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ADVANCING PROFESSIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT WORLDWIDE

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This issue of *PM* is available online at icma.org/pm February 27, 2014.

BY MARTHA PEREGO

SEEK NO FAVOR

Avoiding appearance of personal gain

Public service is a privilege. And as with life's privileges, it comes with a unique set of responsibilities and obligations. One key obligation for all officials, whether elected or appointed, is to seek no favor.

A public office or position should not be leveraged for personal gain. Conduct that creates even the appearance that personal gain trumps public duty must be avoided.

A Look Back

In a bit of irony, ICMA was focused on encouraging local government professionals to follow that higher principle of public service, seek no favor, the very same year the White House embarked on one of the most egregious abuses of official power. Yes, Watergate.

Tenet 12 of the ICMA Code of Ethics establishes the profession's standard regarding the issue of personal gain. Written in 1972, the tenet is a merger of a statement from the original Code drafted in 1924 that reads: "Believe that personal aggrandizement or profit secured by confidential information or by misuse of public time is dishonest" with "seek no favors," which was added in 1969 (perhaps ICMA was a bit prescient about the conduct to come from the executive branch?).

The current Tenet 12 reads: "Seek no favor; believe that personal aggrandizement or profit secured by confidential information or by misuse of public time is dishonest."

The tenet's guidelines cover a broad range of issues that are both common and significant to professionals working in local government: gifts, conflicts of interest, investments, personal relationships, use of confidential information, outside employment, and endorsements.

Era of More Transparency

Much has changed since the tenet and guidelines were written in 1972. The level of transparency in local government has vastly improved with the passage of strong open records laws. As a consequence of more transparency, the scope of what is truly confidential information is pretty narrow.

PM
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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Gone are the days of managers being fêted at upscale venues by vendors and bond dealers. Most professionals understand that those gifts are just like free cheese in a mousetrap. Both come with significant consequences.

Technology and social media bring a new set of ethical challenges. Consultants and vendors now use websites, Facebook, and other social media venues to market their products and services. That possibility was certainly not envisioned by ICMA when the guideline on endorsements was drafted in 1972.

In addition, there are other hot topics for the profession that are not directly addressed. The Code, for instance, does not include any guidelines on member compensation.

While ICMA adopted a set of principles and best practices on compensation in 2010, they were not incorporated into the Code. An opportunity may exist under the principle "seek no favor" to address issues where the Code is silent.

Moving Forward: The Relevancy of Tenet 12

Given the importance to the profession and the length of time since it was written, Tenet 12 and its guidelines have been selected as part of ICMA's annual Code review process. Members will have the opportunity to engage in the discussion about the relevancy of the tenet and guidelines to the profession.

As the dialogue begins, consider these questions:

- Is the tenet still relevant to the profession? Why or why not?
- Are there parts of the tenet that need refinement or clarity?
- In today's environment, what are the areas of greatest risk where local government professionals could improperly seek favor?
- Tenet 12 and the guidelines do not specifically reference the topic of compensation. Does the tenet's statement "seek no favor" make it clear that members should not accept unreasonable or excessive compensation? Should ICMA add a guideline to address issues related to compensation?
- How do you define an endorsement? What situations involving endorsements have you encountered that either don't appear to be addressed by the guideline or aren't clear? For example:
  - Is serving as a reference for a vendor or consultant okay?
  - Is it ethical for a member to "Like" on Facebook or other social media platforms a business in his or her community that he or she frequents on a personal basis (i.e., restaurant, coffeehouse, dry cleaners)?
  - Is it okay for a member to "Like" a vendor or consultant who provides services to the city or county?
  - Is it an endorsement under the Code if, on LinkedIn, you "endorse" the skills of an individual who works for a vendor or consulting firm?
- As you engage in social media on a personal or professional basis, what ethical concerns do you have?
- The guideline on investments does not specifically limit the type of investment members may have in the community where they work. Should the guideline be revised to state that a member's investment in the community should be limited to the purchase of a personal residence and/or residence for a family member?

As you review the tenet and its guidelines, what are the areas that you would like to see addressed that aren't? What recommendations do you have for changes to the guidelines? Please give it some thought.

Let the dialogue continue! PM

MARTHA PEREGO
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HAVE YOU EVER HAD A "GOOSE-BUMPS MOMENT" AND, IF SO, WHAT CAUSED IT?

J. MICHAEL JOYAL, JR.
City Manager
Dover, New Hampshire
m.joyal@dover.nh.gov

A moment like this occurred when our city council was voting to allow the relocation of a successful, nonprofit children's museum to our downtown. This move would enhance the vibrancy and economic growth of the area.

The museum was searching for expanded space. Recognizing a mutual benefit, we offered a downtown and soon-to-be vacated, city-owned building. This building needed structural repairs but was ideal for museum operations.

If approved, the community would complete needed repairs, and the museum would be responsible for any additional renovations. If not for the local "Citizens Against Virtually Everything" group, the council's decision would not have become a nail-biter. This group was critical of the museum's move. The move was recommended by our staff and others given the immediate payback and long-term benefits expected for the community.

Ultimately, councilors did support it. Today, it is a thriving educational and cultural attraction in our downtown.

KATHY HODGSON
City Manager
Lakewood, Colorado
kathod@lakewood.org

My goose-bumps moment is also the saddest moment of my career. Having worked for Lakewood (population 143,000) since 1980, and proud of the high-performing police department of more than 400 employees, a horrific event I experienced in the early morning hours of November 9, 2012, when a police officer was mistakenly shot and killed by another police officer in the line of duty.

It was my job to address members of the police department in an all-employee meeting that morning. The room was packed, with uniformed officers filling every seat and in the aisles and corners. The atmosphere was heavy, dark, and silent.

At the time, my only ambition was to provide support and comfort. While recognizing the treacherous days and months ahead, I urged each person to be kind to themselves, to one another, and to residents.

One year later, we dedicated a memorial to the fallen officer. The experience will never be forgotten.

MONIKA WEIERBACH
Town Administrator
Mt. Airy, Maryland
mweierbach@mountairymd.org

My not-good moment happened on Labor Day 2007, when our town experienced a devastating fire in its downtown area that destroyed an entire block of newly renovated businesses. When, as manager, you experience this type of destruction in a downtown just starting to revive and rehabilitate, it is heart wrenching.

After the fire, I realized the strength of the commitment from the mayor, the councilmembers, and the community to rebuild. Property owners who were affected were extremely determined to rebuild and to build back quickly.

Phenomenal support came to the town from county and state leaders, allowing the town to use state-funding programs to help businesses get back on their feet again. Full coordination of town, county, and state officials allowed the rebuilding to happen rapidly, and the downtown is more dynamic than ever.

Amazing things are possible when your community comes together in such a committed way.

KENNY SMITH
City Manager
Griffin, Georgia
ksmith@cityofgriffin.com

I've had goose-bumps moments when I received a handwritten note from a resident, employee, or past employee whose life I had the opportunity to impact.

Shortly after becoming manager 10 years ago, I got a handwritten letter from a previous employee who made sure I realized the impact our working relationship had on his career. He carefully explained how, even though he did not fully understand all my decisions at the time, now that he had become a manager he had a much better understanding of why I did what I did, and made the decisions I made.

In our roles as public servants and organizational leaders, we sometimes don't realize the impact we can have on others' lives—positive and negative. When someone takes time to mail a handwritten note in today's fast-paced, social mediatized world we live in, it shows they really care. PM

1

ICMA FACILITATES GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Since 2010, ICMA has managed portions of a Professional Fellows Program that encourages global information sharing between U.S. local government staff and their counterparts in Asian/Pacific countries. The program, funded by the U.S. Department of State, brings Asian/Pacific professionals to U.S. communities that can provide insights into challenges they face at home. U.S participants have reported surprises as well as valuable lessons from their return visits abroad.

▸ **icma.org/fellows**

2

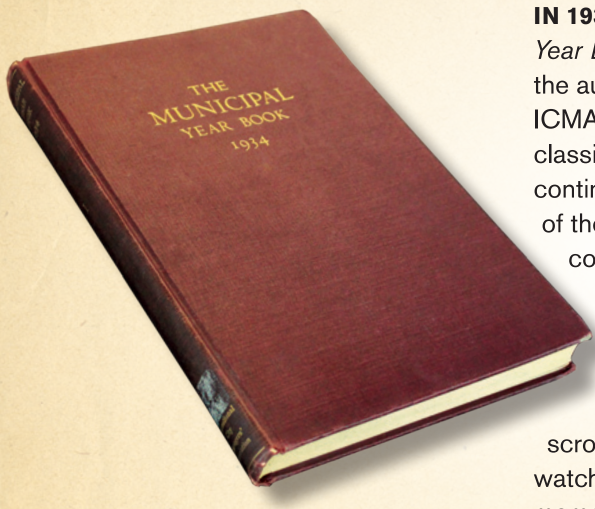
IT PROCUREMENT FOR SUCCESS

Do you need help managing IT procurement? A report on the Knowledge Network can provide helpful information.

▸ **icma.org/IT_procurement**

icma anniversary

MOMENT IN HISTORY



IN 1934, ICMA PUBLISHES its first edition of *The Municipal Year Book*, which sells 1,000 copies and quickly becomes the authoritative source for municipal data and information. ICMA staff member Herb Simon develops the *Year Book*'s classification of cities and presentation of statistical data that continued to be used through the 2010 edition. Introduction of the *Year Book* brought an end to publication of annual conference proceedings in a publication called the *City Manager Yearbook*.

To learn more about the many milestones in the history of ICMA, its members, and the local government management profession, visit **icma.org/anniversary** and scroll through the anniversary timeline on the homepage. Also watch this space in *PM*, where we'll highlight an anniversary moment each month.

ICMA 100th ANNIVERSARY 1914 ■ 2014

TAKEAWAYS

› Learn how local government professionals prioritize different types of public participation.

› Learn how Rancho Cordova, California, is guiding online public participation toward an informed, constructive dialog.

THE EXTENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

ICMA SURVEY EXPLORES PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND THE TENOR OF CIVIC DISCOURSE

By Robert Vogel, Evelina Moulder, and Mike Huggins

Local governments use a variety of strategies and techniques to encourage public involvement in local planning and decision making. The International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) describes public involvement as occurring at five levels ranging from informing all the way to empowering.

In this article, we summarize the responses to ICMA's 2012 State of the Profession Survey, which asked respondents to rate the importance of achieving the five levels of involvement in their communities. The levels are illustrated in a case study of an online public participation project in Rancho Cordova, California. We conclude with a list of questions to help local government managers improve their public participation strategy. >>

Goals of Public Participation

Previous ICMA surveys examined how local governments share information with residents. The 2012 survey delved more deeply into the nature and purposes of local government public participation efforts.

IAP2 has designed a widely-accepted Spectrum of Public Participation that identifies a range of interactions that a local government can have with its community. Distinguished by increasing levels of direct public involvement and intended outcomes, the IAP2 Spectrum includes the following five types of goals that a government can strive for in its public participation efforts: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. A number of the 2012 survey questions addressed the perceived importance of these types of public interactions within the local government profession.

Inform: Eighty-five percent of the responding local governments report that it is "important" or "highly important" to provide the public with objective information to assist them in understanding problems/solutions/alternatives.

Consult: Seventy-five percent indicate that it is "important" or "highly important" to work directly with the public to ensure that their concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

WHILE ENCOURAGING GREATER PARTICIPATION BY THE PUBLIC, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS GENERALLY STOP SHORT OF PLACING FINAL DECISION MAKING DIRECTLY IN THE HANDS OF THE PUBLIC.

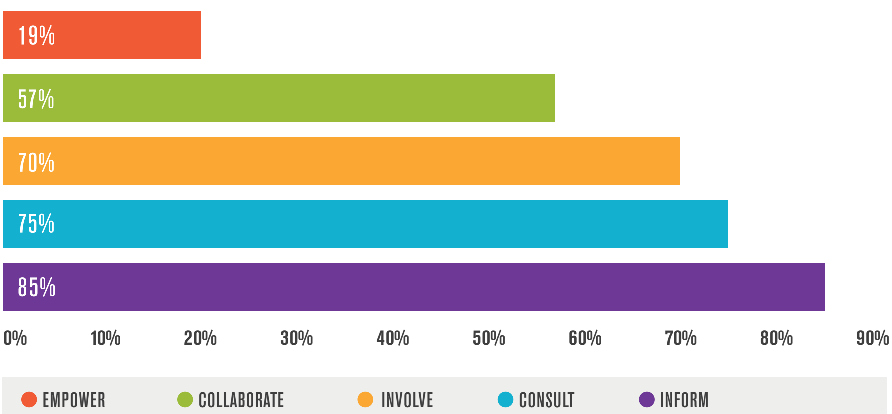
Involve: Some 70 percent report that it is "important" or "highly important" to obtain feedback from the public on analyses of problems, solutions, and alternatives.

Collaborate: The results show that 57 percent of respondents reported that it is "important" or "highly important" to partner with the public in development of alternatives, identification of the preferred solution, and decision making.

Empower: Nineteen percent of respondents indicate that it is "important" or "highly important" to place decision making in the hands of the public.

Being clear about the underlying purpose of the engagement effort as well as the promise it intends to make to the public is essential to the success of any public participation effort. Without objective information and a clearly understood purpose, the public cannot provide meaningful feedback nor can they partner with the local government in developing alternatives, identifying solutions, and making decisions. Unless concerns and aspirations are understood, problems cannot be successfully addressed.

Figure 1. Percent of Respondents Who Considered the Five Goals Important or Very Important.



Source: ICMA *State of the Profession 2012* survey.

Rancho Cordova: A Case Study

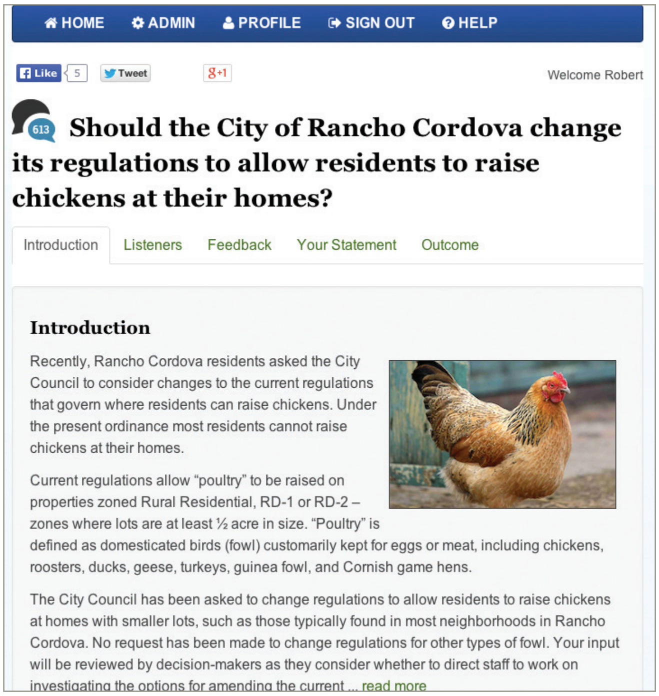
When residents of Rancho Cordova, California (population 67,000), asked their city council to loosen restrictions on raising chickens, the council wanted to first hear from a broad spectrum of residents. Before finalizing their decision, councilmembers wanted to encourage participants to first learn about the issue, then engage in a nuanced discussion without polarizing the community for or against the proposal.

Under the leadership of City Manager Ted Gaebler, the city decided to use the Open Town Hall online public engagement service[1] to broaden the discussion beyond the few who typically attend in-person meetings. To encourage the public to understand the issues around this proposed new ordinance, the online service presented objective background information before inviting users to participate in the online discussion.

To ensure that the public's concerns and aspirations were well understood and considered, the city created a map of "Engaged Rancho Cordova Districts," enabling decisionmakers and others to see what residents from each district were saying. Anyone could click on the "word cloud" in the online tool to see statements containing frequently occurring words (e.g., *enforcement*) and on demographic tallies to see trends in perspectives by age and gender.

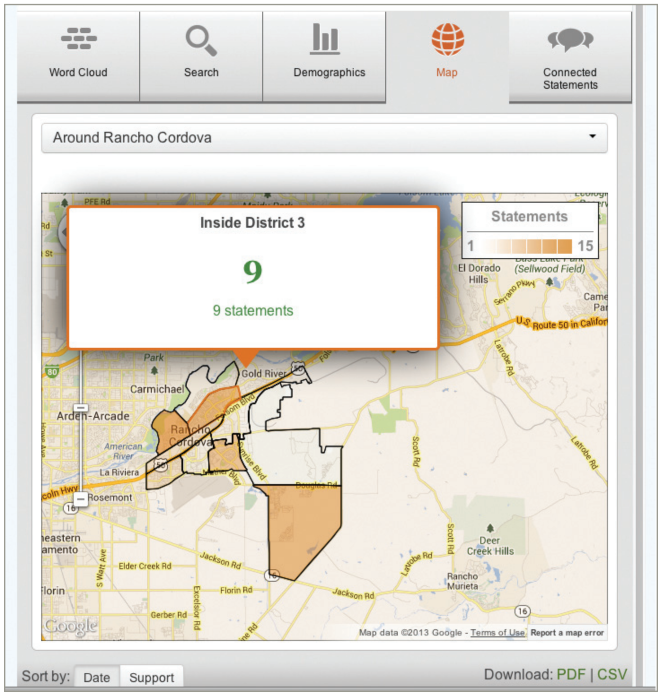
Compared with Rancho Cordova's traditional face-to-face meetings, par-

Figure 2. Framing the Online Discussion with an Objective Introduction.



Residents were encouraged to read the introduction before participating.

Figure 3. Clickable Map of Engaged Rancho Cordova Districts.



Residents and staff could click on the map to review responses by district.

ticipation in the online forum was both large and civil. More than 560 residents visited the forum, 66 posted or supported a statement, and 147 subscribed to updates enabling them to remain involved after the forum closed. Statements were monitored for compliance with the city's guidelines for civility and all but one were found in compliance.

Much like a public hearing, each participant was allowed to make only one statement. Monitoring statements and allowing only one per resident resulted in a collaborative online forum providing clear feedback on the proposed ordinance as well as potential improvements to that ordinance.

After the period for public discussion had concluded, the council directed staff to prepare a draft ordinance that reflected the feedback and addressed the concerns expressed both on the forum and in other public venues. This outcome was also posted on the forum and e-mailed to forum subscribers to strengthen the partnership between the city administration and the public in the decision-making process.

In line with the preference of most of the respondents to the ICMA survey, Rancho Cordova chose not to place decision making directly in the hands of the public. The online forum was designed specifically to preclude the public perception of a public vote or a referendum.

The city never mentioned the "v word" (vote), and it chose to collect open-ended statements from residents rather than have them respond to a poll or survey that asked for a yes/no position on the proposed new ordinance. The forum can be found at www.peakdemocracy.com/1379.

Civic Discourse and Extent of Public Participation

Citing the complexity of issues and the breadth and depth of knowledge needed for sound policies, local government officials often express reluctance for expanding the public's direct role in decision making. Over the past several years, the often disconcerting tenor of civic discourse has also contributed to concerns about greater public participation.

A perception of the public as increasingly "nasty, brutish, short" and polarized inevitably raises questions for local officials about the efficacy of their collaboration with that public.

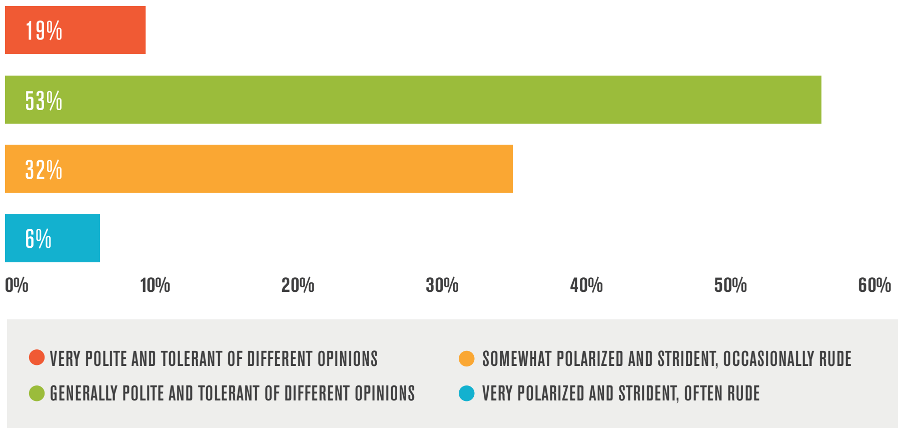
Civic discourse. Close to 40 percent of ICMA survey respondents described the civic discourse in their community as "very polarized and strident, often rude" or "somewhat polarized and strident, occasionally rude." Respondents in the New England division show the highest percentage (45 percent) reporting civic discourse in their community as "very polarized and strident, often rude" or "somewhat polarized and strident, occasionally rude," as did 44 percent of respondents in those communities with the town meeting form of government. The 2013 Weber Shandwick and Powell Tate survey *Civility in America*,[2] which was conducted nationally online, found 71 percent of respondents believed the lack of civility in the United States was worse than several years ago, and 82 percent believed the general lack of civility in politics is harming the country.

Slightly more than 50 percent of respondents with council/administrator/manager and council elected executive also described civic discourse as "very polarized and strident, often rude" or "somewhat polarized and strident, occasionally rude." Of particular interest is that out of the 777 survey respondents overall who reported that civic discourse is "very polarized and strident, often rude" or "somewhat polarized and strident, occasionally rude," 399 also indicated that partnering with the public in development of alternatives, identification of preferred solutions, and decision making is "important" or highly important."

If we look at the same group of respondents, we also see that 127 of them reported that it is "important" or "highly important" to put decision making in the hands of the public. Not surprisingly, when these 127 are examined by form of government, the town meeting and representative town meeting governments represent, respectively, 19 percent and 20 percent of the total respondents.

These are by far the highest percentages of respondents by form of government that rated putting decision making in the hands of the public as "important" or "highly important" and rated civic discourse as "very polarized and strident, often rude" or "somewhat polarized and strident, occasionally rude."

Figure 2. Percent of Respondents Who Described Civic Discourse in Their Community.



Level of resident participation. When asked about the level of resident participation, only 12 percent of respondents indicated that there is a high level of participation in their local government's engagement efforts. A majority of local governments in communities under 10,000 population show low participation levels. Pacific Coast respondents show the highest percentage—19 percent—reporting a high level of participation.

Outcome

Local governments are encouraging the public to participate in the identification of problems and their solutions, to share their concerns and aspirations, and to provide feedback and develop alternatives as part of the decision-making process. The outcome is optimized when local managers first ask themselves these six questions:

- What is the readiness and capacity of my organization for public engagement?
- Why am I involving the residents?
- What do I want to achieve?
- What do I want to know?
- What is the role of the public?
- How is that role communicated to the public in face-to-face and online interactions?

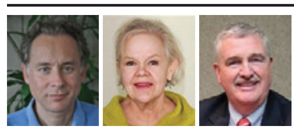
Answers to these questions[3] enable local governments to constructively engage the public in both face-to-face meetings and online public participation methods. Through careful design and monitoring of online forums, localities can significantly improve the effectiveness of public participation by expanding the number of people participating, restoring the civility of their participation, and ensuring clarity about the role of the public in final decision making. PM

ENDNOTES

1 PeakDemocracy.com.

2 www.webershandwick.com/uploads/news/files/Civility_in_America_2013_Exec_Summary.pdf. Page 12.

3 Two excellent tools managers should use in their planning are the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (http://www.iap2.org/associations/4748/files/spectrum.pdf) and the Center for Management Strategies Assessment Tool for Civic Engagement Practices (http://icma.org/en/results/management_strategies/leading_practices/civic_engagement).



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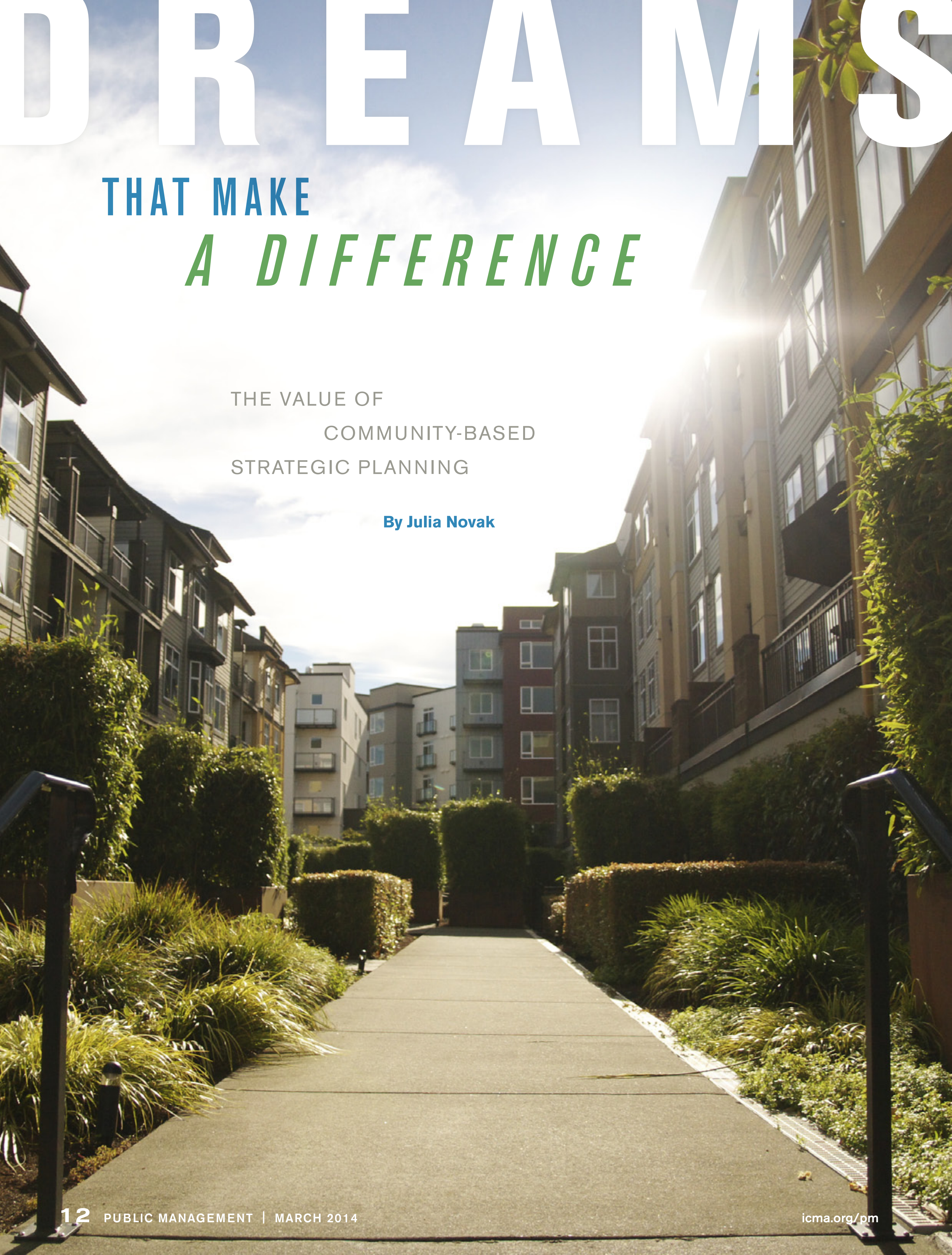


DREAMS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIC PLANNING

By Julia Novak

TAKEAWAYS

› Community-based strategic planning is a specific approach to strategic planning that engages the community in a tangible way.

› A local government can be the initiator or the collaborator in designing a strategic planning process.

› Community-based strategic planning acknowledges that local government cannot meet all the needs in the community, while simultaneously validating the important role it plays in the lives of stakeholders.

Is there any value in engaging communities in strategic planning? After all, locally elected officials function within a representative democracy, accepting responsibility for planning for the future of local governments. While the need is not always tangible, the value in community-based strategic planning is derived from the engagement, buy-in, and owning a stake of the future of the communities within which local governments operate.

In the late 1990s, I recall Alvin Toffler speaking at a national conference where he shared a metaphor that left a lasting impression. Toffler talked about how local governments were becoming vending machines. A vending machine is not something anyone "buys into"—you literally put your money in, press the button, and get what you want.

And what happens when we don't get what we want? We shake or kick the machine, leave nasty Post-it notes, and perhaps call the posted phone number and complain to a customer service representative. While I am a believer in local governments providing excellent customer service, Toffler's metaphor is clearly not the image we want for local governments.

Engaging residents (and businesses and institutions) in community-based strategic planning replaces the vending machine and invokes a setting where people and institutions come together, dream about, and then go about creating the future of their community. Toffler offered the image of a barn raising being a more apropos metaphor than a vending machine.

It sounds lovely. Spending time with a group of residents to get their input and buy-in to the future of a community. The question is: Does it make a difference?

Back to the Future

Over the past 20 years, I have had the opportunity to participate in community-based strategic planning processes as both a city official/manager and as an adviser. At this juncture, it is reasonable to ask the question: What difference did those processes have in the lives of community residents?

Fort Collins, Colorado: Challenge Fort Collins. The first exposure I had to community-based strategic planning beyond public processes for capital improvement planning (CIP) was a process known as *Challenge Fort Collins* in the early 1990s. Fort Collins had long been known for active resident participation. Two successful CIP processes had brought impressive city facilities to life in this college town—one known as *Designing Tomorrow Today*; the other, *Choices 95*.

COMMUNITY IS CREATED WHEN PEOPLE ARE ALLOWED TO ENGAGE THEIR HEADS, THEIR HEARTS, AND THEIR HANDS IN ESTABLISHING SOMETHING TANGIBLE.

One could have almost questioned the need for Challenge Fort Collins but in reality it was bigger than the city government, it was about the entire community. Leadership was provided by dedicated residents, the Poudre Valley School District, Colorado State University, Poudre Valley Hospital, the business community, the arts community, and the city.

Everyone had an equal voice, and when residents wanted to open up the public schools for community use "after hours," it took several years of dedicated individuals working tirelessly to engage the school district and create an award-winning program that was later recognized by President Clinton as a program of excellence.

Rockville, Maryland: Imagine Rockville. In the late 1990s, Rockville, Maryland, engaged in a community-based process that was known as *Imagine Rockville: Creating the Future*, followed by its successor *Imagine Rockville: Checking in with the Future.* Those processes had a profound impact on the community and city government.

Out of the process, the city decided to intentionally engage neighborhood associations in order to establish a Neighborhood Resources Program that was desired by the community and is still in place today. It was determined that downtown Rockville, which was emerging from a failed shopping mall that imploded in late 1995, needed grid streets to be reestablished, and the community wanted a new county library to be the centerpiece of Town Center.

Today, Rockville Town Center has a beautiful library, mixed-use development, and entertainment that is a regional attraction.

Bridget Newton, an I*magine Rockville* participant and now mayor of Rockville, noted: "The *Imagine Rockville* process brought a hundred residents into the process of articulating a future for our community and then kept people engaged in the process of implementation. *Imagine Rockville* was the barn-raising process that turned downtown Rockville into everybody's neighborhood."

Unique to *Imagine Rockville* was not only the accomplishments that came out of the process but also the very process itself, which was innovative and effective. *Imagine Rockville* borrowed from a concept known as Future Search that was developed in Australia then brought to the United States and adapted for use in these types of specific engagements with residents.

The process in Rockville was replicated in Mansfield, Connecticut (*Mansfield 2020, 2008*); Worthington, Ohio (*Worthington 360, 2010*); and Clayton, Missouri (*C the Future, 2012*). Each of these community-based visioning processes used the Future Search process, which uses a specific facilitation technique called a Future Search Conference.

COMMUNITY-BASED STRATEGIC PLANNING IS MORE THAN A TECHNIQUE TO ESTABLISH A STRATEGIC PLAN. IT IS A STRATEGY FOR ENGAGING RESIDENTS AND CREATING COMMUNITY.

CORE CONCEPTS AND VALUES OF A SEARCH CONFERENCE

- People are an extraordinary source of information about the world.
- People can have a role in creating their desired future.
- People like opportunities to engage their heads, hands, and hearts.
- People can participate in collaborative planning and collaborative action.
- Content experts who participate in a search must fully engage in the process.
- People participate as individuals with their own experiences and information, not as a representative of, or for, any single interest group.
- Facilitators manage the time and the tasks, not the content.
- Participants must be willing to investigate the ideas of others (listen with respect).

What Is a Search Conference?

The Future Search Conference model is an innovative and exciting way to include a community in planning its future. In regards to community-based strategic planning, a search conference model is used to develop a unified community vision that identifies both the vision and actions to be taken to achieve that vision.

The search conference "brings people together to achieve breakthrough innovation, empowerment, shared vision, and collaborative action" (*Discovering Common Ground, Marvin R. Weisbord, 1992*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, California. A subsequent book, *Future Search: An Action Guide to Finding Common Ground in Organizations and Communities,* was published in 2000 by Berrett-Koehler.) Elements of a search conference include environmental scanning, identification of key *issues*, articulation of likely and desired futures, and action plans that are designed to set the implementation process in motion.

The search conference is a strategic planning event that is purposefully designed to be inclusive and action oriented. It is a participative planning method that enables people to create their desired future. It is a flexible process designed for today's rapidly changing environments. Participants in the search conference create a plan based on shared ideals with tangible and flexible goals.

Clayton, Missouri: *C the Future.* Clayton, Missouri, is a successful suburb of St. Louis that is also known as that city's "second skyline." In 2011, the community's elected officials decided to engage the community in a strategic

Figure 2. C the Future Community Issues.

This is an artist's representation of what *C the Future* participants in Clayton, Missouri, identified as critical issues to address.

planning process to commemorate its centennial and chart a course for the next 100 years.

The participants examined community programs and processes and strategized about what elements needed to be addressed in order to achieve the desired future. Figure 2 is an artist's representation of what *C the Future* participants identified as critical issues to address.

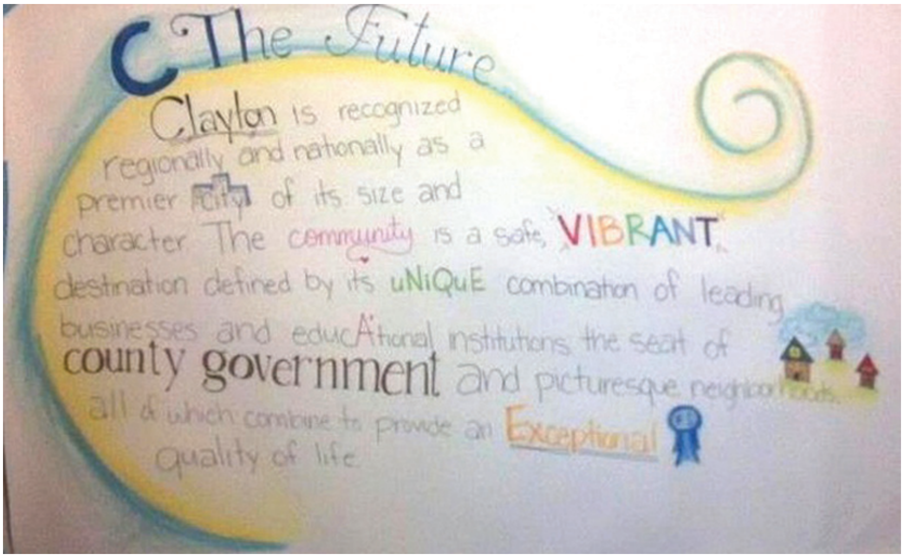
From that process the community identified four critical success factors that would enable the community to attain its desired future:

- Exceptional city services.
- Livable community.
- Strategic relationships.
- Economic development and vibrant downtown.

A directional statement was written and key initiatives identified for each of these areas. While many initiatives did involve Clayton city government, some were decidedly community-based and required the engagement of the community's two universities, public and private schools, and its active business community to make them happen.

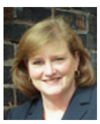
The Vision for Clayton—*Clayton is recognized regionally and nationally as a premier city of its size and character.*

Figure 3. Vision for Clayton, Missouri, in Word Cloud Format.



The community is a safe, vibrant destination defined by its unique combination of leading businesses and educational institutions, the seat of county government and picturesque neighborhoods, all of which combine to provide an exceptional quality of life—and shown in Figure 3 might resonate with managers who wish for their communities to create an idyllic environment for people to thrive. The difference in Clayton was the dedication to making sure the dreams would make a difference.

Community is created when people are allowed to engage their heads, their hearts, and their hands in establishing something tangible. Community-based strategic planning is more than a technique to establish a strategic plan. It is a strategy for engaging residents and creating community. PM



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A GUIDE TO

BETTER RECRUITING

INSIGHTS FOR APPLICANTS, RECRUITING TEAMS, AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

By Art Osten, Jr.

The Members in Transition (MIT) subcommittee of the Illinois City/County Management Association's (ILCMA) Membership Services Committee exists to provide tools that can help management professionals who are seeking re-employment in local government. One question recently explored by MIT members was: How can improvements be made to the local recruiting process for the applicant, search team (in-house human resources department or outside recruitment firm), and hiring body?

The impetus behind this project began with the difficulty that MITs often report in knowing what is most important to the hiring body and in receiving useful feedback when not selected for an interview or a job offer. Narrowing future searches and improving performance are difficult for the MIT without this information.

This led to a review of the recruitment process. Discussions with recruiters and personnel directors revealed additional issues from their perspective and experience. The observations and suggestions provided in this article will hopefully lead to an improved and better-understood hiring process for all concerned.

TAKEAWAYS

› The more specific that employers can be about describing the skills and abilities they want in a person for a job vacancy, the more likely they will find that person.

› Better prepared candidates rise to the top.

› Constructive applicant feedback requires more effort but can lead to more "best fits."

Steps to Improving the Process

1. Initially, position profiles should **key in on what's most important to the hiring body** and not be a generic list of every possible and desirable attribute. The search team's role is to make sure any candidates presented for consideration have the core skills, traits, and experience required for the position. Applicants are then better able to determine if they are a good fit for the job and to focus their preparation on determining if and illustrating why they would be a good fit. The responsibility of the search team consists of two phases.

First, the search team generates a comprehensive list of position duties and major issues, along with professional skills required and personal characteristics desired, through one-on-one and then group discussions with elected officials, key staff, and community leaders.

Second, the search team resolves differences and uncertainties and boils these down to the primary and secondary duties, issues, skills, and personality traits that are sought. This list is then approved by the hiring body and included in the application material.

Much of this work can be completed by e-mail with several meetings to sort out and finalize any remaining criteria. Some helpful techniques include:

- Starting the recruiting process by reviewing basic "do's and don'ts" for successful recruiting with decisionmakers. Many are noted in this article and are to be combined with experience and other literature on the topic.
- Providing the hiring body with a list of potential selection criteria.
- Helping panelists define the subjective fit-and-feel assessments they make during discussions and interviews so they can discuss their accuracy and appropriateness among themselves.

2. Pay attention to the search team's initial winnowing or "recruiter's cut." Applicants and decisionmakers sometimes overlook how the search team narrows down the ample list of applicants to the few who are presented to the hiring body.

The basic review looks at some combination of these items: cover letter, resume, references, requested supplemental material, Internet search, criminal background check, psychological screening, phone interview, DVD of applicant answering preliminary interview questions, and so forth.

The search team's personal knowledge of the applicant can also influence decision making. Perhaps, team members and the applicant have been involved in the profession and have talked at conferences, worked together on a committee, or know each other from past searches. All this is tied together by the experience and intuition of the search team.

Determine how the search team members will examine applications for the particular recruitment. The hiring body can discuss this with the search team during the process of determining which attributes are most important in a candidate. Applicants can do this by contacting the search team prior to sending in an application.

Ask if the search team can describe any key considerations that will help secure an interview for those candidates who have met the requested qualifications listed in the hiring advertisement or recruiting brochure. Search team members might not know until they have reviewed all the applications. Any information, however, that can help insure that decisionmakers' expectations are being met or that can help applicants in targeting their applications is useful.

A RECORD OF SHORT TENURES, ESPECIALLY IF DUE TO TERMINATIONS, CAN BE HARD TO OVERCOME.

3. It's also helpful to **develop and employ formal evaluation checklists** to rank all the candidates. Search teams generally use them simply to manage all the applications. It would be extraordinarily helpful if decision-making bodies used them, too.

Providing elected officials with a checklist of potential criteria based on earlier discussions would help speed and formalize the process. Providing examples of borderline criteria that should not be included can be an effective way to help frame the discussion. The search team should share summary information from these checklists with any requesting applicants at the end of the process.

Keep in mind, even with checklists, participants are human, and many factors will likely influence the selection process:

- Governing bodies may not agree among themselves, creating an oversized laundry list of everything each of them is looking for in a candidate. Without a strong consensus, each member of the governing body will have a different vision of the "perfect" candidate.
- Elected officials can place too much emphasis on experience in communities similar in size and demographics to their community rather than on skill sets.
- Elected officials are volunteers. Few probably have the experience or training needed for effective recruiting, and it can be difficult for some personalities to stay focused on the process.
- It is part art and science. With multiple qualified candidates, it often comes down to subjective but often legitimate "fit-and-feel" gut assessments.
- Interviewers might mask their true intentions or feelings about candidates. A decisionmaker's mind might already be made up as to whom to hire, and so he or she doesn't want any type of checklist to impede that intent. Another person just doesn't like being constrained by methodical procedures. Some people are uncomfortable having to explain their reasoning to anyone, and others become nervous if they feel their comments might make it back to applicants.
- Local governments and recruiters have to be wary of the time and cost of being sued. Local attorneys might counsel their employer to not provide written feedback about their decisions for fear of litigation—evaluation documents could become discoverable. Signed waivers by applicants could reduce but would not eliminate lawsuits.
- Be aware that employers are not career coaches and legally owe applicants nothing other than fair consideration. Recruiting firms are the employee of the hiring entity. Yet both require self-aware candidates for a successful search.
- Some candidates might misuse the opportunity for feedback by trying to debate the decision or by getting irritated rather than looking for what they can learn from the constructive criticism.

4. Don't forget the applicant. For a "best fit" to occur, both parties must be satisfied. Applicants are able to present a better picture of themselves and their availability to potential employers when they receive feedback from applications they have submitted. They prefer not to waste their own or future search teams' time applying for positions when there is not a strong fit. More time is required preparing feedback, but the result is more professional and more effective.

- Common courtesy is always appreciated. Keep applicants informed of the timeline, updates, and any changes to the recruitment process in a timely manner. Don't leave them wondering where they are in the process. Let them know as soon as they are no longer being considered. Add a caveat if there is a realistic chance of being reconsidered.
- Set aside more time during the interview process for applicant questions and two-way dialogue.
- The search team should use available evaluation checklists, take notes during the entire process, and solicit feedback from the decisionmakers to provide every legitimate applicant, whether interviewed or not, with constructive summary feedback if they request it. This feedback can be brief and if greater insight is not possible, simply stating how other candidates had more of skills x, y, or z can be helpful.
- The search team can invite unsuccessful candidates to contact them for feedback.

- Clearly unqualified applicants who ignored the requested qualifications or application instructions need not receive more than a form letter at the end of the process.

How to Be a Successful Applicant

The typical recruiting process will not improve overnight. So what are the key tips for successful applicants? Remember the Boy Scout motto: **Be Prepared.**

- Ask a recruiter or a Range Rider to review your resume and cover letter or provide a mock interview.
- Follow the application instructions provided, key in on the desired skills specified in the job ad in your cover letter, and double-check grammar, spelling, and how the document appears. They are often part of the test of the applicant's skill level and eye for detail.
- It is prudent to be aware of and address any potential shortcomings. To shorten their list of qualified candidates, search teams and governing bodies will tend to look for information to disqualify a candidate from further consideration.

  Check whatever information is available electronically about yourself. Explain anything negative in the cover letter and discuss it with the search team. In addition, a record of short tenures, especially if due to terminations, can be hard to overcome. Some personal soul-searching about the profession or a separate explanation, either in the cover letter or as a separate document in the resume materials, is advised.
- Be comfortable and relaxed in the interview. You may have been without full-time work for some time and do not want to come across as intense or desperate. Speak slowly, clearly, and concisely. Show genuine interest and excitement about the position and community. Be able to say why you want the job.
- Know the community. Do your research. Review the community's website, meeting minutes, news articles, and, if possible, visit the community prior to your interview. Talk with neighboring managers or consultants you know who are familiar with the organization. Ask several questions at the end to demonstrate your knowledge.
- Focus on the key criteria listed in the recruitment brochure and how your skills address specific issues facing the community.
- Remember all of the finalists will usually be qualified. You need to stand out from the others. "Senior" candidates need to dress in current business fashion, wear up-to-date glasses, avoid old hair styles, get up-to-speed on technology, and point out their advantages in perspective and range of experience.
- Be aware that you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you. The recruiting process could be indicative of the way an organization addresses issues. You may or may not be comfortable with their style or see it as opportunity to introduce a more effective approach. Have questions ready for the recruiter and employer that will lead to a dialogue that can help reveal whether a "best fit" is truly present.
- Get to know the recruiters and your potential future employers. If they know you and feel comfortable with you, they will be more likely to share feedback with you.
- Be yourself. Nobody is perfect and a lot depends upon the current circumstances in a particular local government.
- The process can be subjective, feedback is hard to generate, and "best fit" is not 100 percent definable. If you don't get a job offer, accept that this wasn't the right fit for you and that your time will come.
- Be aware that some people simply do not have the personality and demeanor to be a long-term success in the management profession. It might be best to recognize this and move on to a more suitable profession.
- Don't forget to view the wealth of MIT tips and resources provided by ICMA and various state associations. Check websites and search for possible career resources, job vacancies, job seekers, or members-in-transition programs.

There are practical and legal issues to be surmounted but recruiting, like any other process, can be improved. Making it more methodical and providing constructive feedback to applicants will lead to a better decision-making process. More informed decisions will generate longer, more successful tenures.

Here are tools that are yet to be developed but could further improve recruiting:

- Model questions for applicants to ask recruiters and employers that would facilitate a two-way exchange and improve the chances of generating a "best fit" scenario.
- Information for governing bodies, including a "How to Recruit" guide and panel discussions at municipal conferences.
- A practical evaluation feedback guide that minimizes legal concerns.

The Illinois City/County Management Association anticipates this information will lead to better recruiting. Greater awareness can generate a more satisfying experience and a more effective result for applicants, recruiting teams, and elected officials. PM

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BY SCOTT THORPE

THE MISSING INGREDIENT IN STATE-MANDATED GENERAL PLANS

It's time to require realistic price tags

States can mandate that local governments develop and periodically review comprehensive physical development plans. California pioneered this required approach to community planning in 1927 when the state legislature statutorily required preparation and adoption of a general plan.

In subsequent years, California and other states have added "elements" that are required to be detailed within the basic plan document. General plan elements that various legislatures have ordained now include:

- Circulation.
- Land use.
- Housing.
- Conservation/open space.
- Climatic and seismic safety.
- Noise.
- Scenic highway.

Some states, including Arizona, even require that the plan be adopted by a citizen vote.

What's the purpose? Adopting the above-required subordinate "studies" and documentation means there were new and proper standards in terms of planning for the many needs of both the residents and the business community. Zoning maps were battled out, drawn, and adopted. Circulation plans were devised. Safety needs (i.e., police, fire suppression, paramedic, storm drainage, flooding, earthquake/tornado/hurricane/wildfire preparedness) were addressed.

Disaster plans of all kinds were written based on the unique issues facing each local government. Park standards and protection of space gradually was worked out between residents, businesses, and land developers, and usually were adopted in some legal form mandating adherence to the physical development plan and its elements.

Results. Life became wonderful. As a resident or a local businessperson, all one had to do was consult the local jurisdiction's general plan and its various specific elements to determine how great your local services were going to be and how economic and scenic differences of opinion would be worked out between parties. Thus, a press conference on general plan adoption would probably sound like this:

"Life is going to be great in our community. We're planning for fire and paramedic responses of no more than seven minutes. Not to be outdone, the public safety element mandates that we plan for police to respond in less than three minutes. With our adopted standard of five acres of parkland per 1,000 residents in the conservation/open space element of the general plan, there will be a major park in every neighborhood and commercial/industrial area.

"Traffic jams? That will never be a problem here because our circulation element says we are going to have a level of service that will never require sitting at traffic lights for more than a minute or two.

"Heavy rain storms and flooding? Not to worry. We will not have any such problems because the storm drainage collection system has been designed to meet federal pollution run-off standards as well as the demands of a 20-year storm. This community has planned to be a wonderful place. And it will be."

What's missing? But wait a minute, a casual observer might ask: Who's going to pay for all this, and how? How close are we to attaining these planned service levels, and how are we going to afford to maintain them? Couldn't this general plan and all its required elements add a great deal to the city's already grossly underestimated and significantly underfunded infrastructure replacement program? Plus add to its well-known financial difficulties?

Pay for it? Oh, there is no requirement to have a financial element by which to implement the general plan.

ZONING MAPS WERE BATTLED OUT, DRAWN, AND ADOPTED. CIRCULATION PLANS WERE DEVISED. SAFETY NEEDS (I.E., POLICE, FIRE SUPPRESSION, PARAMEDIC, STORM DRAINAGE, FLOODING, EARTHQUAKE/TORNADO/HURRICANE/WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS) WERE ADDRESSED.

Now what? State and local voted allowances and restrictions have either enabled or limited the general plan—or any plan—finances. Development impact fees are permitted, prohibited, or partially accepted, widely varying by state.

Property, sales, income, and other taxes also are allowed by some but either greatly limited or outright prohibited by other jurisdictions. Even fee and benefit charges can be both politically impractical or legally limited. Thus, state by state and local government by local government, the potential financial capabilities of ever implementing any element is dubious at best.

In actuality, the operative word for "plan" and "element" implementation is *could*. Not *should* or *shall*. Local staffs and their various specialist consultants can and will develop and adopt general plans and all their numerous elements, but they become targets, without capability to secure results.

General plans generate toxic discussions and disputes between ideologies, neighborhoods, businesses, residents, and other groups. But the basic point is that there simply is no revenue by which the normal lofty goals of the various elements could ever be reached. So the question—again—is now what?

Time for a new "required" element. It is time to consider and require a general plan financial element. To not do so merely perpetuates dreamy and lofty but financially unachievable goals—mandated or not. And yet another fault of "government" *per se*.

This new element would support the attainment of defined service levels in the other elements. A realistic price tag should be put on securing each element's goals and standards. A progress analysis of how close the jurisdiction is to meeting the many standards, perhaps as a percentage of completion *vis-a-vis* the current percentage of general plan element build-out, would suffice. And other percentages over definitive times and populations also could work.

This financial element progress and analysis would require a level of realistic pragmatism. An open and frank discussion with the community about what service level can be attained through infrastructure investment and personnel additions, and then maintained, is vital. To not do so is grossly misleading relative to any realistic level of local government planning—legally mandated or optional.

More open, honest discussion with verified numbers is required before local governments are financially starved into disastrous levels of service. It's time to require meaningful cost analysis; lofty goals, while uplifting, serve no one, especially communities that cannot count on them ever becoming a reality. PM

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If You Purchased Municipal Derivative Transactions from January 1, 1992 to August 18, 2011

You Could Get a Payment for a Class Action Settlement.

A proposed Settlement has been reached with Bank of America, N.A. ("Bank of America"), in a class action lawsuit that alleges price-fixing in the sale of municipal derivatives transactions by Bank of America and other companies. The case, *In re Municipal Derivatives Antitrust Litigation*, MDL No. 1950, No. 08-02516, is pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Who Is Included in the Settlement?

This Settlement includes all state, local and municipal government entities, independent government agencies, quasi-government, non-profit and private entities that purchased:

(1) Municipal derivative transactions through negotiation, competitive bidding or auction, from any Alleged Provider Defendant or Co-Conspirator or brokered by any Alleged Broker Defendant or Co-Conspirator,

(2) Any time from January 1, 1992 through August 18, 2011 in the United States and its territories or for delivery in the United States and its territories.

The Defendants and Co-Conspirators are listed in the detailed notice available on the Settlement website.

What Does the Settlement Provide?

Bank of America agreed to a settlement amount of $20 million (plus any funds remaining in the State AG Escrow Fund that, as of the date this Notice is issued, Bank of America has access to pursuant to the terms of the State AG Settlement – this potential additional amount could be between $0 and $1 million) to be paid as follows: $10 million has already been paid into an escrow account and the balance will be paid later. This Settlement is only a partial settlement of the lawsuit because it only affects the claims against Bank of America. The lawsuit is continuing against other Defendants. Morgan Stanley, Wachovia/Wells Fargo, and JPMorgan have already settled. Bank of America will provide reasonable cooperation, including discovery cooperation, to Class Plaintiffs' Counsel in the litigation that will continue against the other Defendants.

What Do I Do Now?

- **Remain in the Settlement.** To remain in the Settlement Class and participate in the Settlement, you do not have to do anything now. If the Court approves the Settlement, you give up the right to sue Bank of America for the claims and issues in this case. The Settlement Agreement, specifically Paragraph 1(cc), which is available at www.MunicipalDerivativesSettlement.com, describes in more detail the legal claims that you give up if you stay in the Class. If you remain in the Settlement Class, you still have the right to exclude yourself from any other settlements with other defendants reached in this lawsuit. Claim forms are not available now. Register on the Settlement website to receive a claim form when it becomes available.
- **Exclude yourself from the Settlement.** If you do not want to remain in the Settlement Class, you must exclude yourself. You must send a written request for exclusion by first-class mail, **postmarked no later than May 6, 2014** to the Settlement Administrator. The detailed notice available on the Settlement website describes the information you are required to include in your request for exclusion. If you exclude yourself, you cannot participate in the Settlement, but you retain your right to sue Bank of America on your own for the claims in this lawsuit.

  NOTE: You may receive similar notices regarding proposed settlements with other Defendants (i.e., GE Funding Capital Market Services, Inc., Trinity Funding Co., LLC and Trinity Plus Funding Co., LLC). However, if you wish to exclude yourself from the Bank of America settlement, you **must** *send a separate and specific notice with regard to the Bank of America settlement*.
- **Object or Comment on the Settlement.** If you remain in the Settlement Class and want to object to or comment on the Bank of America Settlement or any part of it, you must file an objection with the Court and deliver a copy to Class Counsel and Bank of America **no later than May 6, 2014**.

When Will the Court Decide Whether to Approve the Settlement?

The Court has scheduled a hearing on June 6, 2014, at 10 a.m. at the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, United States Courthouse, 500 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10007, to consider whether to finally approve the Bank of America Settlement as fair, reasonable and adequate, whether to approve Class Counsel's request for reimbursement of litigation expenses, and to consider any objections.

The Court has appointed the law firms of Hausfeld LLP; Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP; and Susman Godfrey L.L.P. to serve as Class Counsel and represent all Class Members. If you want to be represented by your own lawyer, you may hire one at your own expense. You or your lawyer may ask to appear and speak at the hearing but are not required to. If you want to be heard by the Court, you must file a written notice of your intention to appear with the Court and deliver a copy to the Class Counsel and Bank of America **no later than May 6, 2014**. The Court may change the time and date of the hearing. Any change will be posted on the Settlement website.

Get More Information

For more information on this lawsuit, your rights, or to obtain a list of defendants, call or visit the Settlement website listed below or write to Municipal Derivatives Settlement, c/o Rust Consulting, Inc., P.O. Box 2500, Faribault, MN 55021-9500.

For more information: 1-877-310-0512   www.MunicipalDerivativesSettlement.com

BY MIKE CONDUFF, ICMA-CM

COPING WITH NASTY

How to deal with strict examination

When a management colleague called, our conversation went like this: “Mike, you are going to have to talk me down off the ledge! If the councilmember I told you about speaks like that to a staff member again, it may come to blows!”

I could palpably feel the tension and stress in my colleague’s voice across the phone connection. It was clear this was a major issue and that it had become personal.

His words remained clipped and forceful as he began to relate how, at just about every council meeting, the newest elected official singles out a staffer to give the third degree. He is an equal opportunity offender in that he passes it around, and he keeps getting worse.

His method is to ask involved, often obscure questions and to take copious notes. He then cross examines the staff member, trying to catch the individual in a misstatement or contradiction. When he finds one—and he always seems to find one—he tries to intimidate and humiliate the staff member.

My colleague admitted to having tried all of the methods that I had him use in the past. He had met with the councilmember one-on-one and met with the councilmember and the mayor. He had the mayor and another councilmember meet with the elected official too.

He had taken him to lunch, and he had called him the day of the meeting, He traveled with him to conferences and to state league meetings.

Assessing the Situation

Recognizing that this was incredibly serious for my colleague, I began to ask questions. My first one was “How does he treat you in those less formal environments?” The response was that outside of the council meetings, he was cordial if somewhat reserved, but at the meetings he was an attack dog.

My next question was to find out how the rest of the councilmembers react when the inquisitor starts in. The response this time was that they all look like they wish they were somewhere else, but none of them will challenge him in public anymore.

He treats them about as badly as he does staff if they cross him. Plus, he has contributed to several of their election campaigns, so they feel like they owe him.

My final question was to find out if my colleague thought the official was trying to chase him away from his current management position; however, that didn’t seem to be at the top of his agenda. He also didn’t think it would matter if he left. In fact, that most likely would embolden the official to become even more aggressive. At least right now, my friend could run some interference.

Additional Coping Behaviors

I knew this was not a simple situation. After contacting my governance colleagues and some former elected officials who I respect and could talk with, I recommended several behavioral approaches:

- **Stay calm and recognize it isn’t personal.** The inquisitor would be acting this way irrespective of who sits in the manager’s seat.
- **Make sure staff is truly prepared.** If this means practice sessions, extra packet review, or using more senior members for council appearances, be willing to invest resources in flawless presentations.
- **Reach out even more.** If this means a special one-on-one review of the agenda, it would be worth it to protect staff.
- **Approach others for assistance.** Determine if there are individuals or institutions in the broader community that might be influential with the inquisitor and ask for their help.
- **Remain professional at all times.** While it is tempting to use the inquisitor’s tactics against him, this strategy simply reflects badly on the manager, the staff, and the community. It also emboldens the questioner.
- **Be patient.** The emotional energy required to behave as an inquisitor and the lack of substantive response often results in short tenures for disruptive members.
- **Respect democracy.** Like it or not, the inquisitor is elected and must be accorded the respect of the office.

I also offered these governance suggestions:

- Review the council conduct component of the governance plan. Most high-performing councils agree on such standards of behavior at meetings as treating each other and the staff with respect, not surprising staff at the meetings, and asking the manager questions in advance. If these are not in the plan, approach the mayor about revising the document.
- Once the behavior standard is set, provide the mayor and council with the necessary training to be able to exercise enforcement of the standard. It is likely they are as chagrined as the manager about the behavior and would welcome alternatives as well.

The Outcome

When I saw my colleague next, he said the elected official had resigned his position. After a high five, I asked why, and found out the member had a chance to take over a family operation in his hometown.

My opinion on this type of situation is that when you take the high road, life usually works out. PM

MIKE CONDUFF, ICMA-CM
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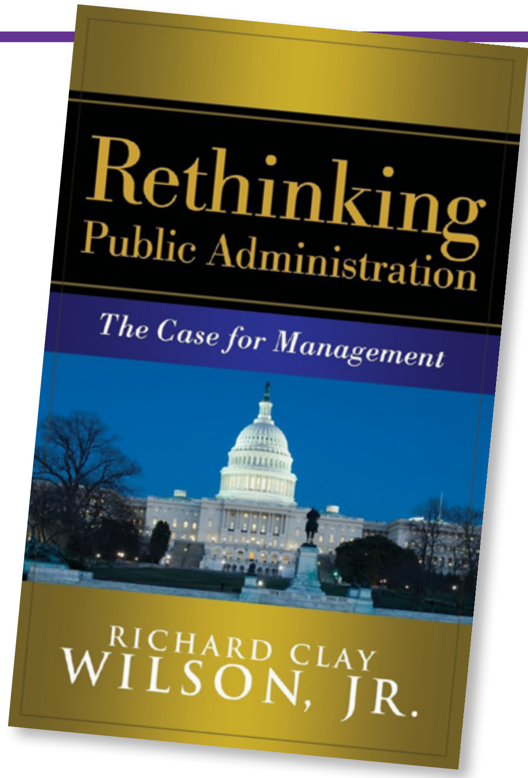
BY LES WHITE

PROMOTING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Why managerial values matter



A professional associate and friend of mine, a veteran and career government manager, has made exceptionally good use of his time since retiring and written a cogent new book about public administration. The author, Richard Clay Wilson, Jr., is the former city manager of Santa Cruz, California, which is a progressive, full-service city that has often been on the cutting edge of management among local governments.

The premise of his book *Rethinking Public Administration: The Case for Management* is that the fundamental worldview of public administration—that politics and administration are for all practical purposes indistinguishable—is wrong.

Compelling Arguments

The author makes a compelling case, grounded in history as well as the real-world conduct of politicians and career government managers at all levels of the public sector, that politics and administration are separate and readily distinguishable endeavsors. Politicians are duty-bound to focus on and attend to the public as well as their work with other politicians, in pursuit of a wide variety of political purposes. Most of these purposes have little to do with the ongoing, operational performance of government institutions.

Government's career managers, on the other hand, are forbidden to be about political purposes; they are about institutional performance. Their focus is more narrow and internal to the organizations of government. Elected officials' focus is broad and about the public.

It follows for the author that politicians and career managers have separate sets of values, responsibilities, and duties. When these come in conflict, as they do from time to time, Wilson reaffirms that political values must triumph.

But—and this is a key point in the book—the fact that "political values must prevail over managerial values when they conflict," as he puts it, should not negate managerial values, which too frequently occurs. The author laments that the supremacy of political values, which should not be questioned, serves to banish managerial values from government institutions.

Obvious Affection

I appreciate Wilson's affection for government institutions that is evident throughout the book. These institutions are, he says, indispensable to a vibrant society. He wants them to succeed and deplores the disparagement that characterizes many contemporary perspectives.

He adds, however, that respect must be deserved and managers are the only people who can possibly render government institutions worthy of respect.

One of the many key points made by Wilson in this regard is that "city managers and department heads are not about the political success of the mayors and city councilmembers they work for." Managers and department heads . . . are employed for one purpose: to obtain *institutional performance* [emphasis added]."

Wilson also notes that managerial values are often thwarted in various forms and levels of government, yet these values serve as the underpinnings of institutional performance. And this is where political expediency can, and more often than it should, negate managerial values.

The book contains three main sections. The first two, politics and management, amplify the themes noted above and also provide anecdotes and advice.

The third and final section of the book is about economics. Here, Wilson offers thoughtful arguments about the economic purpose of management.

This compact book is loaded with evidence of what a clear-thinking, professional manager has to offer to academicians, students, politicians, and practitioners of government. It is a thought-provoking assessment of the roles and values of managers and politicians, particularly in the current conflict-laden, economically stressed governmental environment. PM

ENDNOTES

Rethinking Public Administration: The Case for Management by Richard Clay Wilson (rclaywilsonjr@gmail.com), Mill City Press, 2013, 225 pages, is available at online retailers.

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BY WILLIAM MORRIS

HOUSING ISSUES IN AN OIL BOOM TOWN

Preparation can lessen demand impacts

It is no big secret that there is an oil boom occurring across the United States, with the increased use of fracking technologies and enhanced directional drilling capabilities in the oil shale formations found in Pennsylvania, Texas, New Mexico, and other western states. While this new drilling activity has resulted in significant revenue generation for local governments around oil country, it's not all good.

This same business activity has presented a number of communities in the oil states with unique and problematic challenges with regard to maintaining quality of life, especially providing affordable housing.

Communities located in the oil-patch areas tend to be smaller, have fewer financial resources, and have little or no experience dealing with the demands of heavy growth pressure.

Snapshot of Eddy County

Eddy County in southeastern New Mexico is one of these places. The county's total population based on the 2010 U.S. Census is 50,000. Residents live in one larger town (Carlsbad), one intermediate-sized town (Artesia), and a number of smaller villages and colonias (unincorporated home sites).

In addition, people reside all around the unincorporated parts of Eddy County in a nomadic way, tending to the needs of the oil industry.

Currently, the county has an unemployment rate of about 3 percent, with no unforeseen changes for the oil industry as of yet. The personnel needs of the industry have remained unfulfilled, even though people from Arizona, Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, and Louisiana have poured into Eddy County looking to fill open positions.

Workers with specific skills can literally get hired on the spot if they are heavy equipment operators, electricians, plumbers, experienced roughnecks, or have a valid commercial driver's license. In addition to the individuals who have come here for employment, a number of oil-field service companies have also arrived, being subcontracted out by larger oil companies.

The result has been that the area's already limited housing stock, especially for affordable units, has been hard-pressed to meet demands.

Oil, however, is a cyclical industry, and people working in the "oil patch" know that the good times will end sometime in the future. With this in mind, the recently arrived view their time in Eddy County as a temporary job with no intention of setting down roots. Many have left their families at a permanent home location, returning on regular visits like soldiers returning home on leave.

Pressing Housing Issues

What has been interesting to follow has been the issue of affordable housing. With the influx of new workers, home prices have remained high and vacancies low. This has made it difficult for all of the economic sectors to provide housing for their employees.

At first, the newly arriving workers leased a lot of the available rental units in the area. Available single-family units were also absorbed quickly. Realizing that this type of housing market makes the recruitment and retention of professional workers problematic, Carlsbad and Artesia started pressing for new apartment developments.

Even some local oil companies have started building their own apartments for their workers but in small numbers. While construction is now taking place, these types of projects take time and money to complete.

What Eddy County then started seeing was a number of five-wheel trailers and recreational vehicles being placed in the front, side, or rear yards of homes; then a second vehicle showing up; and maybe even a third. County staff started finding groups of RVs and trailers behind churches and commercial businesses.

Upon investigation, it was found that home or business owners were renting out their yards to oil-field workers who then were tapping into the home's septic system and water line. We also found out that these workers had good paying jobs, but they were responsible for finding their own housing.

Without housing to be found in the county, companies found their own. One oil company rented an entire hotel with a restaurant and converted it into a company boarding house, double-bunking their employees and feeding them in the restaurant.

The current phase of housing provision is that companies are creating their own ad hoc mobile home parks for their employees and actually wanting to do it correctly but in a temporary fashion so that when the oil-patch work stops, the site can be broken down easily as workers depart the area. This includes sewage holding tanks that are pumped on a regular basis, solid waste pickups, and potable water tanks set up on-site or tapping into someone's well.

County Response

Code enforcement for the county had always relied on the state of New Mexico's environment department to regulate septic connections, but it became clear that the state did not have the ability to deal with the magnitude of this issue. County staff also found that because Eddy County did not have zoning to regulate the placement of accessory structures and vehicles, it had to rely on its code enforcement ordinances, which we quickly found to need review and possible rewrites.

A more typical response to providing housing would be to construct a large number of housing units, either through direct government intervention or private sector encouragement. The question people might have is: Where is the private sector response to an obvious market windfall?

The answer is that Eddy County is located in the southwest part of the county, which is arid. Drought is not a stranger to residents in this part of New Mexico. Water is the key to everything in the southwestern United States.

There have been plans for new development to be approved but several have also been denied in adjacent communities out of concern for the ability to provide adequate potable water. Local water provider co-ops are already limiting or even refusing new connections due to the area's drought conditions.

Eddy County staff is adjusting to this boom by reviewing its code enforcement ordinances to see if we can better control the negative aspects of this growth. The application of zoning in the unincorporated areas is still a difficult issue to accept in this part of the country, but staff will do what we can to safeguard health and safety.

We will also look to create a form of temporary approvals so that we can better regulate these sorts of ad hoc trailer parks that have been appearing.

Lessons Learned

Managers would probably enjoy working in a place where there is virtually no unemployment and a local government has no debt and is paying for infrastructure projects with cash due to oil and gas tax revenues. But there are clearly costs associated with this boom, including high home prices, low housing availability, high drug use and related crimes, and other familiar sounding ills.

What makes this situation more perplexing is that the oil boom is a temporary situation, so the creation of large amounts of permanent housing and the expensive installation of supporting infrastructure may have negative consequences when the work stops and the temporary workers leave.

What may well be left behind may be a lot of unused or underused infrastructure that needs to be paid for and maintained, as well as permanent residential structures that may remain vacant and also underused. The key is looking for ways of creating temporary housing to accommodate the boom that may be disassembled as oil jobs slow up and the workers leave.

Regardless of a local government's previous experiences with heavy growth and the amount of financial resources available, locales found to be sitting atop oil shale formations or other valuable resources need to assess the impacts to their housing stocks before companies and their workers arrive on the scene and determine—if possible—what can be done about mitigating the impacts. PM

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BY LILLIAN GLASS

BODY LANGUAGE TIPS

What to look for, what to practice

How do you know if a community resident is interested in what you are saying? If you're perceived as being self-confident?

Here are four tips that will help you to be more aware of body language in the workplace, as well as what to practice on your own:

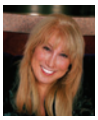
1. What might happen when a community resident is turned off by what you are saying? He or she may lean back; furrow the forehead; or sit with their feet pointing towards the door.

These are some of the signs they may signal a resident does not want to do business with you. If you recognized these signs, you may want to immediately change your tactic or confront the resident directly by saying, "It seems you may have some concerns about our service. What questions can I answer that might help you?"

2. What should you do if you need to have good face-to-face contact? Do not stare at a person or look him or her in the eye as that is disconcerting and a myth. Instead, look at the person's eyes for two seconds, the nose for two seconds, the mouth for two seconds, and then the entire face for two seconds. Keep doing this throughout the conversation as it makes you seem approachable and softens your gaze.

3. Is there a benefit to keeping your head up? If you pretend there is a string holding your head up, it will automatically give you a better head posture. Also make sure that your shoulders are pulled back as people with good posture look like winners with confidence.

4. Is it true that body language is not only nonverbal but verbal as well? Be interested, not just interesting! Ask the person you are talking with questions and only speak of yourself as it relates to what the person says. Then bring the conversation back to him or her. PM

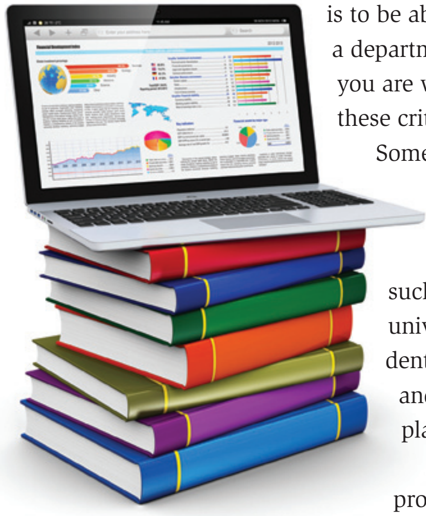


LILLIAN GLASS, Ph.D., Beverly Hills, California (www.drlillianglass.com), is author of the book *The Body Language of Liars: From Little White Lies to Pathological Deception* (Career Press, 978-1-60163-280-7, October 2013).

BY MITCHELL BERG

THE PATH TO ACADEMIA

How to gain a foothold into adjunct teaching



Since I have been a member of the management profession who's in transition when this was written, I have met colleagues who have shared their desire to go into teaching. For a few of us, teaching is a way to give back to the profession or to help prepare the next generation of practitioners.

The benefit of teaching also can bring a certain level of prestige to both you and your city. When I began teaching in 2008, I was a city administrator and the city I worked for was extremely excited to have an administrator who taught at a university.

In addition, the skills you obtain from teaching can help you become a better administrator. Not only can it be a great way to practice public engagement skills, but you can also learn about the latest and current best practices in local government management.

Teaching also gives you the ability to connect with people of different backgrounds and enhances your technology skills through the use of various online platforms and tools. Specifically, the ability to interact with people of different ethnicities, cultures, and ages can better prepare you to connect with those you supervise in the workplace and encounter in public.

The Path I Took

For me, the path into academia began in 2001, when I approached the University of Minnesota Duluth to become a member of the alumni association board of directors. Over time, I requested and received the opportunity to guest lecture in front of several different urban studies courses at the two universities where I had obtained my undergraduate and graduate degrees.

Being a guest lecturer allowed me to know if I truly wanted to teach and to get introduced to professors at the various universities that had an urban studies program. Having the professors see me guest lecture also allowed them to see me interact with a class.

While attending the 2013 ICMA Annual Conference in Boston, Massachusetts, speakers at a session on managers who want to become instructors also encouraged this approach of asking to guest lecture at a local university in order to gain a foot in the door. An alternative approach, both speakers suggested, was to contact the department chairperson of the local university and request a meeting.

Letting department heads know that you are interested in teaching and what subject you would like to teach can help put a face to a name. Keep in mind that a department chairperson often receives at least two and usually more unsolicited e-mails a month from people interested in adjunct teaching.

Curriculum Issues

Both speakers also discussed the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) accreditation criteria that instructors now have to incorporate into their curricula. Where in years past an adjunct teacher was free to put together his or her own course, instructors, along with adjuncts, are often now required to incorporate department student learning outcomes and learning rubric into their curricula.

While these criteria are not overwhelming, one way to elevate yourself above other applicants wanting to teach is to be able to demonstrate to a department chairperson that you are willing and able to use these criteria in your classes.

Some universities grant a professor flexibility to design his or her own course; while such others as national universities have the student learning outcomes and courses already planned.

While both approaches have their pros and cons, it really depends on your comfort level and time commitment. If you have never prepped for a course, for example, or are unfamiliar with the department's student learning outcomes and learning rubrics, the ability to teach at a national college may appeal to you, as the syllabi and curricula have already been developed.

Keep Your Options Open

While there are more and more opportunities for adjunct professors, some institutions will only accept adjuncts with a master's or doctorate degree. Don't let this discourage you, however, if you truly have a passion for getting involved in an academic environment.

Do not, for example, discount teaching at a community college, as many two-year colleges will allow one to teach with a master's or bachelor's degree. Also, as a manager, don't focus simply on public administration or urban studies programs. Many schools have hired managers to teach courses in political science, business, and HR management.

If you can't commit to teaching due to time constraints, you might want to consider one or more of the following options:

- Serve on a volunteer alumni board or committee. At the collegiate level, programs will also have their own alumni or scholarship group or committee.

- Participate on an academic advisory board or committee. Some programs have a committee of practicing alumni who are asked to meet with the faculty whenever a program wants to introduce or change a part of the curriculum.
- Volunteer to help a student organization.
- Mentor or hire an intern and help a student learn about the profession.

Online Resources

Finally, ICMA and NASPAA have additional online resources. Such teaching resources available from ICMA include but are not limited to:

How to access the ICMA discussion board on teaching and those interested in teaching and information on the Advisory Board on Graduate Education (ABGE): http://icma.org/en/icma/career_network/education/teaching_resources/go_teach.

Managers as Teachers: A Practitioner's Guide to Teaching Public Administration: http://bookstore.icma.org/freedocs/ManagersasTeachers.pdf.

Textbook Resources

ICMA Book Store with information on how to order textbooks, review case studies, and data sets: http://icma.org/en/press/academics.

Association for Budgeting and Finance Management listing of textbooks for courses on public finance, budgeting, economic development, grant writing, performance management, and more: http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/pa/academics/ABFM_database/Textbook_lists.html.

Sample Course Outlines:
http://www.naspaa.org/principals/resources/course.asp;
http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/pa/academics/ABFM_database/syllabi.html.

ICMA Management Internship Guidebook:
http://icma.org/en/icma/career_network/career_resources/management_internships_guidebook. PM

MITCHELL BERG, member in transition, is assistant professor, Urban and Regional Studies Institute, Minnesota State University of Mankato (Mitchell.berg@mnsu.edu), and adjunct instructor member, Argosy University, Twin Cities.

WEB RESOURCES

re:Streets web portal is open and free to use

Street issues? Check out the new web portal—www.restreets.org—dedicated to improving city streets. Funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, re:Streets provides a fundamental rethinking of America's streets.

The web portal answers the question: What would streets look like if they accommodated people of all ages and abilities, promoted healthy urban living, social interaction and business, and supported regeneration of the environment?

"Our objective is to provide clear design ideas for cities to revitalize American streets, so they serve a wide range of community needs, including transportation, commerce, education, recreation, and gathering," said Susan Goltsman, a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects and a principal at Meadowbrook Insurance Group Inc. (MIG), and project director for re:Streets.

Building on the Complete Streets movement, re:Streets has developed a comprehensive design manual for creating streets that promote expanded functions and turn new design ideas into a series of best practices that can be applied to any community.

The interactive web portal is focused on practical, implementable solutions with best practices, design ideas, and case examples. It's organized by the functions of a street: mobility, way finding, commerce, social gathering, events and programming, play and recreation, urban agriculture, green infrastructure, and image and identity.

re:Streets is a multidisciplinary collaboration focused on the planning, design, and construction of streets as a method for improving the livability of the built environment. It pushes beyond the current standards to explore the future of streets and what America's roadways would be like if they were designed for living, not just driving.

"re:Streets is available to anyone who wants to design a better street," Goltsman said. "As solutions are tried and streets are built or remodeled, the results will be added to the web portal, creating an evolving, collaborative reference for improving our communities and the health of the planet."

For information on *re:Streets* and its project partners, visit restreets.org or contact Susan Goltsman at susang@migcom.com. PM

If You Purchased Municipal Derivative Transactions from January 1, 1992 to August 18, 2011

You Could Get a Payment for a Class Action Settlement.

A proposed Settlement has been reached with GE Funding Capital Market Services, Inc., Trinity Funding Co., LLC and Trinity Plus Funding Co., LLC (collectively, "GE"), in a class action lawsuit that alleges price-fixing in the sale of municipal derivatives transactions by GE and other companies. The case, *In re Municipal Derivatives Antitrust Litigation*, MDL No. 1950, No. 08-02516, is pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York.

Who Is Included in the Settlement?

This Settlement includes all state, local and municipal government entities, independent government agencies, quasi-government, non-profit and private entities that purchased:

(1) Municipal derivative transactions through negotiation, competitive bidding or auction, from any Alleged Provider Defendant or brokered by any Alleged Broker Defendant,

(2) Any time from January 1, 1992 through August 18, 2011 in the United States and its territories or for delivery in the United States and its territories.

The Defendants and Co-Conspirators are listed in the detailed notice available on the Settlement website.

What Does the Settlement Provide?

GE agreed to a settlement amount of $18.25 million. This Settlement is only a partial settlement of the lawsuit because it only affects the claims against GE. The lawsuit is continuing against other Defendants. Morgan Stanley, Wachovia/Wells Fargo, and JPMorgan have already settled. GE will provide reasonable cooperation, including discovery cooperation, to Class Plaintiffs' Counsel in the litigation that will continue against the other Defendants.

What Do I Do Now?

- **Remain in the Settlement.** To remain in the Settlement Class and participate in the Settlement, you do not have to do anything now. If the Court approves the Settlement, you give up the right to sue GE for the claims and issues in this case. The Settlement Agreement, specifically Paragraph 1(bb), which is available at www.MunicipalDerivativesSettlement.com, describes in more detail the legal claims that you give up if you stay in the Class. If you remain in the Settlement Class, you still have the right to exclude yourself from any other settlements with other defendants reached in this lawsuit. Claim forms are not available now. Register on the Settlement website to receive a claim form when it becomes available.
- **Exclude yourself from the Settlement.** If you do not want to remain in the Settlement Class, you must exclude yourself. You must send a written request for exclusion by first-class mail, **postmarked no later than May 6, 2014** to the Settlement Administrator. The detailed notice available on the Settlement website describes the information you are required to include in your request for exclusion. If you exclude yourself, you cannot participate in the Settlement, but you retain your right to sue GE on your own for the claims in this lawsuit.

  NOTE: You may receive similar notices regarding proposed settlements with other Defendants (i.e., Bank of America). However, if you wish to exclude yourself from the GE settlement, you **must** *send a separate and specific notice with regard to the GE settlement.*
- **Object or Comment on the Settlement.** If you remain in the Settlement Class and want to object to or comment on the GE Settlement or any part of it, you must file an objection with the Court and deliver a copy to Class Counsel and GE **no later than May 6, 2014**.

When Will the Court Decide Whether to Approve the Settlement?

The Court has scheduled a hearing on June 6, 2014, at 10 a.m. at the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York, United States Courthouse, 500 Pearl Street, New York, NY 10007, to consider whether to finally approve the GE Settlement as fair, reasonable and adequate, whether to approve Class Counsel's request for reimbursement of litigation expenses, and to consider any objections.

The Court has appointed the law firms of Hausfeld LLP; Boies, Schiller & Flexner LLP; and Susman Godfrey L.L.P. to serve as Class Counsel and represent all Class Members. If you want to be represented by your own lawyer, you may hire one at your own expense. You or your lawyer may ask to appear and speak at the hearing but are not required to. If you want to be heard by the Court, you must file a written notice of your intention to appear with the Court and deliver a copy to the Class Counsel and GE **no later than May 6, 2014**. The Court may change the time and date of the hearing. Any change will be posted on the Settlement website.

Get More Information

For more information on this lawsuit, your rights, or to obtain a list of defendants, call or visit the Settlement website listed below or write to Municipal Derivatives Settlement, c/o Rust Consulting, Inc., P.O. Box 2500, Faribault, MN 55021-9500.

For more information: 1-877-310-0512 www.MunicipalDerivativesSettlement.com

BY JOSHUA KELLY AND SHAHRZAD RIZVI

COMMUNICATING EMERGENCY INFORMATION ON A BUDGET

Expand capabilities with no- or low-cost alternatives

Over the past few years, there has been an incredible amount of new software options available to local emergency managers. For a price, options like automated warning systems, preformatted social media updating applications, and integrated database management programs can greatly expand the capabilities of local emergency managers.

Faced with limited budgets, it is not uncommon for local officials in such high-hazard communities as those in Tornado Alley—primarily the states of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and Nebraska—to have to decide between building or maintaining a traditional siren network or purchasing an expensive, privately operated, automated call system.

There really is no choice to be made. If you know where to look, there are a host of state-of-the-art software systems available at little or no cost. Local officials should seriously explore the options before committing any resources to expensive prepackaged communication programs that may or may not be as effective.

What's Out There

Here are some of the options to consider:

Low-cost alert systems. Such new "cloud telephony" providers as Tropo and Twilio allow you to directly broadcast phone and text messages to your community. The same technology that allows broadcasting messages also allows managers to collect reports of incidents via voice calls, short message service (SMS) messages, or websites.

You can have a reliable alert system for a much lower cost than those currently available by using one of these providers in conjunction with free open-source software that has been customized through a "civic software event." Often called hackathons, these events bring together software developers who are ready, willing, and able to commit their technical expertise to civic endeavors for free.

Open source software is just as secure and effective as proprietary software offered by contracted vendors. The wildly popular Mozilla Firefox web browser and the Android mobile software are two common examples of open source software that is both functional and secure.

Social media. Social media platforms have evolved into much more than just personal sharing mechanisms. Their strengths are now in aggregating conversations about community events.

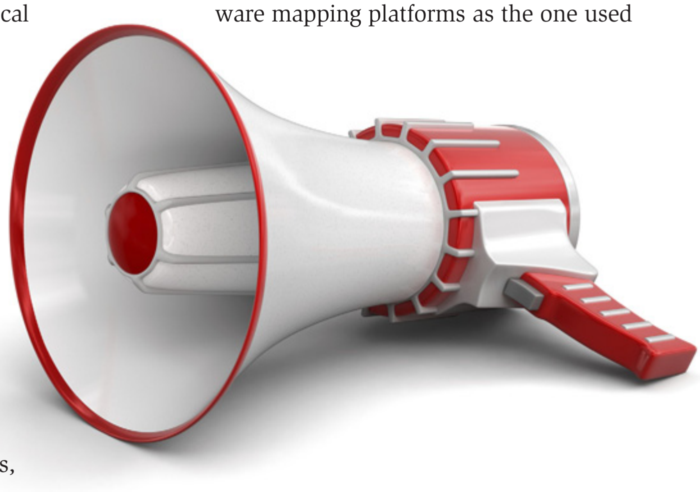
To increase an emergency team's situational awareness, various social media aggregators,[1] which are services that collect content from such multiple social networks as Facebook and Twitter, are available to quickly make sense of the information that funnels into an emergency operations center during a crisis. Managers will increasingly need to include the new media information sources, along with traditional media sources like the local television news.

Twitter responded to this need by launching Twitter Alerts[2] in September 2013. Twitter launched this notification feature in order to "help users get important and accurate information from credible organizations during emergencies, natural disasters, or moments when other communications services aren't accessible."[3] Services like Twitter Alerts are not intended to replace emergency notification services but to serve as a concurrent and complementary method of conveying urgent messages.

Over the next few years, adding a digital media dashboard next to traditional media sources in an emergency operations center may very well become a necessity. Also, by bringing these "digital volunteers" into the fold, emergency managers can more effectively spread useful, accurate, and timely messages to residents through real-time social media monitoring while primary staff members are tied up in an event.

Freeware mapping. The potential for the use of freeware mapping in public safety situations became clear following 20 inches of snow in Washington, D.C., in February 2010. Frustrated with the perceived lack of action from first responders, residents created a website (http://www.snowmageddoncleanup.com) where anyone could post a need—a snowed-in driveway, for example—and connect with local volunteers looking to help.

Since 2010, development of such freeware mapping platforms as the one used



during Snowmageddon have multiplied exponentially (i.e., Google Crisis[4] Map, Google Maps Lite,[5] Ushahidi,[6] and others). Emergency managers should embrace this kind of software to do things like disseminate shelter locations before an event, connect with resident needs during an emergency, and more effectively communicate real-time recovery progress following a disaster.[7,8]

Collaborations. "During a disaster is not the time to exchange business cards" is a quote repeated in public safety circles. The same principle applies to preparedness capabilities. Why spend staff time, resources, and know-how on duplicating a service that is already being offered at a higher level than can be achieved with a start-up project?

Federal, regional, and even private sector partners are increasingly providing no-to-low cost customizable severe weather warnings, real-time information distribution networks, and free mapping services. To reap the benefits of these highly capable organizations, however, you need to know how to quickly communicate your data and where to look before a disaster strikes.

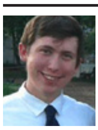
Going Forward

Technology will continue to drive innovation in the way local governments communicate public safety issues to their residents. While these advances are transforming the way we are able to convey things like weather warnings, recovery services, and even the location of displaced friends and family members, they should not be considered pay-to-play benefits.

So when developing your next public safety budget, keep in mind that even the smallest communities, with a little creative planning, can communicate with their residents, in new ways, at little to no cost. PM

ENDNOTES

1 https://hootsuite.com/ or https://about.twitter.com/products/tweetdeck
2 https://about.twitter.com/products/alerts
3 https://blog.twitter.com/2013/twitter-alerts-critical-information-when-you-need-it-most
4 http://google.org/crisismap
5 https://mapsengine.google.com/map
6 http://www.ushahidi.com
7 http://maps.redcross.org/Crossmap
8 http://arc-nhq-gis.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html

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BY DUSTIN ANDERSON

SPOTLIGHT ON REALISM

And personal struggles

I just finished reading the commentary article, "The Quiet Struggle," written anonymously by a manager struggling with alcoholism addiction that was published in the November 2013 *PM*. It was fantastic.

Has *PM* magazine considered collecting anonymous essays on a regular basis? From my own personal observations, we managers are a rather reserved lot and prone to spin things in a positive light if possible. To read an article like this was an incredible insight into what goes on when life gets real.

Again—personally—I find this kind of uncensored, non-self-aggrandizing autobiographical content to be incredibly compelling. Great decision on running it in the magazine, and my thanks to the author for writing it. Hopefully, there will be more content along these lines in the future. PM

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BY AMY McEWAN

KEEP IT REAL

Show you care to succeed as a leader

I was fortunate early in my career to be selected for jobs that one might say exceeded my level of experience. Some of these jobs would normally have been given to a more seasoned person, but I was age 20-something and determined to prove myself.

I remember the feeling of fear mixed with exhilaration. The one that makes you look in the mirror each morning and say . . . I can do this.

At the time, I felt the way to be successful was to look, act, and be more mature. I dressed in conservative business suits every day. I read the popular business journals and books and made a point to talk with my colleagues about them. I worked long hours.

Not a bad plan; however at the time, I also equated "more mature" with extremely serious. I didn't participate in water cooler talks or the Monday morning chatter of how your weekend was, or who won the game Sunday night.

If my direct reports were getting too chatty (by my definition), I would not so casually move from my office to the general work area and start asking "the talker" about the progress he or she had made on a current project. It was highly effective in getting folks back to work in the moment, but it didn't help morale.

It also didn't encourage teamwork, and it didn't motivate the troops to be high performers. I kept reading those leadership journals, but I still didn't have it figured out.

A Proud Go-Getter

In my late 20s, I moved from department-focused work to public administration. My supervisor described me as a fast-walking, fast-talking, go-getter. I was proud of that and wore it as a badge of honor.

I went to leadership training and took a short personality profile and was assigned the motto: "Be bright, be brief, and be gone." It was at this training that I had my first glimmer of knowledge.

I still remember the moment I began to think about what the "be gone" actually meant. I've since learned that people are far more motivated by and loyal to people they can relate to and someone they feel is like them.

If you take yourself too seriously, it can have the opposite effect. It took me several more years to realize I needed a new motto.

A Life-Changing Moment

What was the tipping point? I was 29 and an assistant local government manager. A long-time department director had recently been assigned to report to me rather than the city manager and wasn't happy about it.

I struggled to develop a positive and effective working relationship with him. The director, however, would go around me and generally disregard my direction.

I was frustrated. Then unexpectedly, the director had a heart attack and was hospitalized. When something tragic happens, you forget about the task list and your natural caring and personal side takes over.

It was no longer about work. It was about helping a coworker, so I organized my colleagues to collect his mail and mow the lawn so that his wife could stay by his side at the hospital. Once he was well enough, I suggested we buy flowers and take him a home-cooked meal.

While I organized and planned it, I expected one of the employees that he was closer to would volunteer to deliver it. None did so the task fell to me. This was outside my comfort zone, and I remember feeling uneasy about it.

I made the delivery and stayed with him long enough to share that we had him in our thoughts and prayers and wished him a speedy recovery. He returned to work several weeks later, and to my surprise, went out of his way at every opportunity thereafter to support me and work with me even into his retirement.

Take Time to Invest in People

I learned that to be successful, I didn't need to be more serious. I needed to be personal and sincere; to listen to people; to slow down and care about what they care about; keep things in perspective; recognize what matters; maintain an open mind; accept differences; invest in the people I work with; and recognize the balance in life.

Now I still tend to walk fast and talk fast, but I find that I can be a far more effective problem solver and leader if I am a more personable leader. Local government leadership is truly a test of grit and gumption but also one of heart. My advice to managers, whether it is your first day on the job or your last, is to keep it real! PM

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