

PR Crash Course:

A discussion on effective public
communication for municipal utilities

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Today's Agenda

Framework:

Discussion of stages of communication effects and the value category matrix

PR essentials:

Workshop discussion of key stakeholders, issues, and tactics with audience participation (let's hear about your successes and challenges)

Wrapping it up:

Parting thoughts on effective communication

Fun:

Did they really say that?

Done:

Lunch

Some initial thoughts...

PR means telling the truth and working ethically - even when all the media want is headlines and all the public wants is scapegoats. Public relations fails when there is no integrity."

-Viv Segal

"It is simplicity that makes the uneducated more effective than the educated when addressing popular audiences."

-Aristotle

"Everything you say or do is public relations."

-Unknown

Your value proposition...

- Local control
- Better service
- Lower rates
- Competition
- Green energy initiatives
- Local community partner

Stages of Communication Effects

Awareness

Reach target audiences with key messages



Comprehension

Create a deeper level of understanding to facilitate informed decision-making



Conviction

Influence opinions/shape attitudes favorable to desired outcomes



Action

Mobilize stakeholders to take positive, supportive action

Value Category Matrix

Value Category

Sample Attributes

Product/Service Leadership



People
Expertise
Innovation
Creativity
Unique products/services

Operational Excellence



Service
Delivery
Responsiveness
Attitude/Philosophy

Customer Intimacy



Knowledge of customers (access to useful data)
Strength of personal relationships
Ability to communicate effectively
Fit and comfort level

Stakeholders you need to be prepared to engage...

- Customers
 - Commercial
 - Residential
- Elected and appointed officials
 - Local
 - State
- IOUs
- Business partners / vendors
- Business leader organizations
- Community organizations
- Public safety officials
- Regulators
- Employees
- Third-party subject matter experts

Issues you need to be prepared to address...

- Rate hikes
- Infrastructure investment
- Construction projects
- ROW's
- Environment
- Vegetation management (spraying/clearing)
- Wildlife
- Rate hikes
- Clean energy
- Smart meters
- Power outages/reliability
- Safety (EMF)

Tactics and channels to help deliver the message...

- Website (Mansfield, Marblehead, Ipswich, Shrewsbury)
- Direct mail
- Customer service (telephone/online)
- Print and electronic collateral
- Email/e-newsletters
- News media
- Annual report
- Public hearings / meetings (gov't/regulatory)
- Community meetings / open houses (hosted by you)
- Community meetings /events (hosted by other orgs)
- Charrettes
- Citizen advisory boards
- Facility / site tours
- Social media (Shrewsbury)
- Your office
- Customer's home

Parting thoughts on effective communication...

Never assume the message has been received and understood.

You have to be proactive and reactive.

The most effective communication technique is listening. Ask for opinions and provide a response.

Get to know your stakeholders, especially reporters. Find reasons to communicate with them when there is not a pressing issue. Make sure they know who to contact when there is an issue.

Critics/opponents are often not bound by the facts, but you are.

Engage third-party stakeholders and experts but don't hide behind them.

Brands and reputations are not tangible. Brands exist in the minds of your stakeholders and are shaped over time by exposure to messages and first-hand experiences.

Every touch point and interaction is a chance to improve your reputation, especially in a crisis.

“Do what you say and say what you do” is an adage worth heeding.

Did They Really Say That?

“After finding no qualified candidates for the position of principal, the school board is extremely pleased to announce the appointment of David Steele to the post.”

-Philip Streifer, Superintendent of Schools,
Barrington, Rhode Island

“The police are not here to create disorder.
They’re here to preserve disorder.”

-Richard J. Daley, Mayor of Chicago
at the 1968 Democratic Convention

“We’re going to turn this team around 360 degrees.”

-Jason Kidd

Professional basketball player

“I haven’t committed a crime. What I did was fail to comply with the law.”

-David Dinkins NYC Mayor
answering accusations that he
failed to pay his taxes

“I was recently on a tour of Latin America, and the only regret I have was that I didn't study Latin harder in school so I could converse with those people.”

-Dan Quayle

“Whenever I watch TV and see those poor starving kids all over the world, I can’t help but cry. I mean I’d love to be skinny like that but not with all those flies and death and stuff”

-Mariah Carey

No more slides. Any questions?

Thank you.