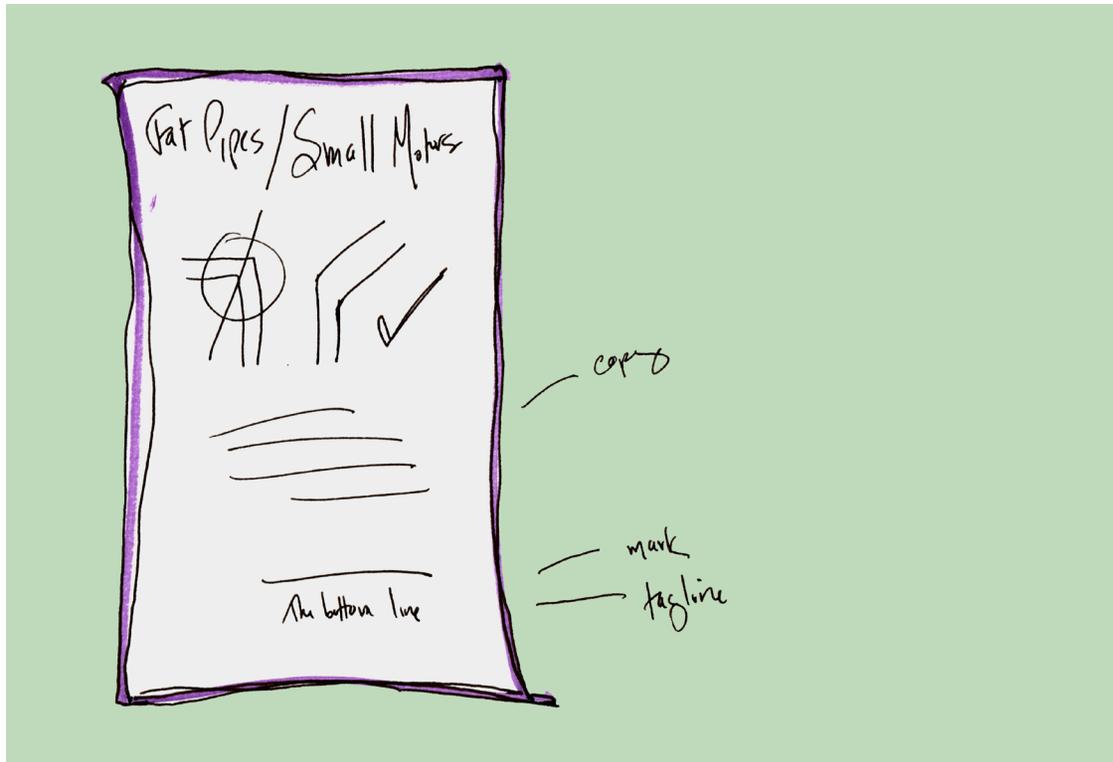
The EPA's Energy Star program, with an annual budget of less than \$60 million, has saved American consumers as much as \$30 billion in a single year by promoting efficient appliances. That's money that they can spend on other things.

And that's the bottom line.

SUGGESTED GRAPHICS

- graph charting economic growth and energy use over the last three decades
- appliances with [Energy Star](#) label

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN: FAT PIPES & SMALL MOTORS



COPY

Efficiency in Plumbing: Why Pour Money Down the Drain?

About two-thirds of the world's electricity powers motors and about half the motors power pumps and fans.

Reconfiguring pipes to reduce friction—so that liquid moves through them more easily—means less energy is needed to power the motors that power the pumps. In fact, can be done with smaller, cheaper motors.

Traditional long, skinny squiggly pipes with sharp, 90° elbow joints create a lot of friction. Replacing them with fatter, straighter pipes designed both to have fewer connections and connections at 45° or less can reduce energy use by 10x or more. Payback is typically about a year. After that, it's all savings.

By some estimates, if all the world's pipes were reconfigured, half the coal plants could be shut down.

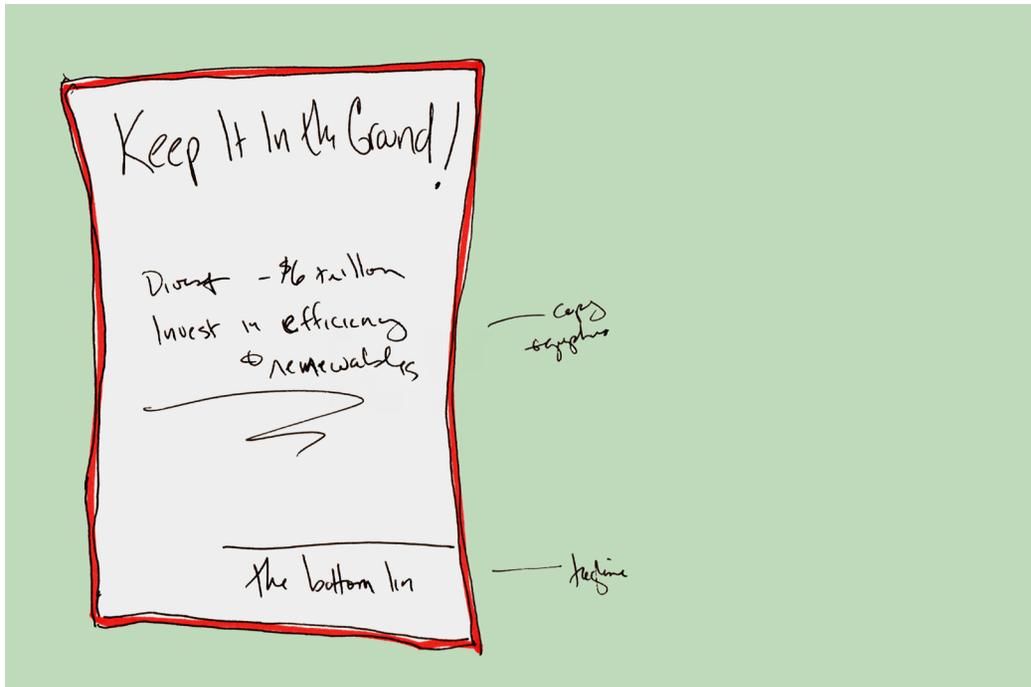
And that's the bottom line.

SUGGESTED GRAPHICS

- stylized drawings and/or photographs of traditional pipes and fat straight pipes ([see graphic at top of post here](#))

- [more background : Amory Lovins' video lecture \(especially section that begins at 10:45\)](#)

SAMPLE CAMPAIGN: KEEP IT IN THE GROUND



COPY

Efficiency Keeps It In the Ground!

Over the last few years, investment funds, foundations and universities around the world have sold off (divested) trillions of dollars worth of fossil fuel stocks in an effort to crash the market. Many of these organizations also committed to using clean energy.

Efficiency technologies have had about 30x the impact of renewables in terms of limiting fossil fuel use. Nothing “keeps in the ground” faster!

Efficiency cuts demand while also reducing utility bills.

When there is no need—no market—for oil or coal, then there is no point to build pipelines, drill in the Arctic or mine tops off mountains.

And that’s the bottom line.

SUGGESTED GRAPHICS

- news headlines about divestment ([see 350.org / background](http://see350.org/background))
- photos of protests
- stylized illustrations of pipelines and strip mining

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- [A Creative Brief: How Designers & Branding Experts Can Help Save Us All \(Really, Truly\)](#) | J. A. Ginsburg (companion video)
- [Less is More, More, More: The Cascading, Collective, Compounding, Sheer Utter Coolness of Efficiency](#) | J. A. Ginsburg
- [Integrative Design, Virtuous Circles, Tri-Sector Innovation and a Paradigm Whose Time is Now](#) | J. A. Ginsburg
- [Rocky Mountain Institute](#)
- [Greenbiz](#)
- [Ellen MacArthur Foundation](#)
- [Yale Environment 360](#)
- [Environmental Health News](#)
- [Climate Science Special Report | US Global Change Program](#)
- [Index of UN Climate Change Reports](#)
- [Keeling Curve | Scripps Institution of Oceanography](#)

