NOVEMBER 2011 | icma.org/pm

PM
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

INSIDE

A CODE OF ETHICS THAT PACKS A PUNCH

ADVANCING PROFESSIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT WORLDWIDE

ICMA

Smart Now, Sustainable Forever

Esri® Technology gives you the power to plan your future. With mapping, modeling, and data analysis solutions, Esri has the complete platform to start your smart community today for a sustainable tomorrow.

esri®

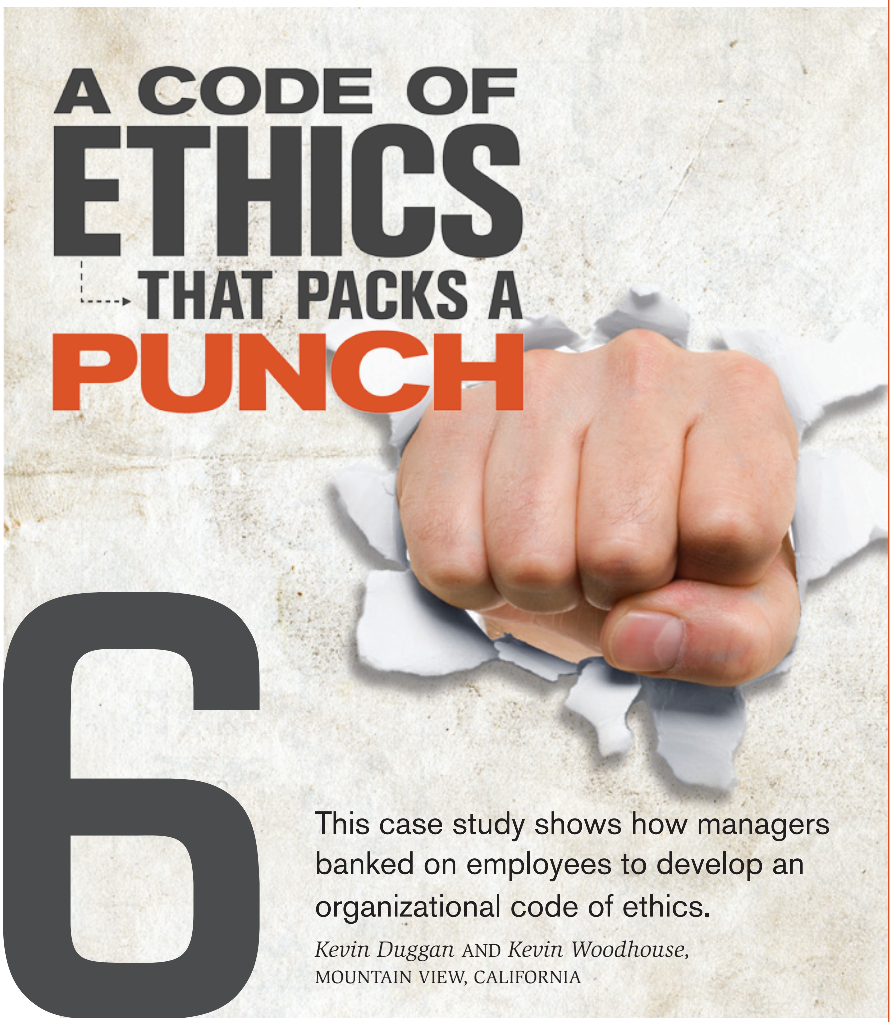
Learn more at esri.com/pm

PM
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

contents

November 2011 | Vol. 93 No.10

cover story



features

departments

icma.org/pm

This issue of *PM* is available online at icma.org/pm November 1, 2011.

BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM

REWIND

Taking steps to undo the unintentional ethical misstep

In the movie, *Resurrecting the Champ*, a sportswriter stumbles across a story that has the potential to elevate his career: it's about an aging, homeless former champion boxer with vivid memories of his glory days. The writer gets close to the champ to learn the rich and painful details of his life.

Research uncovers rare footage of a fight. Watching the fight in the newsroom, the champ identifies the other fighter and recounts the blow that knocked his opponent out.

The story is published to rave reviews. As the writer is enjoying his success and fielding an offer to cover televised boxing, he learns from an old boxing promoter that his champ is a fraud. The real champ died years ago.

But wasn't the film proof of his identity? The champ was in the film. It's just that he was the one who got knocked out. He was masquerading as the true champ.

The writer didn't intentionally do something unethical. He didn't fabricate a story. But now he had an ethical dilemma because he knew that what he wrote was a lie—and that he had been careless to believe the champ without doing more digging. He struggled with the ethical problem—tell the truth, be embarrassed, and probably get fired. Or conceal the truth and advance his career.

Only after he appeared on television in a debut for a new position did he realize that he had no choice but to tell his publisher the truth. He entered the publisher's office only to be introduced to others who had broken the news first. His delay in telling the truth added to the suspicion that he had known all along that the story was a lie. His one window of opportunity to salvage his credibility had passed. No chance to rewind his actions.

Anyone can be in the center of this kind of an ethical hot spot.

One Situation

A city manager accompanied his elected officials to a meeting with the county commissioners to talk about consolidation. At the outset, one county commissioner bluntly stated that the consolidation of one department could occur if the city agreed to take the current department director

PM
PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Public Management (PM) aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments worldwide in the pursuit of excellence in local governance.

ICMA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Robert O'Neill, Jr.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLISHING
Ann Mahoney

EDITOR
Beth Payne

DESIGN
Rock Creek Strategic Marketing

Public Management (PM) (USPS: 449-300) is published monthly except February by ICMA (the International City/County Management Association) at 777 North Capitol Street. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4201. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. The opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICMA.

REPRINTS: Apply to the editor for permission to reprint any part of the magazine.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: U.S. subscription rate, $46 per year; other countries subscription rate, $155 per year: single copies, $10. Printed in the United States.
Contact: 202/289-4262; subscriptions@icma.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Public Management,* ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201.

ARTICLE PROPOSALS: Visit icma.org/pm to see "Editorial Guidelines" for contributors.

EDITORIAL INFORMATION
202/962-3619
bpayne@icma.org

ADVERTISING SALES
Fox Associates
800/440-0232
adinfo.icma@foxrep.com
CHICAGO: 312/644-3888
NEW YORK: 212/725-2106
LOS ANGELES: 805/522-0501
DETROIT: 248/626-0511
ATLANTA: 770/977-3225

PRINTING
Westland Printers
Laurel, Maryland

ICMA
icma.org | icma.org/pm

"off the county's hands." The director, while competent, had never been a favorite of this commissioner.

The city's elected officials jumped at the opportunity to hire this individual to run the consolidated department for the city. Before the city manager could absorb what was happening, the city and county elected officials hatched a plan. The county would terminate this department director with severance to sweeten the deal. Once released from the county, the city would offer to hire the individual. To make this happen, the individual would have to be left in the dark.

The manager didn't speak up in deference to the elected officials who were leading the discussion. He was also reluctant to disagree with them in front of other officials. It didn't help that the county attorney who was present supported the plan.

With a bit of time to consider what had transpired, the manager realized that there was simply no way that he could be a party to this deal—and that he had an obligation to help the city council understand why they should not be as well.

Although intervening could halt a potentially effective strategy for both parties, continuing with a "deal" that lacked transparency, respect for the individual involved, and the integrity of the hiring process was not possible. The manager addressed the issue with the council, explaining that the decision to consolidate needed to be unwound from the fate of the director.

A Second Example

A city and county were locked in a dispute after the county approved the construction of a large manufacturing plant. New jobs were important but city officials were concerned that the environmental impact of the new facility, located near city resources, outweighed the gain. Council designated the city manager to be the point person on the issue.

A county commissioner, the lone vote against the proposal, stopped by city hall to see the mayor. Hearing that the mayor was unavailable, the county commissioner asked to meet with the city manager. Out of courtesy, the manager obliged.

The county commissioner expressed a desire to work with the city to stop what he regarded as a disaster for the region. The manager informed the mayor, and the mayor met with the commissioner and directed the city attorney and city manager to sit in. At the conclusion, the attorney advised all parties not to disclose the meeting to any other county officials as the information presented by the commission might help the city prevail.

The manager soon recognized that he had an ethical issue to resolve. Unintentionally, he met twice with a colleague's elected official without informing his colleague. He had a professional obligation to inform the county manager although doing so could have harmed the city's interests.

When yet another county commissioner called him, the manager seized the opportunity. He informed the commissioner that contact should be elected official to elected official. He told the county manager of the contacts and enlisted his help to put an end to it.

Find yourself inadvertently in an ethical hot spot? Best to do the right thing, and quickly. PM

FIND YOURSELF INADVERTENTLY IN AN ETHICAL HOT SPOT? BEST TO DO THE RIGHT THING, AND QUICKLY.

MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM
Ethics Director, ICMA
Washington, D.C.
mperego@icma.org

WHAT'S SOMETHING THAT YOUR MANAGEMENT COLLEAGUES MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU?

FRANK LANCASTER, ICMA-CM
County Manager
Larimer County, Colorado
flancaster@larimer.org

My avocation is running whitewater rivers, and I used to be a professional river guide. I consider my experience as a river guide more valuable than any other training—even grad school.

Working with groups in challenging environments taught me team dynamics, motivation, and dealing with diverse skills, fears, and strengths as well as balancing all these to get the team safely through challenging rapids. Group dynamics on trips of several days and the challenge of a wilderness experience constitute a microcosm of human behavior and teamwork.

Rivers have taught me about politics and community relations as well. Veteran guides read and work with the river, reading eddies and flow patterns, and ending up exactly where they want to be.

Education and keeping up with management trends are important, but my time on the river has given me the edge to be successful in this continually challenging profession.

DAVID WAIND, ICMA-CM
City Manager
Minot, North Dakota
waind@minotnd.org

I've been an ICMA member who will receive a 35-year service award this year and who also has served Minot since 1979. Because the state I live and work in has such a small population, we do not have a state association for managers.

Instead, I participate in the Great Open Spaces City Management Association (GOSCMA), which has members from five different north central and northwestern states (North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho).

Although it does require more travel than would otherwise be the case, being a member of an organization from such a large geographical area has been beneficial in many ways, including gaining knowledge about local government similarities and differences in our various member cities.

On the personal side, some of my colleagues may not know that my wife and I are the parents of three sons and have five grandsons, including indentical triplet boys born this past January!

CHERYL HILVERT, ICMA-CM
City Manager
Montgomery, Ohio
chilvert@ci.montgomery.oh.us

Many of my colleagues know I am a hockey fan, but few know how bad the obsession is. In addition to being a fan, I am a season-ticket holder for the Columbus Blue Jackets. I also volunteer as an off-ice official for the East Coast Hockey League, serving as official scorer for our minor league team in Cincinnati.

I have worked as an off-ice official for the NHL and the AHL. I represent the NHL each year at the NHL Entry Draft, where I have discussed C-M government with various NHL greats who until then had little knowledge of government of any kind. I will also be working the NHL All-Star game this year.

If this isn't enough, my office is decorated in 1980 Olympic Gold Medal Hockey Team memorabilia, and the license plate on my car is MYZMBNI (My Zamboni).

My hockey obsession has also given me lots of skills to use at city council meetings, labor negotiations, staff meetings, and with tough personnel issues!

GARY RIEDNER, ICMA-CM
City Supervisor
Moscow, Idaho
griedner@ci.moscow.id.us

For relaxation, I like to brew beer. Not the strangest hobby but one that seems to surprise many of my friends and colleagues.

I like to tell them that brewing reflects traits of city management. The proper mix of ingredients results in a product that can be smooth or bitter, dark or light, and, depending upon your taste, good or not so good.

The process can't be hurried, so patience is a must. I find that the brewing process is fun and relaxing on a Sunday afternoon and yields a tangible product to enjoy later on a Friday night.

I started brewing about four years ago, well into my city management career. I am an amateur, brewing at my home, but I'm in the process of setting up a dedicated brewhouse in my shop, which is adjacent to my house. I can currently brew five batches, five-gallons each, at one time. I try to brew mainly in the fall, winter, and spring because of the cooler temperatures. PM

1

BUY-LOCAL MESSAGE

Alachua County, Florida's economic development efforts for sustainability include homegrown businesses.

icma.org/buylocal

2

DON'T STOP BELIEVIN'

Tips from managers in transition on résumé writing, job hunting, and just staying sane have been compiled into one resource.

icma.org/mit_tips

3

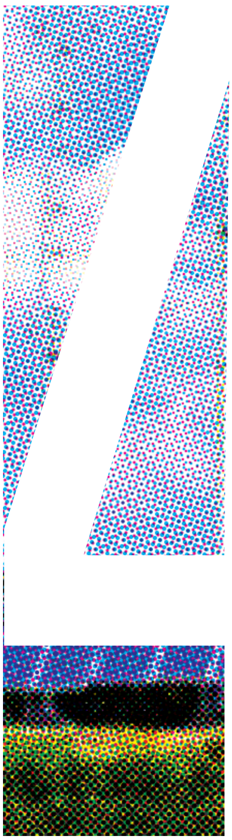
VEOLIA

WATER-SHORTAGE AREAS

A recent study by ICMA Strategic Partner Veolia Water North America identifies regions and countries where water scarcity could put economic development and food production at risk.

icma.org/veoliawater

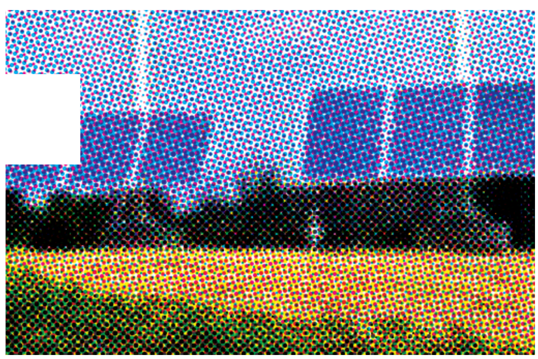
4



SOLAR ENERGY FOR HOT WATER

Fire stations in Durham, North Carolina, are becoming more energy efficient with solar water-heating systems.

icma.org/hotwater



A COD ETH THA PUNC

By Kevin Duggan, ICMA-CM, and Kevin Woodhouse

How an employee-crafted code

DE OF

ICS

AT PACKS A

CH

TAKEAWAYS

- Learn how to strengthen the ethical culture of your organization while minimizing the odds of an ethical lapse.
- Learn how an employee-centered process can create a more meaningful organizational code of ethics.
- Learn how the process of creating a code of ethics can also serve to increase team work across departmental lines.

can strengthen the ethical culture

A CODE OF ETHICS

MANY PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS HAVE CODES OF ETHICS, and many of these codes are created in response to an ethical lapse. Others are promulgated by the management of the organization and are not always well received by employees who are subject to the code. The purpose of this article is to offer a case study—a blueprint of sorts—of the development of a code of ethics at the grass roots of an organization. More than 150 city employees from all city departments came together to craft a code of ethics for the City of Mountain View, California.

This bottom-up approach was initiated as an important preventive effort to help lessen the odds of ethical stumbles, without the time line and format for development of the code being dictated in response to some sort of ethical crisis. A bottom-up approach was also thought to be the best for arriving at a code that would be meaningful and relevant to employees.

It is unrealistic to believe that any amount of training and creation of ethical expectations or other techniques will guarantee that all employees of an organization will always act ethically, but it is the obligation of organizational leaders to improve the odds that employees will conduct themselves consistent with ethical standards.

Although it might not be fair for local government leaders to be held accountable for the conduct of every employee in every circumstance, it is reasonable for us to be expected to have taken reasonable steps to minimize the odds of ethical misconduct. These preventive steps can take many forms, including hiring ethical employees, adequately training them about ethical expectations, providing regular reminders of ethical expectations, and having an organizational code of ethics.

In addition to deciding to create such a code without being in a reactive mode about an ethical crisis, Mountain View decided to make sure that the code was meaningful, relevant, and accepted by its employees. It was determined that the key to accomplishing this objective was to directly involve as many employees as possible in the development of the code.

Cognizant that individuals will more readily embrace that which they have had a direct opportunity to create, we viewed this behavior to be particularly true in regard to developing an employee code of ethics. We also believe in the concept that "the process is an important part of the product." In this case, the code development process—training, discussion, case studies, and more—may prove as important as the final written document.

The Idea

Mountain View has had a leadership development training program ("leadership academy") for several years. The program consists of 10 full-day sessions scheduled over four months. The program's purpose is to develop the leadership skills of existing supervisors and managers and to help prepare nonsupervisory employees for promotional opportunities.

One of the topics covered in this training program is ethics; the value and importance of prevention is one of the concepts reviewed. To complete the academy, participants are divided into project work groups to identify and complete a final project relating to a key topic covered in the sessions. One academy project resulted in the recommendation that the city undertake the effort to create a code of ethics for its employees.

This concept was subsequently endorsed by one of the authors of this article while serving as city manager of Mountain View, along with the team of department heads. This led to the development of an organizational code of ethics.

The process began with two sessions of brainstorming about the code development process. The sessions were open to any interested employees. Approximately 20 employees, representing most departments, convened with the city manager and together developed the goals and objective. Two of the goals were:

- To promote and maintain an ethical organization built on the highest standards of personal and professional conduct.
- To enhance trust within the organization and community.

And the objective was:

- To create a code of ethics to guide employees in daily decision making.

A core group from the initial brainstorming sessions committed, on top of their day-to-day responsibilities, to work as part of the Ethics Committee to design and implement the detailed process.

Process

Among the key guiding principles associated with the development of the code of ethics were:

- The process should not be top-down. That is, the code should not be promulgated from the leadership of the organization.
- A recognition that the process will be part of the product.
- The process should strive to have as many employees participate as possible.
- The final product should be as concise as possible, ideally one page.

We strongly believed that the only way for the final code to be meaningful to employees was for it to be developed through a process that directly involved as many of them as possible.

The first step was to disseminate throughout the organization an invitation for any interested employees to join the Ethics Committee. This invitation remained open throughout the entire process. Approximately 15 members of Mountain View's organization volunteered to assist with the initial phase. During the next year, the committee met periodically to design and plan the employee engagement that would eventually lead to the code of ethics.

The fundamental component recommended by the committee was a series of employee input sessions in which a large group meeting would divide into smaller group discussions about a hypothetical ethical dilemma, with the objective of eliciting ethical principles from the discussions. Mountain View's final code was developed from this input.

Six sessions were held during a three-month period and involved the participation of 137 employees. Participants in each session were assisted by a group of employees who served as small-group facilitators and recorders. More than 20 employees were trained for this role in a special half-day session focused on facilitation skills and ethics concepts provided by the city's police chief, who frequently teaches ethics to police officers, and a local expert in facilitation from a nonprofit mediation services agency.

Each input session included these components:

- Explanation of the process and the intended goal.
- Discussions of ethical dilemmas.
- Brainstorming regarding potential ethical principles to include in the code.
- Prioritization of ethical principles.

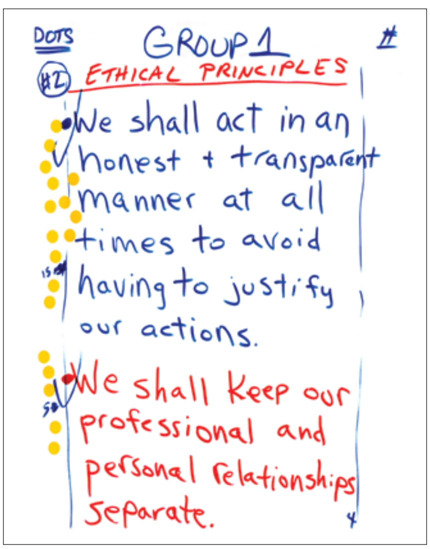
The input from each session—more than 100 raw and unedited principles—was compiled, reviewed, and synthesized by the committee into a concise draft code, and it served as the basis for a capstone meeting. All employees were also invited to participate in this meeting, but most participants had already contributed by attending one or more of the ethics committee meetings or input sessions.

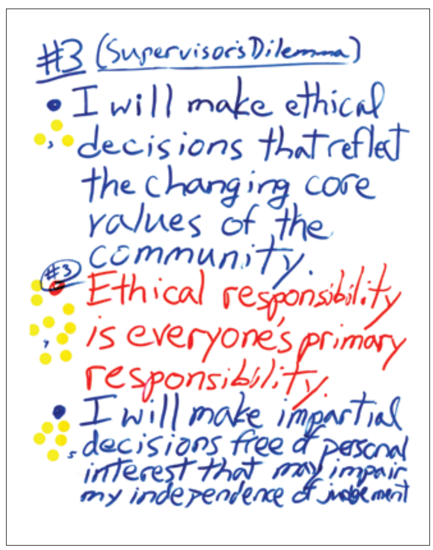
The purpose of the capstone meeting was to review a proposed draft final code and to brainstorm ideas for integrating the code into the city's organizational culture. The final code then was accepted, and ideas on how to make it relevant were discussed.

After the capstone meeting, these steps were taken to distribute the final code:

- The final code was distributed by e-mail (or through the use of paper copies for those employees without e-mail) to all city employees.
- The code was placed on the city's website as well as on its employee intranet site.
- Wallet-sized copies of the code were distributed to all employees.
- Framed copies of the code were placed in every department and public spaces of city offices.
- A discussion of the code is included as part of new-employee orientation programs, training programs, and performance evaluations.
- All city departments are encouraged to have a periodic dialogue regarding the code and ethical scenarios.

Although many ideas, principles, and concepts could have been included in the proposed code, the employees who participated in the effort believed that the list of expectations should be relatively short in order to have them take on greater importance. They believed





that a long list of principles would dilute the power of all the principles.

The code was also formally presented to the council, and those employees who participated were acknowledged for their efforts. A pizza lunch served as an appreciation event for the 20-plus employees who led the process.

Results

The methodology described here not only resulted in a set of principles and expectations to serve as a guide to current and future employees; it also included a process that validated the eventual code. In addition, it served as a training opportunity for the more than 150 employees who participated in the code development.

This process also strengthened interdepartmental working relationships by bringing together employees from all areas of the organization to work together on a common objective.

PREVENTATIVE EFFORTS, INCLUDING TRAINING AND THE COMMUNICATION OF ORGANIZATIONAL EXPECTATIONS, WILL INCREASE THE ODDS OF HAVING AN ORGANIZATION THAT MEETS THE HIGH LEVEL OF ETHICAL CONDUCT EXPECTED BY RESIDENTS.

Here is language from the final Mountain View Employee Code of Ethics:

As a city employee, I will be guided by prudent judgment and personal responsibility, whether serving the public or working with colleagues, and my decisions and actions will be made according to the following ethical principles:

- I will uphold the city's policies in a transparent and consistent manner at all times.
- I will make unbiased decisions and use my authority fairly and responsibly.
- I will act with honesty and be an advocate for an environment that promotes public trust.
- I will not use city resources or my position for personal gain.
- I will be mindful of how my actions may be perceived by others and avoid conflicts of interest.

CHALLENGES BECAME LEARNING POINTS

Decision making by committee can be challenging in itself, but the Ethics Committee's work confronted several organization-wide challenges that are noteworthy because the solutions in this case are important learning points.

One challenge was that the original timing for the employee input sessions was going to occur during the spring and summer of 2009—a time when Mountain View was confronting some important budget decisions related to employee positions. Foreseeing that employees' concerns about the budget and its impact on their positions might work at odds with undistracted input on ethical principles, the committee decided to delay its work by six months.

The lesson learned is that flexibility in timing is important.

Another challenge was the fluctuating workload that the process required of committee members, on top of their normal duties. Although each member was self-motivated to participate, this challenge was partially mitigated by not rushing the process (again, flexibility in the timing). A third challenge related to facilitation of the input sessions that covered the topic of ethical dilemmas.

The committee was extremely cognizant of the importance of not influencing the discussion in the small groups. Because the committee members serving as facilitators had become familiar with ethical-dilemma analysis—in part by previously designing and discussing the scenarios—it would have been easy for the facilitator to suggest key ethical principles pertaining to the scenario under discussion. The special training session for facilitators was critical to teaching facilitators to be wary of this common facilitation challenge.

Conclusion

As noted at the beginning of this article, no amount of training or guiding principles will guarantee that an organization will avoid ethical crises. Preventive efforts, however, including training and the communication of organizational expectations, will increase the odds of having an organization that meets the high level of ethical conduct expected by residents.

Mountain View embarked on a bottom-up effort and can attest that this process can proceed successfully and efficiently alongside all of the other priority demands of an organization. We hope that this blueprint might spark ideas for how your organization can begin efforts to develop an employee code of ethics, if you have not already. PM


KEVIN DUGGAN, ICMA-CM, ICMA West Coast regional director, Mountain View, California (kduggan@icma.org), is the former city manager of Mountain View. **KEVIN WOODHOUSE** is deputy city manager, Mountain View (kevin.woodhouse@mountainview.gov). The authors thank and commend the members of the Mountain View Ethics Committee for their commitment to and support of this effort.

By Rollie Waters and TL Cox

PUBLIC SECTOR COMPEN$ATION

PANACEA OR PANDORA'S BOX?

Ensuring compensation equity is key

TAKEAWAYS

Reading this article will help a manager address the principles of a sound approach to compensation in an organization by:

› Providing local government with the necessary tools to support employee compensation decisions and policies and provide the transparency needed.

› Learning how private sector and public sector pay differences can be explained rationally and with quantifiable data.

› Applying a commonsense approach to the statistical analysis applied to the market data.

› Considering the missing link of individual performance management.

› Engaging elected officials in the process.

IN AUGUST 2011, an Internet search on the topic "public and private sector pay differential" yielded more than 9,030,000 results. It is no surprise that sessions on employee compensation presented at ICMA annual conferences are always filled to capacity.

One of the events that triggered this push for more information and transparency in local government pay was last year's compensation scandal in Bell, California. Because of layoffs, service reductions, and frequent questions regarding pay levels and benefits in the public sector compared with the private sector, local government managers are concerned that this is the wrong environment in which to consider studying employees' compensation. Yet this economic climate is the best time to audit and, if necessary, develop a quantifiable, defensible compensation policy that addresses these concerns.

The salaries and benefits of public employees, when compared with the private sector, have always been under a microscope and scrutinized by citizens, elected officials, and the media. Stakeholders are challenging the equity of local government's pay systems when compared with the private sector. Managers need practical tools in place to ensure that elected officials and staff are following best practices and pay policies that are in the best interest of the constituents served.

The availability of emerging technologies in public sector human resources, including tools for pay and benefit plan design and maintenance, union negotiation, budgeting, and performance management, will empower local government officials to create and maintain effective classification and compensation systems and aid in keeping personnel services and benefits within acceptable limits. These tools will also provide support to address transparency while responding efficiently and confidently to requests for such information.

This article attempts to highlight key areas for action in order to ensure basic compliance with acceptable compensation practices. Traditional approaches are explained as well as the roles of the manager and elected officials. First, however, it is necessary to understand the basics of a sound compensation system prior to discussing emerging technologies.

Information Is Key

Local government administrators are currently facing some of their most difficult human resources challenges to date: salary and hiring freezes, the retirement of key leaders, and rising service demands in conjunction with sharply declining budgets. While meeting these needs, local government also must promote transparency and ensure compliance with all legal requirements, including the Fair Labor Standards Act and the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009.

There is an immediate need for maintaining a sound classification and total compensation system ("personnel services" in local governments' budgets) to provide managers with the effective tools needed to meet these challenges.

Three key fairness doctrines penetrate all aspects of a sound, principled pay system: internal equity, external equity, and individual equity (see Table 1). Internal equity should be addressed first as it drives pay level placement according to position and market comparisons.

Internal Equity

Internal equity is the process of placing jobs into a hierarchy based on characteristics such as minimum qualifications; essential functions; and the skills, knowledge, and abilities required by the position. We refer to this collective group as compensable factors. Comparing jobs and placing them in a hierarchy is a process commonly accomplished using a methodology that identifies similarities and differences in job content. Some outcomes include combining jobs into a single title with similar or identical essential functions or placing incumbents with substantially different measured responsibilities into new or modified titles (reclassification).

There are numerous ways to establish an internally equitable compensation structure through job evaluation. The rating processes used are classified into two methodologies: whole job and quantitative. Point factor job evaluation, a quantifiable approach, has proven to be one of the most effective processes in explaining classification decisions and reasons for pay-level differences.

The point factor job evaluation process, which relies on compensable factors to create an orderly hierarchy of positions, determines the relative internal value of jobs within an organization. It is used to classify jobs into grades based on rated factors and clearly delineates the reasons for the differing relationships between jobs within a pay structure. Point factor job evaluation is accepted by compensation professionals as one of the most

TABLE 1: FAIRNESS DOCTRINES

Equity issues with corresponding techniques and objectives in pay systems.

CONCEPTS	TECHNIQUES	OBJECTIVES
Internal Equity: Relationships between and among jobs in the organization	Job analysis Job description Job evaluation	Maintain cost control
External Equity: Relationships between and among jobs in the labor market	Salary surveys	Attract and retain competent staff
Individual Equity: Relationships between and among individuals in the organization	Performance appraisal	Motivate competent staff

defensible and documented approaches to compensation management.

Some examples of these compensable factors include formal education, experience, technical skills, and working conditions. These factors represent characteristics or features of jobs that are understandable and quantifiable, and when they are properly defined, they capture both job requirements and duties as well as needed core competencies.

Organizations that have implemented the point factor job evaluation system have realized a number of advantages to this approach. First, it substantiates the placement of positions without relevant market matches by slotting them into the pay system with positions that have identified market matches with common compensable factors.

Second, the use of compensable factors ensures that jobs are placed into a pay structure strictly on the basis of job content, without considering individual incumbents, thus avoiding claims of favoritism or discrimination.

A point factor job evaluation can also provide administrators with the reliable information needed to respond to claims of excessive compensation. *Out of Balance? Comparing Public and Private Sector Compensation over 20 Years*, an analysis published in April 2010 by Keith A. Bender and John S. Heywood, identifies a number of differences in public and private sector jobs. The report finds that "state and local governments consist disproportionately of occupations that demand more skills and earn higher wages. As a consequence, the typical state or local government employee has substantially more education, training, and experience."[1]

Point factor evaluations include minimum qualifications along with education and experience necessary for entry into a job, therefore enabling an efficient, quantitative comparison with private sector positions. Bender and Heywood's examination found that when adjusting for such earning determinants as education, "wages and salaries of state and local employees are lower than those for private sector workers" at the rates of 11 percent and 12 percent, respectively (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY TO PRIVATE SECTOR.

	STATE/ PRIVATE (%)	LOCAL/ PRIVATE (%)
Full Country	-11.4	-12.0
California	-9.8	-6.1
Texas	-16.6	-17.6
New York	-7.0	-5.9
Pennsylvania	-4.5	-12.9
Illinois	-12.5	-13.3
Michigan	-10.1	-11.2
Florida	-4.8	-0.2

External Equity

The second doctrine of fairness, external equity or market competitiveness, is the comparison of an organization's wage and benefit offerings with those of its identified market. Creating a competitive pay structure involves conducting a market survey to determine the pay levels of incumbents in similar positions in selected organizations.

These surveyed organizations may include those in both the public and private sectors, depending on type and level of job. Jobs commonly found in other organizations are benchmarked as survey targets, as are jobs that are more specialized and difficult to place. The selection of benchmark jobs should include positions that reflect a broad range of departments, pay grades, and work duties. It is always necessary, without exception, to match job definitions, not titles, during this process.

Figure 1 demonstrates the results of a sample point factor job evaluation comparison (grades) with market data plotted using a regression analysis. Figure 2 shows one city department's salary structure aligned to market, with current employees plotted. This type of analysis can help managers make strategic decisions regarding employee compensation. In this example yellow circles indicate employees below market minimum, with the blue circle representing one employee above market maximum.

ICMA GUIDELINES FOR COMPENSATION

Adopted by the ICMA Executive Board in October 2010, the *ICMA Guidelines for Compensation* advocate ethical standards for establishing compensation, place greater emphasis on transparency, and provide a roadmap for managers and their elected officials in establishing and negotiating compensation contracts. These guidelines reaffirm the fundamental public service values—honesty, trust, transparency, integrity, and accountability—embodied in the ICMA Code of Ethics and provide sound guidance on:

- Developing the best practice for establishing and negotiating compensation for local government managers and staff.
- Ensuring transparency around issues related to compensation of public employees.
- Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of the governing body and local government manager.
- Maintaining public trust and integrity in local government and position professional local government managers as primary stewards of that trust.

To download a copy of the *ICMA Guidelines for Compensation*, visit icma.org/compensationguidelines.

FIGURE 1: POINT FACTOR EVALUATION COMPARISON TO MARKET

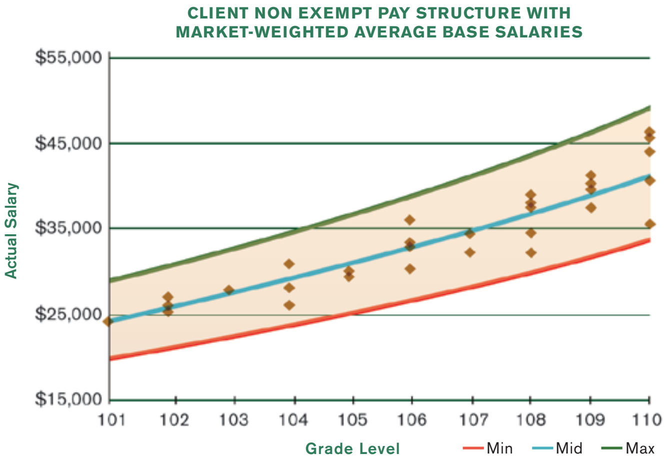
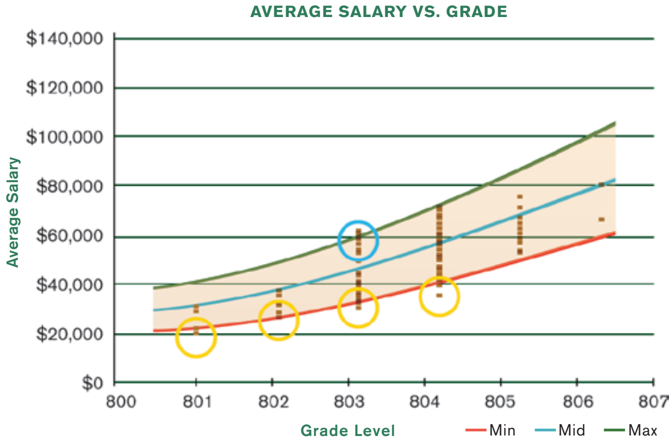


FIGURE 2: CURRENT EMPLOYEES WITH BELOW AND ABOVE MARKET CHALLENGES



Individual Equity

The third doctrine of fairness, individual equity—in other words, the relationships between and among individuals within an organization—can be accomplished by implementing a compensation system that recognizes and rewards performance. As an avenue for acknowledging individual contributions and guiding supervisors' pay decisions, an effective performance management system helps motivate and develop competent staff and is a critical component, particularly in an environment where there is internal and external competition for talent.

Creating a job-family approach to competencies enables an organization to avoid a one-size-fits-all performance appraisal form. Such generic forms are unable to provide a true assessment of employees' strengths and weaknesses and are often viewed negatively by supervisors, managers, and employees.

Likewise, the move to a merit-based system enables public administrators to satisfy separate, often opposing constituencies. Employees will be pleased that their individual accomplishments can be quantified, acknowledged (measurable objectives), and rewarded, while their development goals (competencies) to increase their skill base are being supported by the performance management process. The maximized return on investment of public funds will no doubt please all involved, including residents and elected officials.

The Future Is Now

First and foremost are the questions of where to start and what the strategic issues are. Various surveys can be conducted to determine how employees feel about the three equities: internal, external, and individual. The perception of trust in the system's administration should also be probed.

An audit of the current pay and benefit system and how it compares with best practices is critical. Web-based platforms are now available to assist in the total compensation audit. These programs have been designed to create, manage, and maintain employee pay systems as well as monitor the direct costs of all benefit plans.

An advantage is that these programs allow staff to filter this data for all employee groups and to track fund expenditures and monitor job titles, departments, and any other necessary variables for salary, benefit cash components, and such noncash benefit items as time off. This day-to-day ability to manage the personnel services budget has been shown to aid significantly in controlling expenditures.

During such a study, transparency and the role of elected officials in the process needs to be addressed. Our experience shows that any issue that impacts compensation policy should be discussed with the elected officials before the actual market research begins. This would include the decision on the benchmark organizations (both public and private), best-practice questions, and how to collect and compare the benefits data.

After data are collected, the policy about where to place the actual pay line (as opposed to market line) and the cost and morale implications of this policy would need to be discussed with elected officials. Such other policy decisions as the treatment of individuals below and above the pay scales would be made by the manager and staff and included in the final implementation plan.

The recent unfortunate public sector pay controversies also have necessitated that local governments ensure a transparent, defensible system for compensating their employees. PM

1 Keith A. Bender and John S. Heywood, *Out of Balance? Comparing Public and Private Sector Compensation over 20 Years* (Washington, D.C.: Center for State and Local Government Excellence and National Institute on Retirement Security, April 2010). http://tinyurl.com/outofbalancepdf.

ROLLIE WATERS is president, The Waters Consulting Group, Inc., Dallas, Texas (rwaters@watersconsulting.com), and **TL COX** is director, human resources E-Solutions, and senior consultant, The Waters Consulting Group, Inc. (tlcox@watersconsulting.com; www.watersconsulting.com).

By Mary Eleanor Wickersham

[FILLING THE] GAPS

THINKING BROADLY ABOUT COMPLIANCE

TAKEAWAY

Compliance is about more than money. Effective programs to root out and prevent wrong-doing involve all aspects of the organization and should take into consideration the values of the residents a manager serves.

Higher standards rewarded with higher performance

A WELL-EDUCATED PUBLIC ADMINISTRATOR writes a grant-funded check to his wife for consulting services, endorses the check, and deposits it. Her pay for consulting services: $3,000 per day, although she lacked necessary credentials and the fee was well above market price.

In Bell, California, the police department set up a "ball game" with quotas for impounding cars in order to raise revenue to fund the exorbitant salaries of city officials. They brought in three times as much money as Los Angeles for the same violation.

A county supervisor, well known for his demands for on-time performance by employees, including strict limits on lunch and break times, watches porn in his corner office.

These real-life situations can show that it is difficult to explain the thoughtless and unethical acts of public officials, most of whom should have known better. The big question from the public's point of view is always about the motivation, the why. Was it one of the seven deadly sins: wrath, envy, pride, greed, lust, gluttony, or sloth? Was it ignorance? Stupidity? Habit? Oversight? Too often, the question is never answered, and the wrongdoing is blamed on a person's bad character.

Check Whether Compliance Is in Place

Perhaps a more practical starting point for rooting out and avoiding future ethical wrongdoing is figuring out the gaps in the organization's compliance program—or starting one if there is no such program in place. Princeton psychologist John Darley wrote in a 2005 *Brooklyn Law Review* article that "people are ethical, but only intermittently so." If a manager is really serious about ethics, then it is vital to minimize opportunities for wrongdoing and to always be intolerant of unethical behavior.

The slippery slope is the unethical behavior that gets by undetected or, worse, the one that gets rewarded. Atlanta Public School Superintendent Beverly Hall got bonuses and a national school superintendent's award while the systems' teachers and principals were changing answers on students' tests to show the "improvement" that was rewarded.

WHEN DEFICIENCIES ARE IDENTIFIED, PROVIDE TRAINING TO ASSURE CHANGE AND THEN REASSESS. WHEN PERFORMANCE IS STELLAR, ENCOURAGE SHARING OF PROCESSES.

Compliance is viewed by many public managers as an after-the-fact way of checking up on the work of the organization. Financial audits are the most familiar means of demonstrating compliance. In many organizations, the annual audit is the only type of check and balance, but ethical issues in the public and nonprofit sectors clearly involve more than handling of money.

The first step toward an ethical organization is conducting what amounts to a gap analysis of the organization. As you begin to think about where the gaps are, consider every department. Ask yourself where things could go wrong and where the organization or agency could get into trouble or break laws or regulations. Then go one step further. When you identify the ideals your constituents expect you to uphold, other gaps will become obvious and can be addressed through a program of monitoring and auditing.

THE SLIPPERY SLOPE IS THE UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR THAT GETS BY UNDETECTED OR, WORSE, THE ONE THAT GETS REWARDED.

A Proactive Plan Is Important

Financial audits are, of course, essential, but they are only the beginning of a proactive plan. If we consider the values of public managers in the United States, then we broaden the range of ethical interests. A representative bureaucracy, for example, is a widely held value in this country in communities where people of several ethnicities live. Because most people tend to hire people who look like themselves, over time there can be a demographic shift in an organization. Setting up an annual review of employees' ethnicity, age, and gender can at least create an awareness of trends that might not otherwise be obvious.

Human resources departments may also have compliance issues of which the manager is not aware. Regular audits should be used to ensure that drug screens, I-9s (employee verification forms), background checks, and required continuing education, among other precautions and requirements, are in place. An effective way to ensure compliance is to conduct random follow-ups for background checks and to review files at least annually or more often if turnover is high.

Turnover in itself says something about the organization. Compare your organization with others in your region. Look at external salary schedules for comparison purposes and internal salary schedules for equity issues. Consider the state of employee morale in an effort to avoid unethical behaviors by dissatisfied workers. HR should be as much a part of any compliance program as the financial sector.

Early identification of trends is key. Although a financial audit might immediately discover money that has gone missing, it's not always easy to spot changes in customer service or response time for police or ambulance calls unless they are tracked and trended.

At a nonprofit where I worked years ago, the facility depended on referrals from hospitals for its clients. A review of four years of referrals demonstrated a dramatic shift. The largest source of referrals, more than 60 percent in the first year, had dropped to only 10 percent by the fourth year. A simple pie chart or bar graph was all that was needed, but without trending, it would not have been obvious. The manager had to repair whatever relationship damage had caused the decline in referrals.

What's in the Contract

Contracts are another major problem in public organizations. First, is there a contract at all? Does the contract spell out deliverables and timelines? Was the procurement process fair to potential bidders? Can the public be assured that officials do not have any conflicts of interest? Did advertising follow the letter of the law?

Public officials can create other difficulties when their own interests take precedence over those of the public they serve. There must be some means of reporting any potential conflicts prior to land purchase or award of contracts, for example. Routine audits should look at family-member involvement with potential contractors and others who have potential to conduct business with the organization. Procurement is rife with opportunities for wrongdoing. Laying the ground rules up front and then monitoring will help avoid problems.

Although less easy to identify as an ethical issue, squabbling among public officials can derail an organization's efforts to plan or make decisions. Two school boards in the southeastern United States were responsible for their system's loss of accreditation because unethical self-interest and power struggles made them ineffective. Are policies in place to address these issues?

A simple time study might indicate necessary meeting changes if the time is not used wisely. Transparency is a 21st-century expectation, so make sure that meetings are open and public documents are accessible.

Responsiveness is another widely held value among public officials and their constituents. Customer satisfaction surveys—inexpensive and instructive—can tell you about routine performance of garbage pickup, animal control, and even the time it takes to answer a phone.

With public websites now urging citizens to use e-mail for inquiries, be sure that whoever is answering e-mail is responsive and that there is an alternative for others who are not connected.

Governments are now using GPS to assure that mobile employees are where they are supposed to be, another means of avoiding ethical mishaps while saving money.

Public Image

A significant but often overlooked issue in the public setting is public image and its attendant professionalism. When one considers the expectation of professionalism as an American value demonstrating respect for the public, then there is value in monitoring and auditing that public image. Are the organization's offices neat, clean, and well organized? Can employees readily find information? Does your organization set a standard you'd like to see repeated in the community; that is, do you have a pleasant and professional service, the flag flying, and a well-kept entrance?

Go to lunch and call yourself to see how well office staffers respond. Prepare a first-impressions checklist to see where you could improve. Monitoring is not simply a fiscal matter. Pride in the workplace translates into higher morale and lower likelihood of sabotage or negative actions that could hurt the organization.

Take (and Keep) a Picture

Vary the types of audits and the auditors you use to ensure that you're getting a true picture of the organization. Unless trending is involved (when consistency is vital), change up the audits that are done, so that auditing won't simply be a repetitive process. Take a lesson from the private sector and consider using a secret shopper to see how efficiently employees are providing information or other services.

Monitoring and auditing do not, however, have to be done by outsiders or professionals. Peer reviews are often great learning experiences for workers and can help with cross training. Few people can proofread their own material, and the same applies for the jobs we do. It's harder to see one's own mistakes.

PROCUREMENT IS RIFE WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR WRONGDOING. LAYING THE GROUND RULES UP FRONT AND THEN MONITORING WILL HELP AVOID PROBLEMS.

If the process is positive—not a witch hunt—then performance will improve. When deficiencies are identified, provide training to assure change and then reassess. When performance is stellar, encourage sharing of processes.

Nobody wants to spend more time doing compliance than doing the job, but monitoring and auditing can be built in to many services with little additional labor. Yes, follow the money, but keep in mind that the goal of compliance programs is to ensure an organization of integrity, not just an organization of efficiency.

Higher standards demand higher performance. By broadening your approach to compliance to include your organization's values, you can achieve a more rounded compliance program and improve overall performance. PM

MARY ELEANOR WICKERSHAM, DPA, is assistant professor of public administration. Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia (mrwickersham@valdosta.edu).

BY MIKE CONDUFF, ICMA-CM

PREPARING FOR THE SUCCESSFUL COUNCIL RETREAT

There's more to it than just planning

At a recent Texas City Management Association annual conference in Galveston, Gene Kranz of Apollo 13 mission control fame spoke to several hundred attendees on his topic, "Failure Is Not an Option!" He emphasized that understanding the desired outcome was the critical first step in any successful endeavor, and after that it was planning, practice, execution, quality control, and adaptation.

His admonition to his immediate team, which he said was accurately reflected in the movie, *Apollo 13,* was that in spite of the difficulties facing that space mission, successfully bringing home the Apollo 13 team would be remembered as "our finest hour."

As we listened to Gene, I reflected at how transferable his message was for local government managers in these thorny fiscal times. In spite of all of the challenges that the economy, the changing political environments, and the citizen expectations gift us with, managers, in conjunction with great elected officials and keen staff, keep bringing excellent services to communities.

Having good council direction and involvement in developing our outcomes is absolutely an important first step, and I often get questions about the components of a successful council retreat that help accomplish this piece. Having designed and facilitated many dozens of retreats for cities both large and quite small, I have a short checklist I bring to meetings with mayors and managers when they want to explore the concept. This checklist envisions the assistance of an external facilitator, but it is just as helpful if a manager needs or wants to do it alone.

What Do You Hope to Accomplish?

With new elected members or with groups that do not function well, it may be that team building and governance process will be the key values of the retreat. With tenured or cohesive groups, it may be that long-range visioning, community strategic planning, or thorny-issue discussion is most critical.

For every event, it is important to set expectations appropriately. Expecting long-term dysfunction to turn into a lovefest in a day and a half is not realistic although agreeing on and practicing good group dynamics certainly is, and remarkable progress can certainly be made.

Can You Invest in Individual Pre-Meetings Prior to the Event?

Councilmembers come in all personality types, and not all of them are willing to put difficult issues on the table in front of their peers. As a facilitator, I use the pre-meeting to get to know the individuals, to develop some rapport before the event, and to get a sense of what they hope to accomplish. Often it is possible to structure the agenda so that an individual's key issue is tackled as a matter of course and not as a result of a certain person pushing for it, thus lowering the perceived threat of participation.

Does using some sort of personality profiling assist in getting the process ball rolling? There are lots of instruments available, and my favorites are Insights® and DiSC®, but many folks like others. The key is to recognize that all of us receive, process, and communicate information differently and most certainly arrive at a decision point differently.

By understanding our preferences and those of our colleagues on the council and staff, we can get a handle on group process and provide a framework and context for appropriate communication. Again, it is not unusual for a single council to have a member who prefers verbal exchange, one who prefers abbreviated written reports, and still another who wants lengthy chapter and verse (with a question-and-answer opportunity).

When the pressure cooker of important decisions on live TV comes into play, it is critical that the team have a framework for dealing with the resulting discord. Although personality profiling is not a panacea, it provides a common language for folks to use to highlight these differences in a positive fashion.

What Is the Agenda?

With proper pre-meetings, personality profiles in hand, and the input of the mayor and manager if appropriate, a realistic agenda can be crafted. Because in most environments retreats are open meetings and must be posted, it is important that the agenda comply with local standards and yet also reflect where the key energies are intended to be invested.

Let me emphasize "realistic." If this is the first retreat for a council and group dynamics is the focus, don't put the community's BHAG (that big hairy audacious goal) on the agenda as well. Conversely, with a tenured group with successful dynamics, don't waste this precious off-site time by playing soft toss!

As Gene Kranz emphasized, understanding outcomes, planning, practice, execution, quality control, and adaptation help us be successful. Apply these short questions to your retreat planning, and your opportunity for accomplishment will increase. PM

MIKE CONDUFF, ICMA-CM
Former City Manager
Now President and CEO
The Elim Group
Denton, Texas
mike.conduff@theelimgroup.com

BY THOMAS DUFFY

HELPING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IMPROVE CYBER SECURITY

Why is it important to local governments?

Many of our critical government services rely on the Internet and technology to function. The efficiencies and convenience afforded by the technology, however, do come with risks. Cyber Security Awareness month in October can serve as a reminder that it is time for management professionals to review their cyber security practices and insure that proper safeguards are in place.

The average unprotected computer (which means that the computer does not have proper security controls in place) connected to the Internet can be compromised in less than a minute. Thousands of infected web pages are being discovered every day. Hundreds of millions of records have been involved in data breaches.

These are just a few examples of the consequences facing us, and they highlight the importance of cyber security.

Local governments have a responsibility to their residents to protect the information in their care. Here are examples of how your computer system could be affected by a cyber security incident:

- Your websites could be disabled and unavailable to your residents to process transactions.
- Criminals could break into your systems and steal personal and sensitive information, including online banking credentials, about your employees or residents.
- Your network could be shut down by an external attack.
- A laptop or mobile device could be inadvertently lost, putting any data on that device at risk for compromise.
- A malicious user could use your systems to attack other systems.

These and other information security incidents would certainly have a negative impact on your ability to provide services to residents and could result in a loss of public confidence.

What Can You Do to Protect Your Information?

- Designate a principal individual responsible for cyber security.
- Know how to recognize that you might have a problem: for example, if your computer is slow or constantly crashing, or if you are not receiving e-mails, you may have a problem.
- Understand how to deal with problems: make sure you take an infected machine out of service as soon as practical and gather as much information as possible about the incident.
- Physically protect equipment: keep equipment protected from theft as well as environmental hazards.
- Protect essential hardware and software: install and maintain firewalls, antivirus software, and patches.
- Control access: ensure users have strong passwords; limit access to sensitive data to authorized users.
- Protect information: perform regular backups.
- Implement training and awareness programs.
- Develop Internet and acceptable use policy.
- Take steps to securely dispose of computer equipment.

For more details on how to implement each of these steps, visit the Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center (MS-ISAC) website at http://msisac.cisecurity.org/resources for the guide, *Cyber Security: Getting Started,* along with a number of other helpful guides, newsletters, daily tips, and references which are available at www.msisac.org.

How Can MS-ISAC Help?

MS-ISAC, a division of the not-for-profit Center for Internet Security, focuses on cyber threat prevention, protection, response, and recovery for the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal governments. It provides resources to its members (there is no cost to join), including incident response; information sharing, cyber alerts, and advisories; emergency conference calls to respond to threats or reports of major cyber incidents; monthly member webcast meetings; and more.

To learn more about how your local government can become a member, contact Ryan Spelman, MS-ISAC, at 518/266-3460 or ryan.spelman@msisac.org. PM

THOMAS DUFFY
Executive Director
Multi-State Information Sharing and Analysis Center
Center for Internet Security.
East Greenbush, New York

BY DAVE ANDERSON

LEADERSHIP AND LITTLE WHITE LIES

How seemingly harmless fibs and half truths can hurt you

Picture this: It's 4:30 on a Friday afternoon at the end of an exhausting week. You've finally reached a good stopping place in your work, and everything seems on track for a clean break when 5:00 p.m. rolls around. Suddenly, the phone rings. You glance at your caller ID screen and cringe. It's one of your most talkative residents.

So what do you do now? Do you take the call, or do you have the receptionist tell him you've already left for the day and direct the call to your voice mail.

If you opt for the white lie, you're not alone. We're all guilty of stretching the truth every now and then, and some of us find ourselves doing it so often we barely notice anymore. But those harmless little untruths are anything but. Not only are these fibs a reflection on your character—after all, lying is lying—but they can open the door to bigger, darker, more destructive lies.

White lies are like the gateway drug to bigger offenses. Get away with them and you're tempted to tell ever bigger ones. Eventually your lies will catch up with you and will damage your relationships with residents, vendors, and employees. And in a business world that is already unstable, it's not a risk you should be willing to take.

Consider the Consequences

Although most white lies seem harmless on the front end, consider the potential consequences of your actions. What if, for instance, the resident you had the receptionist lie to happens to find out you actually were in the office? He may feel offended enough to tell other residents about your unsavory behavior.

Even more detrimental is the effect that white lies can have on one's own psyche. White lies work much the same as other types of lesser offenses (say, flirting with that married coworker rather than launching a full-on affair). Basically, you become desensitized to the feelings of wrongness and guilt, and, before you know it, you are finding ways to excuse away other, more serious infractions.

If you're going to start classifying lies as either white ones or whoppers, you may as well categorize different levels of stealing, too. The white-lie version of embezzlement could be taking a few dollars worth of office supplies home with you, or mailing personal correspondence with company postage, or making personal copies on the office copy machine.

Is this the standard you want to set for your employees? I suggest that you personally work inside a no-lying zone and insist that your employees do the same. Here are other tips:

1. Tell the truth at all costs (literally!). You should tell the truth even when it is not easy, cheap, popular, or convenient. Selling a product at the right price (rather than a grossly inflated one that you are pretty sure you can get away with) may cost you more in the short term, but dishonesty and deception can end up costing you much more in the long run, professionally and personally.

2. Don't give false impressions. When it comes to business, false impressions are everywhere. From misleading advertising campaigns to padded resumes, you won't be hard-pressed to find examples of people trying to make others believe things are better than they really are. And, although you may not realize it, this is just another form of lying!

You need to be up-front and honest with those you work with, or you may lose your credibility and build up bitterness and resentment in a once-valuable relationship. Think about the ways that you or your organization may be misleading others, and find ways to stop it.

Make sure that you aren't spinning feedback to make people feel as though they're doing better or worse than they really are. And certainly don't mislead any potential job candidates or employees about the realities of compensation, advancement, or future plans.

3. Never, ever ask someone else to lie on your behalf. This is an abuse of your power, position, relationship, and friendship. Asking an employee or colleague to lie for you can do permanent damage to your integrity and reputation, and it opens the door for them to lie to you as well as to business and government contacts.

4. Beware of the four magic words. Four words should tip you off that you are headed for trouble: "Just tell him that…" Any sentence that begins with that phrase is usually followed by a lie. For example, "Just tell him that the offer has already expired," or "Just tell him that this is the last time we'll consider a change" are lies that may seem harmless on the surface but can lead to big trouble. And if someone tells you to tell someone else, "Just tell him that…" you can do the person a great service by respectfully replying, "But that's not true. What should I tell him instead?"

Think of all the business scandal stories from this past year and how many of them were the result of dishonesty—and how that dishonesty shattered the lives of so many people. That's something every manager should work to avoid. PM

DAVE ANDERSON is president, Dave Anderson's Learn to Lead, Agoura Hills, California, and author of How to Run Your Business by THE BOOK–Revised and Expanded: A Biblical Blueprint to Bless Your Business (Wiley, 2011, ISBN: 978-1-118-02237-5, $18.95, www.learntolead.com).

BY JOHN BAKER

TIME'S UP! WHAT DO YOU REALLY WANT?

Most people, when it comes down to it, are fearful of being direct and to the point and telling people in no uncertain terms, "Here's what I want!"

Think about it. There's a conspiracy that encourages people to bury their most important wants and desires. Marketing trainers use consultative selling to draw people out. Social media consultants say, "Asking directly is suicide!" People hem and they haw, and they even are afraid to ask what they want to ask the most. They feel vulnerable about being honest and up-front.

Yet when it comes to being successful in a job, being frank, open, and clearly asking people for what you want is what wins the day. If you ask me, I think the world would be a better place if marketers, for example, were totally up-front and said, "I'm selling windows today; are you buying?"

I spent several years studying the fears and trepidation people demonstrate in situations across the whole spectrum of human interactions and have concluded that people do not know the best way to get what they want.

What I discovered was simple: the most successful people ask for what they want. Then they give the three best reasons that explain why it makes perfect sense to say yes. Here's an example.

A manager is frustrated with the administrative team and needs a way to get team members to focus on specific items that elected officials have asked be completed. How does the manager ask team members to move things forward?

Even experienced people, young and old, are often stumped over asking someone for exactly what they want.

Various experts tell you that it's important to build a relationship, or you have to draw out the prospect, or listen for clues, and any number of other items, but the crucial, bottom-line issue is that a person never gets around to asking the important question.

Yet the quickest and best way to ask for a job to be completed, as in our example here, is to go right up to team members and say: "Would you please do this for me?" I want you to call 'Joe' and ask what needs to be done to get the project finished. I want you to see what will happen. You'll ask what is needed, you'll find out the answer, and you'll then get to give them what they need, or we'll know what it's going to take to complete the project.

It is crucial to identify the exact, most important request, and then brainstorm before you decide on the best reasons. Each reason needs to be carefully selected from a larger number of options and be backed by three important facts. And it really helps if you put your money where your mouth is by saying something like, "Let's implement the plan as follows. E-mail me the information by the end of the day. We'll meet at 10 a.m. tomorrow and discuss the results and lessons learned, and we'll even make sure that we have answers to the questions by noon!"

A quick conversation like this is clearer, and there is less misunderstanding. The formula to use has three key rules:

1. Offer only information that is meaningful. The rest is trivial.
2. Get to the point and ask for what it is you want.
3. Be quick about it. PM

JOHN BAKER is a management and leadership consultant, Minneapolis, Minnesota (info@theaskingformula.com), and author of the book, *The Asking Formula – Ask For What You Want And Get It* (www.theaskingformula.com).

BY COREY SCHMIDT

HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER VACATION...

You guessed it—at city hall—and yes, it was incredible!

Across college campuses this fall, students might have been asked that age-old question, "How was your summer vacation?" The standard reply usually consists of the word "good" and perhaps not much else. But if that description is all the student can muster, then a summer internship in local government wasn't part of the agenda.

As a 2011 summer intern with the city of Maryland Heights, Missouri, I was fortunate to experience the dynamic nature of management in local government. Although the old adage that no two days are alike may not be entirely true for an intern, there are certainly enough everyday twists to keep things interesting. Particularly in this internship program, the combination of challenging tasks and managers who welcome thoughtful ideas made it a great fit not just for me but also for scores of others in past years.

A 26-Year Program

Maryland Heights has operated this internship program every summer since the city incorporated in 1985. The program originated in the administration department, with graduate student interns from local universities who were interested in municipal management.

Over the years, internships were developed for other city departments—community development, parks and recreation, public relations, and public works—and expanded to include undergraduate and graduate students from schools around the country. Maryland Heights has now hosted more than 100 interns in its 26-year existence.

This past summer, the internship program included students from universities in the Midwest who worked on a variety of projects. Interns in community development conducted research and analyzed data that related to city planning and zoning. A public works intern performed design, concept, and cost estimates for engineering and construction projects. Another intern, in parks and recreation, learned about the management of a recreational facility. In administration, three interns worked on economic development research, human resources matters, and budget projections.

Although we worked independently on these projects, we as a group also experienced various aspects of city government. Weekly excursions to facilities like a water treatment plant and a recycling center exposed us to operations taking place outside of city hall that still impact service delivery and quality of life in the area. We also planned the annual summer barbeque for the city's 200 employees, a task designed to give us experience working on an interdepartmental project. It was also a lot of fun!

Projects like these benefited past interns when they were seeking jobs after their internships concluded. More than half of them now enjoy employment in the public sector, and many others work for private firms that conduct business with government. Regardless of the sector in which they are employed, past interns have overwhelmingly reported that the internship gave them skills and experiences still useful years later.

In addition to providing a slew of students with a launching pad into public service, the internship program has also been beneficial to the city. The staff can rely on summer interns to complete tasks and projects that are meaningful to the organization's success. They bring perspectives that can freshen up staid approaches to conducting the business of government. Perhaps most important, interns give department heads and managers an opportunity to convince the next generation that a career in public service is a worthwhile endeavor.

Benefits Are Real

The Maryland Heights internship program is just one of many around the country that has been offering hands-on experience to students pursuing a career in local government. As any student who has conducted an internship search will note, however, there is still a need to increase the availability of meaningful internship programs at the local level. Although budget constraints may make growth difficult, this is one program that does not need a sophisticated cost-benefit analysis to implement, and the benefits of employing interns far outweigh the costs!

When members of the 2011 class of Maryland Heights interns concluded their experience, some traveled back to school to finish degrees while others went off to begin their careers. Whatever paths we ultimately choose to pursue, we will be better prepared because of our experience as interns. And next time someone inquires about our summer vacation, we will have a lot more to say than "It was good." PM

COREY SCHMIDT
2011 Summer Intern
Maryland Heights, Missouri
and Graduate Student, School of Public and Environmental Affairs
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana
corschmi@indiana.edu

BY G. CHRIS HARTUNG

THE JOB INTERVIEW

The Importance of the Last(ing) Impression

A lot of advice has been given about the importance of the first impression in a job interview. Although I agree that candidates must be aware of the power of a poor first impression, at least with a poor first impression the candidate has the balance of the interview to recover.

If a candidate leaves a less than favorable impression as the interview is ending, there is no opportunity to overcome that.

Let's examine a few of the trouble spots that can ruin an otherwise positive interview.

1. Don't prolong the interview needlessly. A common mistake some candidates make is asking too many questions in the initial interview stage. This needlessly prolongs the interview. The hiring authority often allows time at the end of this type of formal interview for the candidate to make a final statement or ask questions of the interview panel.

This period is intended to allow the candidate to ask a limited number of questions. The schedule usually does not provide time for the candidate to ask the panel as many questions as the candidate has been asked. Candidates who open their notebooks and begin to ask a long series of detailed questions may well talk themselves out of an otherwise favorable rating.

2. Know the details of the interview process. It is important for candidates to be prepared for the interview by knowing the details of the interview process. One of the details candidates need to know is how much time the organization has allocated for the interview and then be sensitive to that schedule.

If the interviewer extends the allotted time with follow-up questions, that is the interviewer's choice. If the candidate, however, causes the schedule to slip by asking too many questions at the end, that can be seen as a definite negative by the panel.

3. Do the homework. Another red flag is the candidate who asks a question that indicates a lack of preparation. Before an interview, candidates should research the organization and the position by reviewing material available on the Internet or from such other sources as profiles developed by the organization or a search consultant. Questions that indicate the candidate has done due diligence are viewed positively by interviewers.

Candidates also need to be careful about asking questions that come across as being critical of the organization or its management. A brief job interview is probably not the time to get into a critical evaluation. If the position seeker is hired, there will be ample time to understand all of the challenges of the position.

4. Don't assume the interviewers know you want the job. I remember a chilling statement made by an interviewer after a candidate left the room at the conclusion of an interview. One panel member said to the others, "Do you think he really wanted this job?" It is imperative that a candidate never leave an interviewer with even a remote impression of being uninterested in the position—assuming, of course, that the job seeker truly wants the job.

One of the basic principles of sales training is: Always ask for the sale. Salespeople are taught to never assume anything. I think that is a good principle to follow if you are trying to sell yourself for a job. At the close of the interview, when an applicant is about the leave the room, the applicant should look directly at the interview panel and state or restate a desire for the position. A statement such as "I just want to make sure you know that I am truly interested in this position and believe that I can make a contribution to the organization" will eliminate any confusion.

5. Leave the room with a confident demeanor. Interview guides stress the importance of entering the interview room with a confident demeanor, sometimes described as "having presence." Leaving the room with a confident demeanor at the close of an interview is at least as important. Interviewers evaluate everything about a candidate during the interview. Not only the information being disseminated but also the candidate's body language and tone of voice.

At this stage, the interviewers are envisioning how the candidate would perform as a representative of the organization both internally and externally. As a candidate for city manager, assistant city manager, or other senior position, the applicant will be judged on presence as well as other personal characteristics.

Concluding the interview with presence includes expressing a strong interest in the position, shaking hands with the panel members, and thanking them individually for their time. It is important to maintain eye contact during these brief encounters because eye contact is an indicator of confidence, sincerity, and transparency.

6. Finally, use the name of the interviewer as you shake hands. One of the most effective interviews I ever saw involved a candidate who was being interviewed by three city managers for a position as director of a multicity operation. She had obviously done her homework and had the three names attached to the correct faces.

Managing your interview by paying attention to small details may well make the difference between landing the job or being faced with disappointment and regret later. PM

G. CHRIS HARTUNG
President
Chris Hartung Consulting and
Former City Manager
Denton, Texas

A LANDFILL'S NEXT LIFE—SOLAR DEVELOPMENT

Development on former landfills makes sense

Landfills can be environmentally and economically beneficial for siting renewable energy (RE) facilities because they have critical infrastructure in place; contain the underlying contamination-using secure liners, or caps, or both; and offer large areas of land that can be suitable for siting solar arrays.

They also take stress off undeveloped lands for construction of new energy facilities and provide economically viable reuse to sites with significant cleanup costs or low real estate development demand.

Dozens of solar projects on landfills have been developed across the United States in recent years, including projects in Colorado, Nevada, North Carolina, New Jersey, and Texas that demonstrate the unique advantages landfill sites offer.

Encouraging RE Development

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has evaluated approximately 11,000 sites and almost 15 million acres of potentially contaminated land and mine sites across the United States for renewable energy potential.[1] Through its initiative, RE-Powering America's Land: Siting Renewable Energy on Potentially Contaminated Land and Mine Sites, in those cases where renewable energy is the "highest and best use" and where the community supports a renewable energy project, EPA is encouraging the development of renewable energy on formerly contaminated sites. Visit www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland for more information and resources.

When developed for renewable energy, these sites can take stress off undeveloped lands for construction of new energy facilities while providing developers with access to existing infrastructure. EPA's inventory of tracked lands, which includes brownfields, Superfund and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act sites, and Landfill Methane Outreach Program sites, among others, comprises hundreds of landfills that have the potential to support such renewable energy projects as solar facilities.

To further study the concept of solar development on former landfills, EPA partnered with the Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) to conduct a study to support the reuse of landfills for solar facilities in Puerto Rico. The Feasibility Study of Economics and Performance of Solar Photovoltaics in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico assesses eight landfills with the highest potential for possible solar photovoltaic (PV) installation and presents estimates of cost, performance, and site impacts of three different PV options: crystalline silicon (fixed tilt), crystalline silicon (single-axis tracking), and thin film (fixed tilt).[2] Seven of the eight landfills considered in the study were found to be feasible to support solar PV systems.

In Massachusetts, the Merrimac Valley Planning Commission is reviewing 11 closed landfill sites in nine communities through its regional green energy initiative to determine their potential to host solar arrays. The state of Massachusetts encourages entities to determine the feasibility of siting solar and wind facilities on landfills and brownfields. Its Green Communities Division of the Department of Energy Resources and the Department of Environmental Protection recently held two well-attended workshops on this issue.

If the Merrimac Valley Planning Commission identifies suitable sites for solar development, it may bundle projects together in order to attract a developer. The commission's process may serve as a model for other regional planning councils and commissions looking to turn landfills into solar facilities.

In addition to the sites being studied by EPA, NREL, and states, dozens of landfills across the country are being developed for solar. Here are two examples.

Former Landfill Site Helps Power Fort Carson. At Fort Carson, a U.S. Army installation south of Colorado Springs in El Paso County, Colorado, a decommissioned landfill is home to a 2-megawatt (MW), ground-mounted PV solar facility.

ABOUT EPA RE-POWERING AMERICA'S LAND INITIATIVE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is encouraging the development of renewable energy on potentially contaminated land and mine sites—as an alternative to developing renewable energy on previously undeveloped land. Through its RE-Powering America's Land: Siting Renewable Energy on Potentially Contaminated Land and Mine Sites initiative, EPA identified more than 11,000 EPA tracked sites and nearly 15 million acres that have potential for developing solar, wind, biomass, and geothermal facilities.

Using potentially contaminated land and mine sites to develop renewable energy facilities can preserve greenfields, provide developers with access to existing infrastructure, create jobs, and enable potentially contaminated property to return to a productive and sustainable use. For more information on EPA's RE-Powering America's Land initiative, visit www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland or contact cleanenergy@epa.gov.

LEFT: At Fort Carson, a 2 MW solar PV facility is sited on a15-acre decommissioned landfill.

RIGHT: At Nellis Air Force Base, a 14 MW solar PV facility covers 140 acres, including the 33-acre capped landfill.

Because this 15-acre former landfill had a restricted use, the site was an ideal candidate for a solar array. The site was prepared for the solar facility by covering the inert landfill debris with soil, grading it for drainage, and planting a native seed mix.

Fort Carson now hosts a 12-acre array on the former landfill. The solar modules will produce electricity efficiently for 40 years. The array will generate 3,200 megawatt-hours of power annually, enough to supply 2.3 percent of Fort Carson's energy consumption, or the equivalent of 540 homes.

For more information on how Fort Carson harnesses the sun, visit www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland/docs/success_fortcarson_co.pdf.

Air Force Base Landfill Transformed. Nellis AFB is a 14,000-acre facility located northeast of Las Vegas, Nevada. The base's onsite landfill contained debris from building demolition, paint sludge, wood buildings, and other solid waste.

After the landfill was capped, native soils and groundwater monitoring wells were installed. A 2006 environmental impact statement determined that the landfill area was suitable for housing a solar project.

Working with several private sector companies, the U.S. Air Force (USAF) developed a solar PV system powerful enough to provide a quarter of the entire base's energy needs. The solar PV system consists of 72,416 solar panels, covering 140 acres and generating 14 MW.

Constructing the solar PV system on this former landfill allowed Nellis AFB to benefit and transform land that could have remained vacant for decades. The solar PV system saves the USAF an estimated $1 million annually, and it reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 24,000 tons each year.

For more information on the Nellis AFB, visit www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland/docs/success_nellis_nv.pdf.

More Online Information

For more information regarding the initiative, RE-Powering America's Land: Siting Renewable Energy on Potentially Contaminated Land and Mine Sites, or EPA and NREL's research related to siting solar facilities on landfills, visit www.epa.gov/renewableenergyland, or contact cleanenergy@epa.gov. PM

ENDNOTES

1 Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, U.S. EPA, "Draft Cross-Program Revitalization Measures Report," June 12, 2008.

2 James Salasovich and Gail Mosey, Feasibility Study of Economics and Performance of Solar Photovoltaics in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Technical report NREL/TP-6A20-49237 (Golden, Colo.: National Renewable Energy Laboratory, March 2011), www.nrel.gov/docs/fy11osti/49237.pdf.

US EPA, Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response (OSWER) Center for Program Analysis. For more information, contact Lura Matthews, Environmental Protection Agency's OSWER Center for Program Analysis, Washington, D.C. (matthews.lura@epamail.epa.gov).

BY AARON BIBRO

REAL WORLD, INVOLVING THE TOWNSHIP MANAGER

When meetings are television shows

When I was in my early twenties, I applied to be a cast member on MTV's long-running reality show, *Real World*. I was quickly notified that someone else had already filled the slot of the middle-class, all-American, average guy. What I didn't realize at the time was that 12 years later I would find myself on a much different kind of reality show—local government meetings.

For the past two and a half years, I have served as an assistant township manager and, later, as township manager in a thriving community west of Pittsburgh that televises three monthly meetings—workshop-caucus meetings, regular board of commissioners meetings, and planning commission meetings. Because of their popularity, it wouldn't shock me if in a few years I'll be televised drafting memos in my office.

Although our township's reality shows aren't quite as diverse as what you will see on MTV, the fights can be as explosive and occasionally as entertaining.

Forewarned

While earning my master's degree in public administration at Villanova University, I listened in class to my professors and local government managers describing some of the unique challenges one faces when managing a community that believes in the importance of televised meetings. I didn't exactly understand what that meant until I attended my first meeting as a newly hired assistant manager.

I began my current tenure in July 2009, four months before an upcoming municipal election in which three of the five seats for commissioner were being contested. I sat in the audience as the township manager introduced me to the community and read aloud my résumé—which included AmeriCorps volunteer, constituent services representative for a Pennsylvania state senator, master's degree, and several internships—and I felt somewhat confident that I had the necessary combination of experience and skill to become a valuable asset to the township administration.

I was quickly brought back down to earth as I sat through the next 20 minutes of the residents' comments portion of the meeting, cringing as the township manager was getting bashed for hiring someone without this, or someone without enough of that. Even though this was my first public meeting in this community, I had attended dozens of local government meetings elsewhere while working in different capacities throughout my career and I had never experienced anything quite like this.

Almost four hours later when the meeting finally ended, feeling as if I had just left the ring with Mike Tyson, I was quickly brought up to speed by the township manager regarding the dynamics of the local political landscape and the heightened tension caused by the approaching election. The next three board meetings had more of the same—candidates and friends of candidates on the attack. After the election, however, the subsequent meetings were attended by only a handful of loyal constituents.

The Good and the Bad

I found from personal research that both positive and negative effects of televising local government meetings have been debated in communities across the country. Critics argue that television leads to longer and less productive meetings and creates an environment that is not conducive to creativity and long-term planning. They say that the meetings are often filled with posturing and theatrics. Proponents argue that televising creates transparency, accountability, and allows taxpayers to be closer to and more informed about the inner workings of their government.

While working in a televised community for the past two years, my biases against the medium have been confirmed during every meeting that is filled with negativity and divisiveness. I also have been surprised, though, to discover several benefits of incorporating television into local government.

The township is able to use the community channel to help promote its local events and fundraisers and provide emergency updates and communicate other relevant information to the residents at a low cost. And, despite my assumption that people would rather watch *Monday Night Football* or *The Bachelor* instead of council meetings, the feedback I receive after the meetings is at times overwhelming. Calls come from residents who have questions and comments—both positive and negative—after they watch the meetings at home.

Since I'm a lifelong fan of reality television (stop judging me!), I envision each month incorporating a different popular reality show's theme into the township's meetings, including shows like Dancing with a Commissioner, Township Idol, or maybe Manager Swap. I only hope that on the month that the theme is *Survivor*, I don't get voted out of the township. PM

AARON BIBRO
Robinson Township Manager
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
abibro@townshipofrobinson.com

Save the Date

2012 ICMA Regional Summits

For Members and State Officers

- Network with your colleagues.
- Discuss ICMA issues and programs.
- Provide feedback to the ICMA Executive Board and staff.

icma.org/SUMMIT

Southeast	Midwest	Northeast	Mountain Plains and West Coast
March 15-16 Decatur, Georgia	March 29-30 Columbus, Ohio	April 12-13 State College, Pennsylvania	May 3-4 Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

2012 Young Professionals Leadership Institute

For Assistants, Assistant Managers, and those who are beginning their career path

- Build your leadership skill set through the art and practice of leadership.
- Precedes each regional summit.

icma.org/YPLI

Made possible through a generous grant from ICMA-RC.

ICMA *Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

12-026

Help Spread the Word: Professional Local Government Matters

With the generous support of ICMA members, state associations, and other local government stakeholders, the Fund for Professional Management has contributed more than $400,000 toward educating citizens about the role and value of professional local government management.

Now we are expanding our efforts to include a coordinated, national awareness campaign to proactively educate thought-leaders, elected officials, and citizens in your community about the role and value of professional local government management. Learn more about the campaign and join your colleagues by offering your support at icma.org/lifewellrun.

Grow the profession; give to the Fund.

ICMA *Leaders at the Core of Better Communities*

11-196