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ADVANCING PROFESSIONAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT WORLDWIDE

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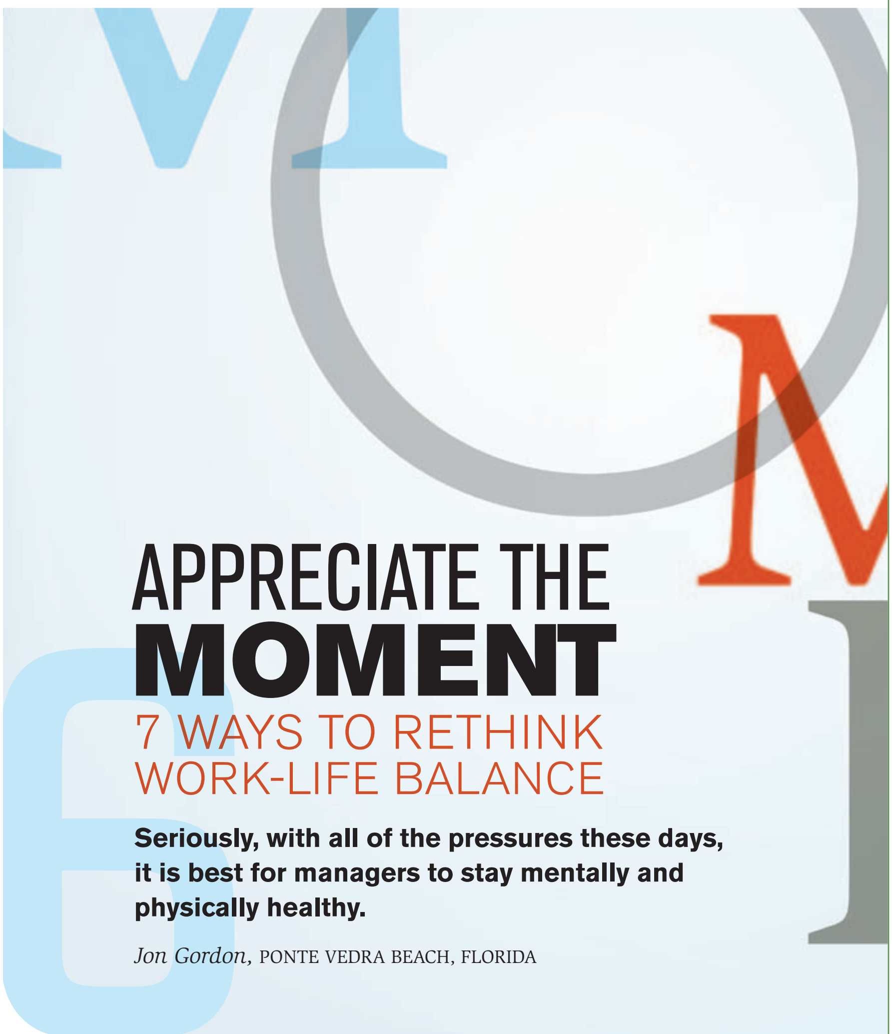

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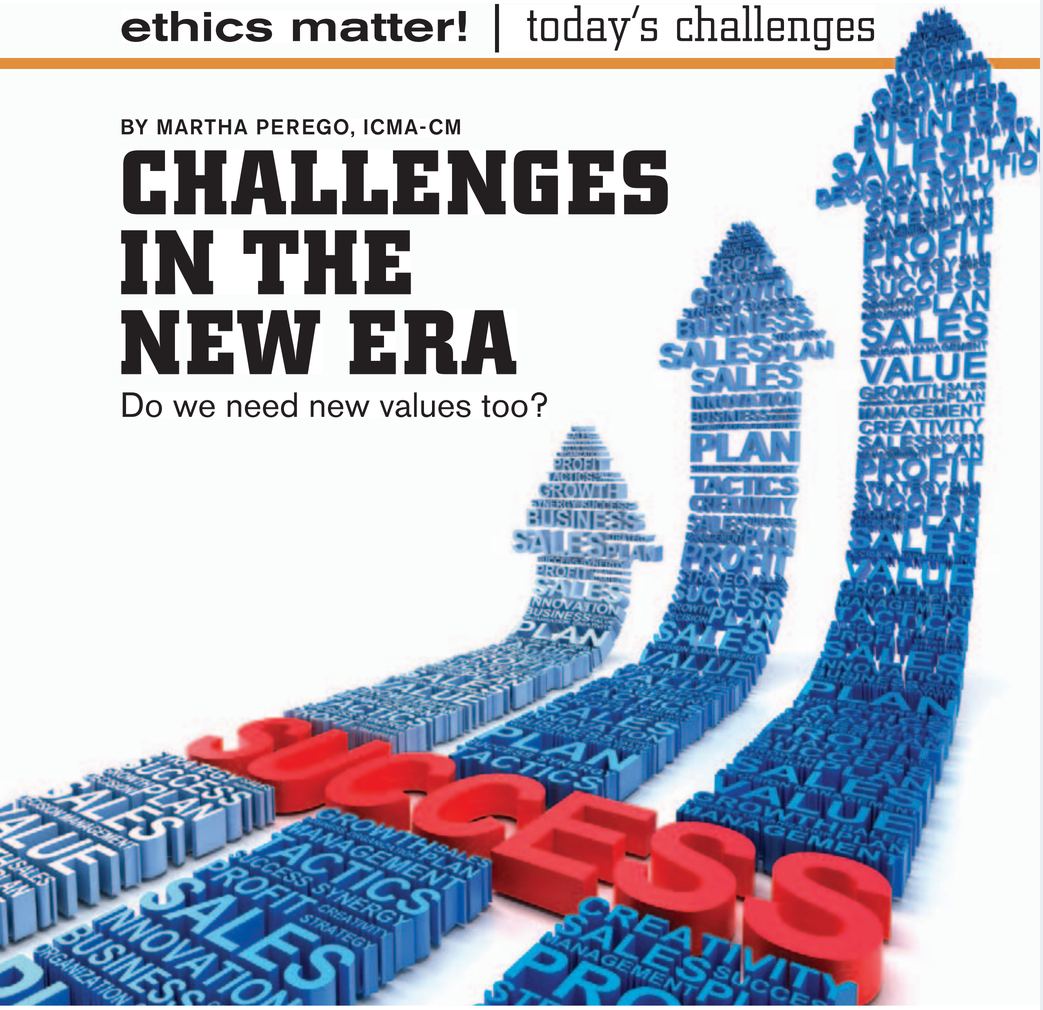
BY MARTHA PEREGO, ICMA-CM

CHALLENGES IN THE NEW ERA

Do we need new values too?



Organizations around the world, including local governments, are challenged in the new era to meet their constituents' demands with far fewer resources. With limited opportunities to create new revenues, local governments must reorganize and innovate to succeed.

Now, several years into this new normal, some local governments have moved far beyond the generic solutions for fixing problems. All ideas are getting vetted. New ways create new ethical challenges.

Case Study: New Benefactors

After several restructuring efforts, a city still faces severe cuts in service. All options for restoring services are on the table. One idea floated by the city council is to seek donations from the public in order to bring the services back.

Why not tap local corporations, prominent residents, and even vendors who do business with the city? The city attorney opines that public agencies can accept private donations for general operations. After all, the city's performing arts center was built with private donations.

Ethical warning signs are flashing for the city manager. It's one thing to approach a few big donors for a large project. The potential for ethical missteps is limited. You've got a small pool of donors, publicity, and an extremely tangible result.

But an ongoing, broad-based fundraising campaign with many donors? Seems like a field day for the media. The challenge for the manager is to create the structure that avoids even the appearance of a pay-to-play scheme. Built on a foundation of the right principles, it might be doable.

Sound Public Policy

A well-considered and carefully crafted public policy is the first step toward avoiding an ethical misstep here.

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.

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The policy must have at the foundation a commitment to transparency, communication, and accountability. The governing body needs to vet and approve not only the concept but also the detailed strategy.

Who is the target audience? Who will do the "ask"? How will donations be recorded and publicized? Would a donation ever be declined and, if so, under what circumstances?

How will the funds be used? And, at the end of the day, how will the public know whether the campaign met the financial and ethical metrics of success?

Execution and Accountability

Good policy in hand, the manager needs to ensure good execution. Centralizing this effort will help with the execution and accountability. The more staff involved, the more likely that someone will do something inappropriate, whether intentional or not.

Selecting a third party is one option for erecting a firewall between staff and the donors. This approach comes with its own limitation, as it cuts into the financial benefit and creates its own accountability headache if the contactor doesn't follow directions.

What constitutes an acceptable donation is a pretty significant issue to resolve.

One option is to take any amount from any donor and rely on public disclosure to address any potential ethical concerns, thus relying on the theory that sunshine is the best disinfectant. The other approach is to try to identify either individuals or situations where accepting the donation would potentially harm the integrity of the organization's processes or decisions.

If the manager or staff members, for example, have had informal conversations about a development plan, a business expansion, a request for rezoning, or something similar, the city should be prepared not to solicit from those entities and return any donation they might voluntarily make.

Not to do so creates the opportunity for someone to argue later that there was a quid pro quo. Be up front and clear about this when the campaign begins.

Transparency

The public expects current and easily accessible data. And when the data involves money, expectations rise. The good news is that electronic communication makes this expectation relatively easy to satisfy.

Use social media tools as well as the local government website to both promote the campaign and report current data on contributions. Also be clear in reports about how the funds were used. The more transparent the effort, the greater the likelihood that everyone's integrity will be intact in the end.

Here is a true story on what not to do. A former resident, recognizing the dire straits facing his hometown, approached the mayor with an offer to donate $1 million toward the purchase of new fire trucks. The mayor accepted the donation and kept it a secret.

City council, residents, and firefighters were never informed. When the new trucks went into service, the mayor credited his administration's sound financial planning. Six years later, the donation was uncovered by a sleuthing resident.

The mayor argued that he was right to conceal the donation to honor the donor's request. After all, there is nothing wrong with a public agency accepting a private donation, is there? In response to the controversy, the benefactor noted that he was not expecting anonymity or seeking publicity. He was just trying to do good! Now his good deed has been unnecessarily tarnished.

Successfully meeting the new challenges doesn't require new values. It requires leaders who keep true to the core values of public service. PM

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WHAT CUTBACK HAVE YOU MADE THAT HAS SAVED YOUR COMMUNITY THE MOST MONEY BUT HAS CHANGED OR IMPACTED IT THE LEAST?

THOMAS FROMME, ICMA-CM
City Manager
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Because of declining revenues and dwindling reserves, Newport's elected officials in 2007 made the decision to begin reducing yearly operational costs through position attrition in departments outside of public safety.

Since then, 35 positions have been eliminated. A few positions that could not be eliminated were consolidated or, when feasible, converted to part-time status. Positions from the departments of historic preservation, main street, risk management, recreation, and finance were eliminated.

Significant thought was given as to what reductions would have the least impact on services to residents. Since most of the abolished positions were behind-the-scenes operations, the impact felt by the public was minimal.

With the weak economy causing the city to determine which functions could be consolidated or removed, better service is being provided to the public, and it puts us in a better position to deal with issues in the future.

JANE BRAUTIGAM, ICMA-CM
City Manager
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In the late 2000s, a task force composed of residents appointed by the city manager was asked to review city revenues and expenses in an effort to eliminate a likely future structural gap between revenues and expenditures and to address a changing economic picture. An important recommendation was to examine current practices in compensation.

On the basis of a review of current best practices, we eliminated most tenure-based pay practices and all salary increases formerly tied to cost of living. Pay for performance was emphasized instead. We also restructured health care benefits to eliminate a costly HMO plan.

In addition, we revised our wellness program so employees become better consumers of health care. Because more than 40 percent of the city budget is in salaries and benefits, these long-term changes have provided an effective method for Boulder to protect its fiscal future.

JOHN PICK, ICMA-CM
City Administrator
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When Salisbury undertook a repaving project in the past, we wrote the contract so that the milling contractor took possession of the milling materials when the project was completed. Several years ago, following up on a suggestion from one of our employees, we rewrote the contract so that the city would take possession of the milling materials.

Now the city collects the milling materials as the milling operation is under way and hauls them to a city storage facility. These materials are used later by the city for hot-patching and cold-patching projects as well as for temporary fill for sidewalk voids and other needs.

We estimate that the use of these recycled materials saves the city approximately $10,000 to $12,000 per year on the purchase of similar materials. The exact amount depends on the amount of repaving being done.

ANDREW NEIDITZ, ICMA-CM
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In our community-based services and outreach programs, the city of Lakewood recently cut back on staffing through an innovative program called the Community Safety and Resources Team (CSRT). We had been operating with six community service officers (CSOs) in our police neighborhood policing program—one for each of six patrol districts—and two code enforcement officers in the community development department.

By establishing CSRT (every good program needs a good acronym!), we formed an interdepartmental and interdisciplinary six-member team consisting of three CSOs and three code enforcement officers. Members were assigned so that each of the six districts would have a go-to liaison to assist with neighborhood problem solving.

Lakewood has been able to meet community expectations with a reduction from eight to six in staff positions (25 percent). PM

1

CONTRIBUTING TO URBAN GOVERNANCE IN CHINA

After more than three years of groundwork, the ICMA China Center has become a reality. Created in partnership with the China University of Political Science and Law, the Beijing-based center will engage in research, exchanges, training, and other activities.

▸ icma.org/chinacenter

2

CAREERS IN *PROGRESS*

A "Career Compass: Anthology" focuses on career issues for local government professionals. Read the original 19 articles for the first time or as a refresher.

▸ icma.org/career_compilation

3

TIPS — FROM — MEMBERS IN TRANSITION

"Take care of yourself first" and "consider interim assignments" are just two of the many tips compiled into a tips list by ICMA's program for members in transition, with help from ICMA's Range Riders.

▸ icma.org/MIT_tips

4

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ICMA's voluntary credentialing program comprises more than 1,200 credentialed managers and candidates. The next new application deadline for the program is July 1, 2012, and you can apply online.

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APPRECIA THE

M O M E

7 WAYS TO RETHINK WORK-LIFE BALANCE

By Jon Gordon

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In a perfect world, work and home would balance out neatly. We'd work from 8 to 5 each day, take an hour-long lunch, and then come home and spend uninterrupted time with our families. But for people working in the wake of the recession, firmly entrenched in an "always on" society, this notion seems hopelessly outdated.

Managers and all local government staff members continue to work long, stressful hours, and that work extends into evenings and weekends, including council and other organizational meetings that managers usually attend. Perhaps there are even more meetings now—financial and otherwise.

No wonder a 2011 survey of North American employees by Captivate Network[1] found that 87 percent of respondents say their work-life balance (or lack thereof) is negatively affecting their health! With so many people suffering from this problem, you would think the natural solution would be to encourage organizations to help their stressed-out employees find more balance in their lives. But this isn't so.

Work-life balance, at least in the sense that most of us think about it, is a myth. It does not exist. For many people, it never has. Personally, I have never been able to balance the scales of work and life on a day-to-day basis. Rather, I've come to realize that the dance between work and life is more about rhythm than balance.

I compare the rhythms of work and life with the rhythms of nature. There's a time and a "season" for everything.

For most people, there are seasons when hard work and extra hours are necessary, and seasons when there is more time for rest. And guess what? When you love what you do—and I truly believe there is meaning and even joy to be found in every job, especially for a local government manager who is trying to create a better life and community for residents—you'll thrive during the busy seasons and fully appreciate the down time.

TAKEAWAYS

› Discover your purpose in work and life.
› Ask yourself: "Why am I here and how can I serve."
› Find out there always can be new sources of wisdom and inspiration in your organization and in your life.

This sense of purpose is the natural remedy for the crushing guilt that many working parents in particular experience. (You know the drill: when you're working late, you feel guilty that you're not home with your partner or the kids; when you're at home, you feel guilty about all the work not getting done.)

When you believe your job has no meaning, of course you're going to feel guilty for spending so much time there. and so will your loved ones. But when you approach every day with passion and purpose, whether you're working long hours to prepare an important presentation or staying up late with your daughter to work on her science project, you can find joy and happiness in whatever it is you're pursuing at that moment.

2. LOOK AT YOUR WORK-LIFE BLEND OVER THE PAST YEAR. Consider it as a whole. Rather than thinking of your work and life day to day, think of it as a whole. How

INSTEAD OF DRIVING YOURSELF CRAZY TRYING TO ACHIEVE A WORK-LIFE BALANCE EVERY DAY, LOOK AT YOUR LIFE ON A WEEKLY, MONTHLY, OR YEARLY BASIS. **SCHEDULE TIMES TO WORK HARD, RECHARGE, RENEW, PLAY, AND ENGAGE WITH YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

many times did you get away with your family last year? Were there particular weeks or months when you worked really, really long hours? Were there times you were less busy? You might find that, when viewed that way, you did have a balanced life. Or you might realize you need to make a change in the way you do things during the upcoming year.

It is going to be virtually impossible to achieve complete balance every day of your life. There will simply be days and weeks when your work requires more time from you. There will also be days when your family requires more of your time. Instead of driving yourself crazy trying to achieve a work-life balance every day, look at your life on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis. Schedule times to work hard, recharge, renew, play, and engage with your family and friends.

3. IDENTIFY THE SEASONS IN YOUR ORGANIZATION'S WORK FLOW. In nature, there's a season for everything. Spring (planting season) and fall (harvest) are times of extreme work. But there's a slowdown in the summer when plants are growing; and, of course, winter is when farmers do such other things as repair work on house and equipment.

Most industries and organizations work this way, too. They have busy seasons (when they're getting ready for major events or budget times, for instance) and not-so-busy seasons. It might be easy for you to plan the flow of your work life and your home life around these times, not just in terms of when you plan vacations but also in terms of daily work hours. During the slow time, it's okay to leave a little earlier each day if you know you're going to be working long hours once the busy season arrives.

Everyone's rhythm is a little different, but when you find the right one for you and your life, you'll be able to achieve a lot more at work and at home.

4. KEEP IN MIND YOUR FAMILY'S SEASONS, TOO. Of course, you can't base everything on work schedules. There are times when your family's need for you is greater: birth of a new baby, when a child starts school, or when an older parent is having a crisis and needs your care.

At times like these, you will want to put in the family time and make it up when you can be at work. Just as with your work, you can plan for only some of these seasons; other busy seasons—times when a parent is ill, for example—

It's the realization that you are making a difference in the lives of others that lets you let go of the guilt and truly immerse yourself in what you're doing during both seasons.

Here are the ways to rethink the concept of work-life balance and find passion and purpose in both arenas:

1. LET GO OF THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE NOTION. Instead, think purpose and passion. It's true that work-life balance is a topic that seems to be on people's minds. But in many ways a perfectly balanced life is a perfectly tepid life. How much balance do you think Bono has when U2 is on tour? What about an Olympic athlete preparing for a competition? Or the leadership team at Facebook? Probably not much, but their passion and purpose fuel them to work harder and longer with more joy and satisfaction in both work and life.

When your goal is to achieve work-life balance, you'll be constantly disappointed might pop up unexpectedly. You have to be ready to adjust to the season. You have to go where you are needed. If you are worried about work at those times, give some thought to who you might be coaching on the staff to fill in during unexpected absences. But you can take comfort in knowing that there will be a period when you can apply more of yourself to the job.

5. BUILD UP A HARD-WORK BANK ACCOUNT WITH YOUR COMMUNITY. When your community needs you to really push, push hard. (And do it cheerfully.) This way, when you need to slow down the pace or take time off, people will be willing to adjust. Think of it as making deposits into a bank account.

By willingly and happily accepting the challenge of a difficult project or resident or by working long hours to meet an important deadline, you make deposits in the organization's hard-work bank account. When you need to make a withdrawal, whether it's for a family emergency or just a much-needed break, you'll have plenty of goodwill with elected officials, and they won't begrudge you for taking the time off.

6. WHEN YOU'RE AT WORK, REALLY ENGAGE. Fully commit to whatever you're doing at work. Don't complain—being positive goes a long way. And don't feel guilty that you are not at home. Feeling guilty is a recipe for misery and poor performance on the job and unhappiness at home. Commit fully to your season of hard work as you plan for your season of rest and recharging.

When you commit to your season of work, you won't be tempted to watch the clock, dreading each hour that will pass before you finally get to leave work for the day. You'll be more successful at work and feel more fulfilled.

7. WHEN YOU'RE AT HOME, REALLY BE AT HOME. Throw yourself into those precious family relationships. Don't spend family time thinking about work or zoning out in front of the television or computer. It's not about the amount of time we spend with our families. It's about how engaged we are during the time we do have with them.

When you focus on planning your life around the rhythms of work and home, you have to be fully committed to the demands of the specific season. So when you're in a family season, don't constantly check your BlackBerry. Don't take work calls during dinner. Devote as much of yourself as possible to your family.

Use the time that you wouldn't get to spend with them if you were in a work season to do something special. Read to your child each night. Take your family on a surprise weekend trip. When you live your nonwork season to the fullest, you'll be all the more motivated to give 110 percent when you're at work.

What I'm really talking about is making the most of your time however you spend it—of making each and every moment really count. Understanding your rhythms and planning and committing to the seasons of your life may not help you achieve perfect work-life balance. But you will create a life that is more passionate, more productive, and happier. PM

ENDNOTES

1 "Captivate Office Pulse Survey Reveals Men Are Happier Than Women With Their Work-Life Balance," press release, Captivate Network, September 7, 2011, www.marketwatch.com/story/captivate-office-pulse-survey-reveals-men-are-happier-than-women-with-their-work-life-balance-2011-09-07.

JON GORDON is a consultant, speaker, and author of the book, *The Seed: Finding Purpose and Happiness in Life and Work,* Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. The book (Wiley, 2011, ISBN: 978-0-470-88856-8, $22.95, www.JonGordon.com) is available at bookstores or direct from the publisher at 800/225-5945. In Canada, call 800/567-4797.

By Alphonse Gerhardstein and
David Krings, ICMA-CM

UNCOMFORTABLY TRUE POLICE MISCONDUCT CASES

Keys to appropriate methods of resolution

"You can't fight city hall." We all know that saying is totally wrong.

People fight city hall every day, often with civil rights lawsuits. These cases can drain energy and resources as well as depress employee morale. They also can make leaders overly cautious, especially if the local government manager or police chief knows a mistake was made by a public servant.

The plaintiff and local government lawyers usually are on automatic pilot, requiring the local government to fight for 18 months or more before anyone looks up to see what the plaintiff really wants and what action could be taken to solve the problem. By then, the fees of the plaintiff's attorney are so high that a settlement seems barred by that alone. No one can argue that these cases can last way too long.

There is a better way. As a civil rights attorney and a village administrator, respectively, we followed an alternative course in two cases in the community where we were employed. This article reviews the cases and suggests how the model we used can be replicated in other communities.

This model is not appropriate for frivolous cases where the police acted correctly. Those charges need a vigorous defense. This article focuses on cases where something really did go wrong, and it proposes a way to bring those disputes to a swift and honorable conclusion, using a minimum of government resources.

TAKEAWAYS

› A sincere effort by a local government manager to make amends for a public safety situation that went horribly wrong can lead to a far better emotional and financial outcome for all parties involved.

› The openness of a local official to account for such a public situation can reduce bias and build more trust.

Case 1: Drug Dealing Response Causes Harrowing Experience for Family

The village of Lockland, Ohio, is a community of 3,700 lower-income and middle-income residents located in the center of a metropolitan area. Residents enjoy a small-town atmosphere and peaceful lifestyle. When drug dealers set up operations in town, that all changed.

The mayor, council, and residents demanded action. The recently appointed police chief conferred with members of the regional drug task force and independently came up with a plan of action. Here's the story of how a SWAT raid nabbed the wrong people.

Members of the Williams family were sitting quietly in their car waiting for the minister to open their church, Victory Gospel Temple, in Lockland. It was December 4 and time to decorate for Christmas. A white van screeched to a stop in front of the Williams's car. Men with automatic weapons and ski masks jumped from the van, screaming that Donna Williams, her young daughters, and her nephews should get out of their car and lie prone on the cold sidewalk.

Donna and the children were terrified and thought they were being robbed. Eventually the family was permitted—still at gunpoint—to sit on a ledge. After 20 minutes, they were released. They were in disbelief when the men identified themselves as police officers. During the ordeal, all of the family members had expected to be shot.

The police officers on duty that day were functioning as members of the regional drug task force and were following instructions to "detain any person standing on or near" the corner of Locust and Maple. The instructions and the way they were implemented blatantly violated the Fourth Amendment. The family sued.

Several months later, the African-American Williams family sat with their lawyer on one side of a federal courtroom and the Caucasian task force officers, police chiefs, municipal administrators, and defense lawyers assembled on the other side. The U.S. magistrate explained the purpose of mediation. Each side would be permitted to state its position while everyone was in one room, and then the groups would be separated for the actual negotiations.

As village administrator at the time of the mediation, I spoke first. I stood, turned, and faced the Williams family. I explained that I could see my daughters in the faces of the Williams children. I told them that if my daughters had been held at gunpoint by strangers wearing ski masks, I would be outraged and angry at anyone associated with those actions.

I also told them that I was extremely sorry the Williams family had this terrible experience in my village. I did not want any residents subjected to this treatment in the future. I hoped the Williams's would accept my apology. Donna Williams wept as I spoke.

The case settled quickly with agreement on compensation for the family and agreement on a training program to be instituted for the task force to prevent any further violations of the law. For the family members and their legal counsel, the apology was critical to the resolution. It was clear that the village was not going to let it happen again.

Case 2: Harmless Grandma Wrongfully Arrested

Jennifer Starks is an elderly grandmother. In May 2009, Starks was called to help her daughter who was being forced to leave the apartment she shared with a friend. It was late at night. The young grandkids needed to get to bed. Starks

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MISCONDUCT CASES

arrived to pick up her grandchildren about the same time the police responded to complaints.

Without investigation, the officers physically arrested Starks. She spent her first night ever in jail. The charges were promptly dismissed by the prosecutor. Starks threatened to sue. She said she wanted fair compensation, training for the officers, and a meeting with them. As Lockland administrator, I agreed.

The case was settled before filing, and the agreement included training for the officers and a personal meeting that included Starks, the police officers, and the attorneys. During that meeting, she explained to the officers how she felt while being arrested and held in jail, being falsely charged, and having her car impounded.

That opportunity to meet in a respectful fashion with the officers was more valuable to her than the money. The village settled the case for less money by identifying the real goal of the plaintiff and offering both economic and noneconomic terms for settlement.

The Trouble (and Opportunity) With Lawsuits

Many people have no political or economic power. Among them are mentally ill prisoners, discharged workers, inner-city African Americans, and others of different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Lawsuits may be the only way to secure their rights.

But lawsuits are limiting. A jury trial ends with a verdict that allows the jury to take only one action if it finds liability—awarding money to the plaintiff. An injunction claim can be more comprehensive, but an injunction puts the local government under a court order. This is intrusive and is often resented by rank-and-file officers and police administrators.

Lawsuits as traditionally pursued are simply one way to solve a problem and not a good one at that. Some lawsuits have no merit, and they need to run their course and be vigorously defended. But often the issues are clear and wrongs were indeed committed.

Apologies, training, policy changes, plaques, and dialogue can all be considered to make sure the plaintiff is heard and the government expends only the appropriate amount of time and resources.

In those instances, monetary damages can be minimized if the parties explore ways to ensure that the problem will not be repeated. That might be an apology; that might be targeted training; or that might be a face-to-face dialogue pursued under ground rules of respect and civility.

Other Examples

Symbolic or noneconomic terms have been parts of settlements in many cases:

Unarmed man shot at crash site. An officer confronts a drunken driver at the scene of a one-car crash. With a single command, he orders the driver to turn around, show his hands, and get down on the ground. When the suspect turns, the officer shoots him in the face. The settlement includes training on threat assessment, implementation of performance evaluations, and better screening of officers.

Corpse abuse at the morgue. A county coroner allows a commercial photographer to enter the morgue and photograph bodies after placing props on them. The settlement includes a formal, written apology from the county commissioners, complete destruction of all images and copies of any of the photos, and the installation of a plaque at the morgue entrance that states, "The bodies entrusted to the county coroner are sacred and shall be treated with the utmost respect."

Protecting battered women. In two cases, police departments were accused of failing to protect battered women. The settlements included training and also memorials placed near the department entrance. Examples of the memorials can be found at www.gbfirm.com/thompson_photos.php or at www.gbfirm.com/culberson_photos.php.

Outcome Options

Not every lawsuit should be settled. In the majority of cases, public servants do remarkably well in extremely trying circumstances. But, occasionally, mistakes are made. Although not every lawsuit has merit, some do. In those cases, the parties should sit down early and consider more than money as tools for resolution.

Apologies, training, policy changes, plaques, and dialogue can all be considered to make sure the plaintiff is heard and the government expends only the appropriate amount of time and resources. PM


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SPRINKLE
HUT

ZBB IS BACK

TAKEAWAYS

Readers of this article will learn

› The three questions to consider when deciding if zero-base budgeting (ZBB) is right for your community.

› Who is using ZBB and why?

› What are the alternatives to ZBB?

When using zero-base budgeting (ZBB), a local government builds a budget from the ground up, starting from zero. Although the apex of ZBB's popularity in the late 1970s is long past, there has been renewed interest in ZBB in today's environment of fiscal constraint, not least because the "zero" in zero-base budgeting sends a powerful message that taxes and spending will be held in check.

The time lapse between ZBB's zenith and the present as well as the political rhetoric surrounding ZBB have obscured the theory and practice of it. The purpose of this article is to offer clarification on this sometimes controversial and misunderstood budgeting method.

What Is "Textbook" ZBB?

ZBB promises to move the organization away from incremental budgeting, where last year's budget is the starting point. Instead, the starting point becomes zero, with the implication that past patterns of spending are no longer taken as a given.

To deliver on this promise, the organization is first divided into decision units—the lowest level at which budget decisions are made (for example, a division). Managers in each decision unit then prepare a detailed description and evaluation of all activities it performs, including alternatives to current service delivery methods and the spending plans necessary to achieve the decision unit's goals.

ZBB IS BACK!

IF THE ORGANIZATION HAS GOOD EXPERIENCE WITH PERFORMANCE MEASURES AND UNDERSTANDS THE RELATION BETWEEN COSTS AND SERVICE LEVELS AND BETWEEN SERVICE LEVELS AND IMPACT, IT COULD MAKE MORE EFFECTIVE USE OF ZBB.

This information is used to create a number of decision packages, which show marginal spending-level differences that represent varying levels of effort and cost. There should be at least three decision packages for each decision unit, although there could be as many as 10 or even more.

In addition to the detailed information on inputs (dollars, personnel, and so forth) needed to provide the service, decision packages include performance measures that express the impact of the package on service levels. After the decision packages are completed, they are gathered up and ranked from top to bottom within the organizational unit in which the decision unit resides.

In a local government, for example, the head of a department might gather the decision packages from the divisions of the department and then rank them all together. After the packages are ranked, the ranking is then used by such central budget authorities as budget office, chief executive, and governing body as the basis for making allocations. Each department, for instance, would submit its suggested ranking to the chief executive, who would use those rankings to formulate a recommended budget for review by the governing body.

Who Is Using ZBB and Why?

ZBB's public sector heyday was in the 1970s and early 1980s. Since that time, interest declined, but ZBB is now making a kind of resurgence. A 2011 Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) survey shows that an increasing number of leading public budget practitioners (44 percent of all respondents) are considering ZBB, and just over 20 percent of those surveyed (representing both small and large governments) say they are now using ZBB, at least in part.

Compared with the number of governments using ZBB just before the onset of the worst of the financial impacts of the 2007–2009 recession, this represents an increase of more than 50 percent in the number of governments that say they are using at least some elements of ZBB. There has been renewed interest in ZBB in today's environment of fiscal constraint, not least because the zero in zero-base budgeting is a powerful symbol of public officials' commitment to fiscal austerity.

It is important to note, however, that GFOA's research found that "textbook" ZBB is extremely rare. GFOA's survey found only one government that reported using textbook ZBB.

If Not Textbook ZBB, What Kind of ZBB Are Governments Using?

The label of ZBB has been applied to budgeting methods that borrow elements of pure ZBB but do not conform to the theoretical ideal. According to GFOA's research, those describing themselves as using ZBB tend to fall into two major categories.

The first group, which we will call zero-line-item budgeting, focuses on determining if inputs are reasonable given the expected output. This method seeks to create greater transparency in how line items are arrived at by requiring detailed justifications of line-item requests in lieu of pointing to prior years' allocations as the justification.

The second group, which we will refer to as service-level budgeting, presents decision makers with different service levels and asks decision makers to choose between them, thus focusing on the question of which level of service should be funded within a program or department.

In service-level budgeting, departments concentrate on presenting decision packages and service levels with associated metrics, while there is less emphasis on detailed input estimates. GFOA's survey showed that governments using these practical methods of ZBB tended to be satisfied with their experience.

Can ZBB Be Useful for My Government?

Here are three questions to consider when deciding if ZBB is right for you.[1] Additional questions are discussed in GFOA's research report, *Zero-Base Budgeting: Modern Experiences and Current Perspectives,* available at www.gfoa.org/downloads/GFOAZeroBasedBudgeting.pdf.

What is ZBB replacing? If the current system of budgeting is not working—for example, if it is incremental, relies on across-the-board budget cuts, or does not recognize that service impacts are sometimes an inevitable trade-off for budget cuts—then ZBB could represent an improvement.

Is performance data available to help make different funding levels meaningful? If the organization has good experience with performance measures and understands the relation between costs and service levels and between service levels and impact, it could make more effective use of ZBB. Also, management must place much importance on using data to drive decisions.

How much work will be required to implement ZBB? The availability of budget staff to develop forms and training for ZBB is crucial. Also important are the analytical skills and capacity of managers to engage in ZBB analysis. The availability of these resources needs to be compared with the time available and the goals for ZBB. If the organization is facing a large budget deficit and needs to come to a solution in a short time, ZBB may not be the answer.

What Are the Alternatives to ZBB?

ZBB is clearly not for everyone. Here are the three major alternatives:

Priority budgeting. Under this system, the government first determines how much revenue it has available, then identifies the community's most important priorities, and then allocates resources to the priorities rather than directly to departments. Programs are ranked according to how well they align with the priorities.

This form of budgeting focuses on determining which services the government should offer in order to get the most value from the tax dollar. Hence, it too is a nonincremental form of budgeting—an alternative to ZBB.

Program review. Program review is a planning method used to examine, outside of the budget process, how a program is provided. It can answer several important questions, for example: What services should we be in the business of providing? For those services we do offer, what level of service should we provide? Are we providing that level of service efficiently?

Program review answers these questions outside the pressures of the budget process, and thus may be more successful than ZBB in finding real alternatives.

Target-based budgeting (TBB). Unlike ZBB, TBB makes no attempt to re-examine base spending. Rather, each decision unit is given a target spending amount (for example, 90 percent of what was spent last year) and is asked to submit a budget for that amount.

The total target for the organization is necessarily less than what is affordable. This is because the difference between the target and what is affordable is used to fund additional activities through decision packages. TBB is a significant improvement on incremental budgeting but is much less intensive than ZBB. PM

ENDNOTES

1 Questions adapted from Frank D. Draper and Bernard T. Pitsvada, "ZBB–Looking Back after Ten Years," *Public Administration Review* 41, no. 1 (January–February 1981), pp. 76–83.

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RESOURCES

To learn more about ZBB and GFOA's research findings, read GFOA's free research report "Zero-Base Budgeting: Modern Experiences and Current Perspectives" available, along with GFOA's other research reports, at www.gfoaconsulting.org/researchreports.

BY JOSEPH THOMPSON

THE NEW NORMAL

Evaluating Operational Efficiency and Effectiveness

Local governments are grappling with unprecedented operational and organizational challenges. They are addressing precipitous budget shortfalls through deep program and service reductions. Nontargeted, across-the-board reductions are being implemented.

The prevailing public and political sentiment is that fewer layers of bureaucracy equate to improved efficiency and operations. On its surface, this assertion seems somewhat sensible—trim an oversized bureaucracy and then become a more efficient and effective government.

As simple and straightforward as it sounds, the truth is that arbitrarily reducing programs and services will, in most instances, encumber operations and exacerbate existing inefficiencies.

The new normal expected of local government is operational efficiency and doing more with less. To achieve this new normal, managers must realistically and thoroughly evaluate their departments, programs, and services to identify obstructions to optimal performance. What follows is a typical management problem broken down into the steps of a formal evaluation.

Five Attributes of an Effective Management Evaluation[1]

1. Criteria. Criteria refer to the rules that govern the activity being evaluated. Criteria can include but are not limited to (1) local and state regulations, codes, and statutes, (2) adopted ordinances and resolutions, (3) internal policies and procedures, (4) promulgated administrative regulations or decrees, (5) contractual requirements, (6) memoranda of agreement or understanding, and (7) best practices.

Hypothetical example: *Personnel regulations require the employee in the property maintenance and housing inspector position to be certified through the American Association of Code Enforcement (AACE).*

2. Condition. What is the problem or issue with, or the status of, the activity being evaluated? The condition can be established through various sources of information, which can include but are not limited to (1) employee interviews, statements, and surveys, (2) direct observations, and (3) document review or analysis, including relevant data, reports, and files.

Hypothetical example: *During an interview, the code enforcement supervisor stated that the property maintenance and housing inspector has been with the department for six years and was promoted to the inspector position eight months ago but has not received AACE certification. The supervisor noted that the inspector had a "construction background" and would eventually become certified.*

3. Cause. What action or inaction brought about the condition? The cause be can established through the same sources of information as in no. 2, above, Condition.

Hypothetical example: *When asked why the inspector was not required to receive AACE certification right away, the supervisor noted that the inspector was an internal hire, plus they needed this individual to "hit the ground running" because of the increase in housing cases. The supervisor explained that, because the position was filled internally, the employee was not required to gain the certification immediately. According to the supervisor, this rule was a longstanding practice in the department, but it was "not written down anywhere."*

4. Effect. What is the impact of the condition being evaluated? In other words, what are the actual or potential consequences of the existing condition? The effect will reveal the problem or issue, which can be a myriad of variables, depending on the scope of the evaluation. Because the effect is not always readily apparent, it is incumbent upon the individual leading the evaluation to develop and carry out a thorough analysis.

Hypothetical example: *The impact of the inspector's lack of certification could endanger future occupants in homes that are inspected and determined to be habitable and free of potential life and safety issues. The jurisdiction could also be liable in the event the inspector does not recognize a potential life and safety issue that results in serious injury or death to an individual.*

4. Accountability. Who is responsible for the condition being evaluated? Individuals responsible can include but are not limited to senior staff, department directors, and program managers.

Hypothetical example: *The code enforcement director is responsible for the supervisors and for verifying that the departmental personnel requirements are met.*

After the five attributes are established, it is important to develop a recommendation. The recommendation should explain the corrective action needed to remedy or address the problem or issue identified. The recommendation should be realistic and actionable. PM

ENDNOTES

1 Criteria, condition, cause, and effect are elements used for developing an audit "finding" that is based on generally accepted government auditing standards (GAGAS); the accountability attribute is not from GAGAS. See *Government Auditing Standards* (The Yellow Book) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Accountability Office).

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BY DAVID EICHENTHAL

CONSIDERING HOW TO MEASURE THE IMPACT OF 311/CRM TECHNOLOGY

Customer relationship management (CRM) technology systems are in place in more than 100 cities and counties in the United States,[1] and 311/CRM systems are increasingly becoming a critical point of contact between local government and residents. Although many local governments have begun to use 311/CRM to drive larger reforms, the core benefit of 311/CRM is enhanced customer service. In theory, successful implementation of 311/CRM should lead to an increase in resident satisfaction with the level of customer service delivered by the local government.

In reality, it is difficult to prove or disprove the hypothesis. Very few of the cities that have implemented a 311/CRM system have done any sort of comprehensive testing of public opinion before or after system implementation. Many cities, however, have conducted general citizen satisfaction surveys prior to and following 311/CRM implementation. The findings of these surveys, while not definitive, offer at least a preliminary approach to understanding the impact of 311/CRM.

A forthcoming paper in ICMA's *The Municipal Year Book 2012* uses data from citizen satisfaction surveys in seven cities—Denver, Houston, Kansas City, Minneapolis, New York, Philadelphia, and San Antonio—to explore the impact of 311/CRM. On the basis of an analysis of the survey data from these jurisdictions, the author identifies three key findings regarding the relation between the establishment of a local government 311/CRM system and improved customer service for citizens.

CITIZEN SATISFACTION RATINGS INDICATE 311/CRM TECHNOLOGY IS A POPULAR SERVICE.

Finding 1. Citizen satisfaction surveys demonstrate that citizens will transition to 311/CRM as a point of contact with their local government. Citizen survey data begin to provide an answer as to just how much 311/CRM has penetrated the civic psyche of local residents. Survey data suggest that 311/CRM may have become the principal point of contact between some local governments and their residents.

Finding 2. Citizen satisfaction ratings indicate 311/CRM technology is a popular service. Once residents discover it, most see 311/CRM as a service that works. Citizen survey data from the seven jurisdictions showed that the majority of residents gave positive ratings of their respective local government's 311/CRM services.

Finding 3. It is less clear whether there is a relation between the existence of 311/CRM service and citizen ratings of overall quality of city services. Call agents in a 311/CRM system provide information and process service requests for citizens, but they do not actually fulfill the service requests. That responsibility resides with local government service departments. Therefore, residents satisfied with 311/CRM are not necessarily satisfied with the overall quality of city services.

Theoretically, though, a combination of improved customer service and better tracking of citizen service requests through the 311/CRM system should help improve service delivery from the service departments. In the absence of specific surveys designed to measure the validity of this hypothesis, the author used three different methodologies to review existing citizen survey data to explore the relation. All three of the methodologies yielded little conclusive evidence of whether a relation does exist between a 311/CRM system and citizen satisfaction with the overall quality of services.

Conclusions

All of these findings point to the need for greater research and analysis. As noted earlier, the best way to test the hypothetical link between 311 and perceptions of overall customer service quality would be through a series of pre- and post-implementation surveys.

More local governments moving forward with 311/CRM implementation creates an opportunity to conduct detailed research that examines the impact of 311/CRM on overall citizen perception of local government by examining citizen satisfaction levels both before and after implementation of 311/CRM. The need to do so is real.

If, in fact, 311/CRM service can influence citizens' perceptions of their local government and can realistically be expected to enhance the overall local government customer service experience, that fact would add an important arrow to the quiver of arguments to support its widespread adoption and use. PM

ENDNOTES

1 "Call 311: Connecting Citizens to Local Government," Data Report, ICMA's Local Government Customer Service Systems Survey, 2007.

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BY AUSTIN ABRAHAM

NOW THE BUDGET IS BALANCED, WHAT ABOUT THE EMPLOYEES?

Like many managers your focus has been on balancing the budget in the most severe recession in decades. You have been reorganizing, reengineering, and reinventing your government. And because you have salvaged your organization from the brink of financial disaster, at least for another year, you are feeling pretty good about your efforts. Surely your organization's employees are feeling the same satisfaction? Don't count on it!

Anything But Balanced

The last thing most government employees are feeling right now is satisfaction, accomplishment, or success. Although the budget may be balanced, employees may not be. In governments across the country, employees feel unappreciated, insecure, and confused—anything but balanced.

Remember when we touted (and really meant) that employees are our most important asset? In the aftermath of the 2008 recession, with its ruthless budget cutting and staff reductions, it is time to remind ourselves that governments do not run on balanced budgets. Governments run on the skills, efforts, and dedication of employees.

A balanced budget is important, of course, but a balanced budget is neatly footed columns on a spreadsheet. Waving a balanced spreadsheet at a public meeting accomplishes nothing except perhaps some self-aggrandizement for those doing the waving.

A balanced budget performs no work that night at the water treatment plant, the next morning in the administrative offices, or in the afternoon when public safety crews race to the scene of a fire.

Your budget document does not come to work each day with education, experience, creativity, dedication, or a sense of community service. Nor can it tell a joke, share a smile, or give a word of encouragement. There is no "pitching in," no "finding more efficient ways," no "let me take on that new challenge" in a budget document. But these attributes do arrive daily with employees.

For all the fighting for a balanced budget, we may have risked as much as we have gained. After manhandling finances and staffing levels into a semblance of balance against the rising tide of spending of the past 30 years, it should be no surprise that employees now feel manhandled as well.

Is it only a dream that we once promoted training, education, and job enrichment? Perhaps we have focused so laboriously and for so long on balancing budgets that the neatly footed columns have become our holy grail of management. Have we forgotten the reasons we were taught and mentored to value employees? In response to employee concerns, have we silently, or openly, adopted the mantra, "If you still have a job, be grateful and don't complain"?

In this age of layoffs and restructurings, we should not lose sight of what has been learned over the past 100 years about managing people. Although no management theory captures all the truths of managing people, it is a good time to refresh our understanding of Maslow's hierarchy, Herzberg's hygiene and motivation factors, the insights of Drucker and Blanchard, the teachings of faith, and our own intuition about good leadership.

Remember the Human Ledger

The next great challenge for governments is nurturing back to health the vibrancy of the workforce. This cannot be accomplished by the same "force fit" of a square peg in a round hole that was used to balance budgets. Managers should reacquaint themselves and their organizations with the human side of organizations, with the same zeal evidenced in balancing the budget.

Like investors in an uncertain stock market, employees are on the sidelines, hesitant to invest, reluctant to speak up, and cowering in self-preservation. The human ledger must also be balanced for the sake of the communities we serve. We are kidding ourselves and selling employees short if we think this is not also our job. PM

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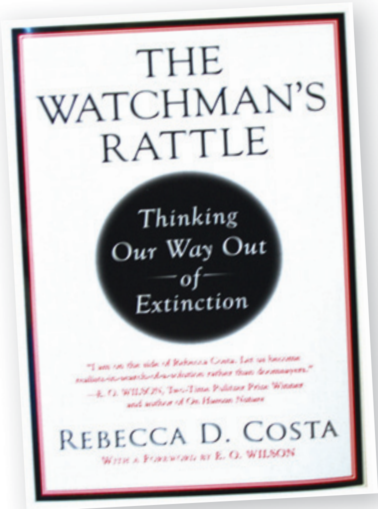
BY RAY GOSACK, ICMA-CM

A WAKE-UP CALL TO ACTION

The Watchman's Rattle, by Rebecca D. Costa, Vanguard Press, 2010, 268 pages, $26.95 U.S. hardcover.



Sociobiologist Rebecca Costa offers new ways of analyzing and solving the gridlock that hinders solutions to today's complex problems. The indecisiveness of today has been present in many societies over many centuries, and Costa uses these examples effectively. The challenge is keeping our society from going the way of the Mayan, Khmer, and Roman empires.

Evolution and the ability of our brains play a pivotal role in solving complex problems like debt crisis, energy policy, education reform, climate change, and terrorism. The uneven rate of change between the slow evolution of our brains and the rapid rate at which societies advance eventually causes progress to come to a standstill.

We reach a cognitive threshold when we're unable to think our way out of large, highly complex problems. Problems get passed from one generation to the next. Gridlock ensues, and then we start substituting beliefs for facts and knowledge. If not corrected, the society collapses.

Society is hindered in solving its difficult, complex problems because of "supermemes." A supermeme is widely accepted information, thoughts, feelings, or behavior that's a response to accelerating complexity. Costa has identified five supermemes that she believes keep us from solving our complex problems:

- Irrational opposition is the act of rejecting, criticizing, misrepresenting, and resisting rationale solutions. Opposition becomes the new substitute for advocacy.
- Personalization of blame is foisting the responsibility for complex problems onto the shoulders of individuals. The search for someone to blame is always successful.
- Counterfeit correlation makes beliefs appear to be legitimate scientific facts. We rely on consensus to determine basic facts. Counterfeit correlations make it impossible to separate facts from conjecture, opinion, theory, and authentic correlations. We simply don't have the time to check every claim.
- Silo thinking is the compartmentalized thinking and behavior that prohibit the collaboration needed to address highly complex problems. My vantage point is right and yours is wrong!
- Extreme economics occurs when such simple principles in business as profit and loss become the litmus test for determining the value of people and priorities. Profitability becomes the most powerful barometer of legitimacy.

To overcome these supermemes, we must restore the balance between beliefs and knowledge. Both are necessary in any society. A society unable to solve its most critical problems moves away from facts and knowledge and begins relying on beliefs. Facts and knowledge are powerful vaccines that protect us from surrendering to irrational beliefs.

Putting supermemes in their place also relies on combating conventional thinking. We must engage new ways of thinking and challenging assumptions. Strategic solutions are needed; we should avoid being mired in tactical, short-term solutions.

Single mitigations aren't powerful. The United States prevailed in World War II because many mitigations were implemented concurrently. The war's outcome would have been much different if our leaders had tried only one solution at a time. Parallel incrementalism works because it forces mitigations to address systemic issues rather than treat individual symptoms as serial mitigations do.

Insight is evolution's slow correction that allows us to make connections that previously eluded us. Insight allows us to identify patterns among seemingly disparate trends. Insights are solutions that come to us suddenly and give us an overwhelming feeling that the answer is correct.

We increase our probability of insights through brain fitness which is achieved with mental exercise, diet, and physical exercise. Insight is the human brain's special weapon against complex problems. According to Costa, the best environment for achieving insights is working in small groups of four to nine people.

The Watchman's Rattle is a wake-up call to action. It uses the lessons of history and biology and old-fashioned common sense to alert us to what lies ahead if we don't heed the warning signs. We must counteract the effects of supermemes with new ways of thinking and creating insights. An inability to think our way out of extinction will allow our complex problems to eventually doom us like past civilizations. PM

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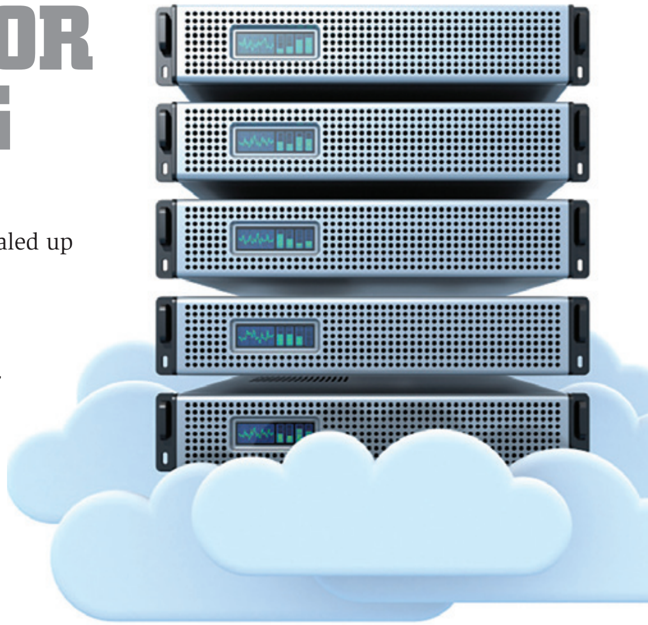
BY RAYAN COUTINHO

CLOUD COMPUTING OR CLOUDY COMPUTING

Are the cost savings worth it?



Local governments and organizations are responding to the poor economy and seeking tools to cut costs. One such tool is the service of cloud computing. Simply put, the goal of cloud computing is the delivery of computation, software, data access, and storage services as a service over a network—the Internet—rather than as a product. Most commonly, the service provider delivers software applications (word processing, accounting, e-mail) using the Internet, and these applications are accessed through a web browser like Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox, and Opera.

The client's software and data are stored on remote servers. This author believes that, as with any new technology, readers should evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of this tool and not make a decision based solely on the projected cost savings.

Cloud computing has these advantages:

- It provides a potential for cost savings related to the purchase of hardware, licenses for software, and network management.
- It provides an ability to access the system remotely and from a myriad of devices, including laptops, smartphones, tablets, and netbooks. Your office is always available through the use of a web browser; thus, cloud computing is independent of device and location.
- In situations involving power loss, including tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes, your data is stored safely in secure data centers instead of a server closet in your office.
- Updates to software and hardware are easier to implement, as they can be done at a single location and can be available to all users simultaneously.
- Data storage needs can be scaled up or down easily.
- It provides a potential for improved local computer performance, including faster system boots, because fewer programs and processes load into memory.
- It provides a potential for improved format compatibility across users' applications and operating systems, and there is no worry about whether a document was created in Microsoft Word 2010 and is being used by someone who has Microsoft Office XP.
- It facilitates group collaboration on documents so that several users can work on the same document and projects.

On the other hand, cloud computing has these disadvantages:

- Recent newspaper articles about hacking and security breaches related to clouds indicate that the services may not be as secure as they are marketed to be.
- There appears to be a lack of standards when using and implementing cloud computing. Some vendors use open-source software and others use proprietary software.
- The user loses control over the network and data, and a dependency is created on a third-party vendor.
- Migrating to a different vendor can become difficult, especially if the vendor uses proprietary software.
- Physical location of hardware and software in remote locations can make site inspections and audits difficult.
- Access to files is completely dependent on Internet connectivity.
- Compliance with federal and state laws (HIPAA, Public Records Act) may become more complicated.
- Risk of data loss caused by improper backups or system failures is outside of the user's control.
- The success of the organization is tied to the financial health of a third party.
- Potential for customization and innovation of information technology for specific needs is diminished.
- Problems with the integration of peripherals like printers have been discussed in online articles.

If you are considering cloud computing, I highly recommend a thorough investigation of the risks involved. I also strongly encourage you to negotiate service-level agreements with the appropriate representations, warranties, and covenants, together with the necessary service-level guarantees, and to formulate an exit procedure should things not work out as planned. PM

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BY BETHANY RUBIN HENDERSON AND ROD WOOD, ICMA-CM

CAN'T AFFORD TO HIRE NEW TALENT THIS YEAR? WRONG!

You can't afford not to

Do you think that budget cuts, declining revenues, and the lingering recession mean you can—or should—put off developing your local government's future workforce? Think again. The statistics speak for themselves.

Local governments need more highly educated and highly skilled workers than the private sector does, but governments pay them less. Two-thirds of local government employees (compared with one-third of private sector workers) are knowledge workers and are valued for their ability to act and communicate with knowledge of a specific subject area, and nearly half have college degrees (compared with one-quarter in the private sector).[1] Yet, local governments compensate their workers about 4 percent less than the private sector. If you ignore retirement benefits and look just at the wage penalty, that figure jumps up to 9.5 to 12 percent less.[2]

The local government workforce is aging and on its way out the door; 63.5 percent of local government employees nationwide are older than 40.[3] On average, they are five to seven years older than their private sector counterparts.[4] The majority of senior-level staff (program managers, administrators, knowledge workers) either could retire today or will become retirement eligible soon.[5]

Apparently morale for senior-level staff is tanking under the strain of having to do so much more with so much less. Between May 2010 and May 2011, 25 percent of retirement-eligible state and local government employees moved up their retirement dates, a rate more than double the prior year.[6]

Local governments have minimal bench strength, at best. For decades, top young talent has shunned local government work. Since the 1980s, survey after survey has shown the vast majority of college students view government work as full of inflexible red tape, a dead end, inefficient, and bureaucratic. They see no opportunity in government to be part of innovative, creative, and challenging learning environments, to quickly assume leadership roles, or to collaborate as partners with equally bright peers and mentors—job characteristics that our youngest workers – millennials – prize particularly highly.

Recession-driven layoffs are now forcing out the few highly skilled young workers that communities have. Enrollment in MPA and MPP programs dropped last year for the first time in a decade,[7] and many graduates with MPA and MPP degrees now head for nonprofit jobs without giving government work so much as a passing thought.

Fellowship Programs

The good news is that today's top young talent is eager for meaningful, community-oriented work. Many 18- to 30-year-olds now report that doing good for society is as important to them as doing well financially.[8]

Not nearly as reflexively antigovernment as their predecessors (a trend documented by the Pew Research Center, the New America Foundation, and Harvard's Institute of Politics), 37 percent of Americans age 18 to 30 actually expressed affirmative interest in government jobs in a 2010 Gallup poll.[9]

Fellowship programs let local governments take advantage of these trends by offering a cost-effective way to try out new talent and get a valuable work product in the process, without the long-term expense of new hires or the need to increase the number of full-time employees (FTEs).

Because fellowships are time limited and perceived as elite by participants, they appeal to the best and brightest—the very people you want working for you and your residents deserve to have working for them. When Fellows are in your office full time, they can take on meaningful roles in long-term projects.

Need a surgical strike? ICMA's Local Government Management Fellows lets any ICMA member community bring on a recent master's graduate to apprentice full time for two years. Alumni often progress into local government manager roles.

Need a whole SWAT team? City Hall Fellows deploys a group of recent college graduates to a single city or to a regional cluster of communities for one year.

Fellows serve as special project assistants to senior administrators. Simultaneously, they spend more than 300 hours studying the real politics of how that city or county works, through case studies, site visits, workshops, and hands-on, pro bono consulting projects for city agencies. Data show that more than half of alumni remain in local public service.

For a relatively low cost (less than a regular FTE and without any long-term commitment), fellowships offer both immediate, high-quality work product and a proven way to attract new talent. **PM**


BETHANY RUBIN HENDERSON is the founder and executive director of City Hall Fellows. To learn more about this program and how to get Fellows deployed to your community, visit www.cityhallfellows.org. **ROD WOOD,** ICMA-CM, is an ICMA Legacy Leader and current interim city manager, Indian Wells, California (rjwood@rjwoodassociates.com). To learn more about ICMA's Local Government Management Fellows program, visit icma.org/en/icma/career_network/career_development/lgmf_fellows.

ENDOTES

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5 *Survey Findings: State and Local Government Workforce: 2011 Realities* (Washington, D.C.: Center for State & Local Government Excellence, May 2011), www.slge.org/vertical/Sites/%7BA260E1DF-5AEE-459D-84C4-876EFE1E4032%7D/uploads/11-220_CSLGE_Workforce2011_Realities_rev.pdf.

6 2009–2010 saw a 2.5 percent drop in first-time enrollments in public administration and related programs; see Nathan E. Bell, "Graduate Enrollment & Degrees 2000–2010" (Washington, D.C.: Council of Graduate Schools, September 2011), www.cgsnet.org/portals/0/pdf/R_ED2010.pdf. The 2011 NASPAA Annual Program Enrollment and Degree-Awarded Survey also shows a drop in both overall enrollment in MPA and MPP programs and degrees awarded between 2009 and 2010.

7 Pew Research Center, *Millennials: A Portrait of Generation Next* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2010, http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change.pdf; Peter Levine et al., *The Millennial Pendulum: A New Generation of Voters and the Prospects for a Political Realignment* (Washington, D.C.: New America Foundation, Next Social Contract Initiative February 2008), www.womenscolleges.org/files/pdfs/Millennial_Pendulum_Feb08.pdf.

8 Pew Research Center. *Millennials*; Levine et al., *The Millennial Pendulum*; Institute of Politics, *Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward Politics and Public Service*, 17th ed. (Cambridge: Harvard University, March 2010), www.iop.harvard.edu/var/ezp_site/storage/fckeditor/file/100307_IOP_Spring_10_Report.pdf.

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BY MIKE CONDUFF, ICMA-CM

A GREAT RETREAT!

Capture a retreat's full value!

You hit the jackpot! All the planning, pre-work, and attention to logistics paid off and the annual council retreat was a resounding success. The new personality profiles were a big hit, and, in fact, the council asked that their descriptors be located at their workstations as reminders of their importance in communication.

Thanks to an excellent facilitator, all the elected members came home with a more complete understanding of their roles in the governance process, and, as a special bonus, the group successfully addressed a handful of challenging community and organizational issues. You and your staff were fully prepared and garnered significant accolades for your performance.

Now, with the retreat weekend behind you, you take a deep breath and get ready to finally get back to some of those vital things you have been putting off while making sure the retreat came off without a hitch.

Not So Fast!

Several key staff members were at the retreat and saw the achievements and the council's hard work firsthand, but most members of your organization did not attend. Because their professional futures are also impacted, it makes sense to quickly convey to the broader team the sense of success, energy, and cohesiveness that was achieved.

A timely organizational communication of some sort is absolutely in order, whether it is in person or by podcast, blog, e-mail, or good old staff memo. Remember, if they don't know what really happened, they will make it up (and generally not in the most positive light). This additional immediate investment will pay big dividends in terms of the organization capturing the positive momentum created by its leaders.

While you're at it, borrow a valuable process from military commanders and convene an AAR (after action review) with your core team within the first week you are back, before the pressures of the daily grind cause the glow to fade. Capture what went well, what especially resonated with the council, and what needs to be tweaked for next year.

What new insights about individuals, teams, and each other did you gain? Also, be sure to capture the AAR logistical learnings in writing and keep them handy for next year. That time will be here in the blink of an eye, and being able to quickly review what worked and what needs to be modified will get you ahead of the curve next time around. In fact, if your future retreat schedule is sufficiently set, even within range of a few weeks, go ahead right now and get on the facilitator's tentative calendar and put a soft hold on the meeting space.

Ask the facilitator to weigh in on the AAR issues. Facilitators come into contact with dozens of elected officials from multiple jurisdictions in many different venues throughout the year and, even while observing client confidentiality, can help you decipher behaviors and comments. If you are comfortable doing so, this is also a great time to ask the facilitator for personal feedback. "What advice do you have for me?" is a great question.

Another session convened soon afterward should be used to delegate quick follow-up actions to the appropriate departments and individuals. Councilmembers will remember their key issues and any broad direction given, so be sure to have a process to provide feedback to them on what you are doing. This sends the correct message that you place high value on their participation and involvement. Any low-hanging fruit should be quickly harvested and the hard-to-reach stuff put into process.

AFTER RETREAT CHECKLIST:

1. Communicate results to the whole organization.
2. Evaluate the event as well as event logistics.
3. Schedule next year's event, at least tentatively.
4. Debrief the facilitator.
5. Harvest low-hanging fruit.
6. Delegate follow-up activities.
7. Reprioritize plans made earlier, if necessary.
8. Provide council with feedback.
9. Use what was learned.

Now is also the time to do any appropriate resource reprioritization. Especially in these challenging times, there is little or no organizational slack, so if the retreat (as retreats almost always do) resulted in additional outcomes, be sure to let people know what can be shifted. It is far better to do the critical things well and some things not at all instead of doing everything poorly.

Be sure to provide elected officials with synopses of these actions. They will appreciate knowing that their time was well spent and valued appropriately, and they will be much more likely to be willing to invest in additional sessions in the future.

Remember Your Reminders

Finally, leverage your success with appropriately frequent reminders of the retreat that are directed to the council as well as staff. "Remember at the retreat when we agreed . . ." or "Recall that my personality profile says I love analysis, so bear with me while I . . ." gives everyone a sense of connectedness back to the event and the process. Timely reminders will keep replenishing that original retreat jackpot. PM

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BY MARK TALLMAN

HUMOROUS THEN? NO. HUMOROUS NOW? YOU BET!

Why dog lovers hated me

I was hired in 2009 by the Kechi, Kansas, governing body for strategic planning and economic development purposes and to better Kechi's chances of becoming more self-sufficient and diversifying its property tax base, which is 97 percent residential.

In March 2009, during the three days it took me to relocate to Kansas from Michigan, the state of Kansas and especially my new hometown took its turn in line for a hard economic hit, with the council needing to refocus resources quickly.

March is the time to start the next year's budget process, and 2010 was going to be special. Property owners were not paying their taxes on the huge sewer, water, and gas projects that had been put in place in the recent past.

Also, new revenues from the two dozen new homes that were usually built each year had ceased, and those numbers were anticipated to remain at near zero for the coming two, three, or four years.

Thus, from being an economic developer I morphed into a city administrator charged with recommending actions to make certain Kechi had the money to meet two payrolls prior to tax receipts coming in.

I am proud of Kechi's mayor, council, and employees, whom I had hardly gotten to know when we first started working together on the budget, for taking on the challenge of reining in expenses, putting off the wants, focusing on the needs, and working without when those needs were focused on essentials. We made it through 2009 while literally zeroing all the funds.

The Problem

But there remained expenses that kept dogging me as I tried to better understand the city's public safety budget. Focus centered on the K-9 unit. Several years before I arrived, Kechi had acquired a K-9 drug dog. When the donated dog, a donated civilian Tahoe vehicle that the dog rode in, an intense out-of-town training regimen, and associated costs came under the financial microscope, facts came to light.

During the review of the K-9 program, the dog's handler coincidently(?) left the public safety department, and it was discovered the dog had been on a daily dose of a life-saving drug for its entire life, had visited the emergency pet vet more than once, and the generous veterinarian was not able to donate all services as was first understood.

It was three weeks until the next council meeting, when the disposition of the dog would be decided. I already had no fewer than five law enforcement agencies of different authorities come to look at the dog for their potential use. Some stayed a few minutes; some spent more time with the dog. These experts considered the dog a pet!

I checked with each councilmember to see whether I could find this dog a home in our town, which had provided the funds for a K-9 drug unit in the first place. I received a consensus to look about for a suitable home prior to the council meeting and the council's final decision on the matter. I sent out a few inquiring e-mails.

I then faced pandemonium while the newly seated mayor was out of town for the first time!

We have a local group that can formulate a campaign in a matter of minutes. So I became, within 1 hour, "the antichrist [really, no joke!] who was trying to kill the city dog and destroy Kechi."

Electronic and print media flooded Kechi to take pictures of our iconic water tower. Every animal rights group you ever heard of threatened suit. Even a rescue center that takes in former drug dogs called. And they all called the mayor.

Not until the council meeting did we know the former handler wanted the dog. Council promptly voted to give the dog to its former handler, immediately after the pledge of allegiance!

Thank goodness, this issue and other accounting issues have since been remedied.

Lessons Learned

These are the lessons I learned the hard way: drug dogs are not pets; do not allow my heart to lead business decisions; do not make mistakes when the newly seated mayor takes his first vacation while in office; and do not bail when the pounding, clenched fists of emotionally charged detractors standing eight feet away demand your termination—this in a standing-room-only gallery during a council meeting.

Also, don't let the title "dog-killer-man" get you down. It eventually fades. But I am certain that if members of the Kechi community read this article, it will stir memories of that three-week uproar! Yes, I make mistakes, but I try hard to never make the same mistake twice! PM

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