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# PM

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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**INSIDE: 2013 ICMA ANNUAL REPORT**



# CONFIDENTIALITY AND COMPLEXITY

Unlocking the subplots of economic development

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**Thomas Wieczorek** at [twieczorek@icma.org](mailto:twieczorek@icma.org), call 202-962-3607

This authoritative and research based assessment process was designed in partnership by the experts at the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) and The Pittman McLenagan Group, L.C.



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# CONFIDENTIALITY AND COMPLEXITY

Unlocking the subplots of economic development

Patricia Mitchell, RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, AND Charles  
Abernathy, MCDOWELL COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA



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REPORT

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BY MARTHA PEREGO

# ADVOCATING FOR YOUR PERSONAL CAUSE

New guidance from ICMA

A national organization notified a city of its plans to open a branch in one of the city's booming commercial districts. The nature of the business as well as the location required a special permit. Due to a unique provision in the city charter, the city manager was the only official who was authorized to grant or deny the special permit. Sounds like just another routine administrative task for the manager, right?

Except that the national organization was Planned Parenthood. Given the organization's mission, public engagement on this issue would be anything but routine. Whatever the manager's decision, the connection of the issue to Planned Parenthood would bring out vocal supporters as well as detractors.

To further complicate matters, the manager privately supports Planned Parenthood's work. She has been a consistent albeit modest financial donor to the organization. But she has never publicly stated her support for the organization or worked in any official volunteer capacity.

## Managing Ethics and "Optics"

The manager is absolutely confident that her personal support of the applicant will not impair her professional judgment in reaching an objective decision based on the merits of the case. That said, the manager is concerned about these ethics and perceptions of the situation:

- Does the manager have an ethical obligation to disclose her personal support of the organization? If she does so before making her decision, is she acknowledging that her capacity to make an objective decision is flawed—that her professional

decision will be influenced by her personal position?

- How will the council and/or the public view her decision if it is later disclosed that she personally supported Planned Parenthood?
- How will she respond now or later if asked for her personal opinion on the merits of Planned Parenthood's mission? Does she have a right to keep her personal views and activities private? Is it ethical to decline to answer such an inquiry?
- Was the city manager wrong to provide personal support for an organization whose mission is so politically divisive? Does privately supporting a cause undermine the public's confidence in the manager and the office?
- What advice does the ICMA Code of Ethics offer on personal advocacy?

All are difficult questions to resolve.

## The Debate

For decades, the Code of Ethics has acknowledged a professional's right to voice his or her opinion on public issues. As to the specifics, the guidance was limited to the topics of how to assist the governing body in the presentation of issues or what to do when asked for help to promote the council-manager form of government.

The code did not address members' rights and responsibilities if they wanted to advocate on behalf of an issue of personal concern in their private life and outside the scope of their official position.

The profession's dialogue this year on the relevancy of Tenet 7 ignited



*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

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EDITORIAL INFORMATION

202/962-3619

[bpayne@icma.org](mailto:bpayne@icma.org)

ADVERTISING SALES

Ascend Integrated Media

Tim McCormack

913-344-1367

913-344-1492 (Fax)

[tmccormack@ascendintegratedmedia.com](mailto:tmccormack@ascendintegratedmedia.com)

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the debate about whether it's really ok for a professional working in local government to advocate on behalf of issues of personal concern. Tenet 7 of the code advises members to refrain from all political activities that undermine public confidence in professional administrators.

In this era of polarized politics, what can be more "political" than publicly announcing your stance on gun control, abortion, immigration, marriage equality, or any number of other contentious public issues. Make a donation to an

## New Guidance on Issue Advocacy

Based on the dialogue, the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct recommended adding a guideline to address issue advocacy that takes place outside the day job. The final version of the guideline, approved by the ICMA Executive Board in September 2013, states:

### "Personal Advocacy of Issues.

Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to voice their opinion on public issues.

## HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN YOUR STATUS AS A "POLITICALLY NEUTRAL" PROFESSIONAL IN A CULTURE WHERE YOU QUICKLY GET ASSIGNED TO A POLITICAL BOX BASED ON JUST ONE OR A FEW ASSOCIATIONS?

organization that advocates for an issue or find yourself on the opposite side of the issue with your elected officials or the community, and the political heat just escalates.

Members even debated the perils of simply being a member of an organization that publicly advocates a position. How do you maintain your status as a "politically neutral" professional in a culture where you quickly get assigned to a political box based on just one or a few associations?

But the majority of members also recognized the need for balance and judgment. People drawn to public service have a heightened awareness and commitment to social issues. They understand the connection between policies and programs and their impact on the people in the communities they serve. Given that, how do you ask deeply committed and informed public professionals to just stand down?

Members may advocate for issues of personal interest only when doing so does not conflict with the performance of their official duties."

In drafting this guideline, committee members had three goals. First, they wanted to make it clear that members are free to express their opinion on public issues. Second, they wanted to reinforce the concept of balance and restraint required of all those who serve the public.

Third, they recognize that you, the professional on the ground, must assume responsibility to assess whether your advocacy on a public issue undermines your effectiveness in the community you chose to serve. **PM**



**MARTHA PEREGO**  
Ethics Director, ICMA  
Washington, D.C.  
[mperego@icma.org](mailto:mperego@icma.org)

# HOW SHOULD A MANAGER PREPARE NEWLY ELECTED OFFICIALS FOR THEIR UPCOMING RESPONSIBILITIES?



**MARK MCNEILL, ICMA-CM**  
City Administrator  
Shakopee, Minnesota  
mmcneill@ci.shakopee.mn.us

For the first time this year, Shakopee partnered with the school district and chamber of commerce to host a “Public Office 101” session prior to the opening of the filing period for elected officials. The intent was to give residents an opportunity to learn about the office in which they were interested.

After the November election, we provide new councilors with the same non-confidential information seated councilors receive. I meet with each of them several times to answer questions and provide issues to consider.

In those weeks prior to taking the oath of office, each department head joins me in meeting with the mayor and council-elects to give a big-picture introduction. I also encourage attendance at a training retreat presented by our state’s League of Cities.

Finally, we take each of them and their families on a tour of the city’s facilities.



**NATALIE ZEIGLER, ICMA-CM CANDIDATE**  
City Manager  
Hartsville, South Carolina  
natalie.zeigler@hartsvillesc.gov

Newly elected officials are often holding office for the first time, so there are many ways that we can help them get up to speed in the beginning. In the City of Hartsville, this includes walking them through our form of government, meetings with our department heads, a tour of facilities, and encouraging them to learn through the training program of the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

Elections can make anyone uneasy. Although they may have run on one issue, they will find that they must address all issues that come before council. They need to understand all laws and policies relating to operations, staff, and budgets.

And most importantly, I as a city manager need to listen to all of their concerns and ideas. They are the people our residents wanted to lead our city.



**SUSAN ROBERTSON, ICMA-CM**  
City Administrator  
Sun Valley, Idaho  
srobertson@svidaho.org

The best thing a manager can do to prepare newly elected officials is provide information. People who run for elected office sometimes have had limited exposure to local government operations.

Holding an orientation for them in the first weeks of their term is key. Discuss operations and common issues that residents might call about. Have department directors assist, as that fosters the elected officials’ confidence in the directors’ knowledge of the community. A tour of facilities and property owned by the local government as well as of locations of projects in the “almost under way” stage are also beneficial.

Finally, state-wide municipal or county associations provide training for newly elected officials. Make them aware of any relevant training opportunities.



**MAURICE JONES**  
City Manager  
Charlottesville, Virginia  
mjones@charlottesville.org

Orientation is the first step in introducing incoming elected officials to a locality’s vision, priorities, and staff, including the manager. Charlottesville’s staff has developed an orientation process that begins before new councilors have started their terms with a meeting with me, followed by meetings with both me and department staff.

Before each orientation session, officials receive budget information on each department, a list of services offered, and challenges they are facing. During the meetings, there is department overview and a time for questions. Post-meeting follow-up is critical, sending a clear message that the officials’ can count on the staff to be responsive. Another important step is to invite newly elected officials to public meetings that the current council holds. **PM**

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FOR THE  
COMMITMENT  
TO OUR  
ENVIRONMENT

## SCORING CLEAN AIR AWARD

A Central Florida community that has made a commitment to protect and improve the environment for its residents is receiving recognition for its programs.

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2

“With thousands of veterans set to return home from Iraq and Afghanistan, coupled with planned reductions in overall end strength of the armed forces, it is absolutely critical that local governments understand the military family and veterans’ issues in their communities and prepare to play an active role in addressing them.”

– Matt Borron, Kathleen Hatten, Michael Hursh, and Jon Ruiz, “The Role of Local Government in Veterans and Military Family Issues.” August 2013 PMPlus.

► [icma.org/pmplus813](http://icma.org/pmplus813)

## COMMUNITY BUILDING

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► [icma.org/community\\_building](http://icma.org/community_building)



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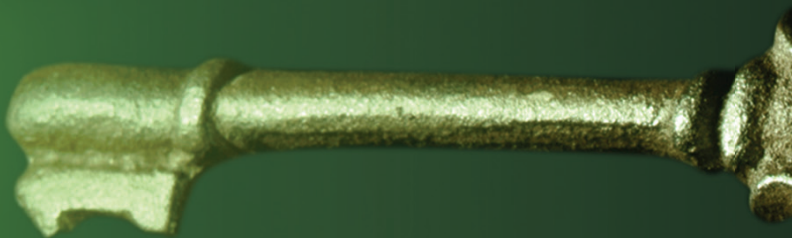
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ICMA members Bill Monahan and Clay Pearson foster relationships and share American local governance lessons with Chinese undergraduates and more than 80 local government officials during a two-week long mentoring trip facilitated by the ICMA China Center.

► [icma.org/icmamembersinchina](http://icma.org/icmamembersinchina)

# CONFIDENTIALITY AND COMMUNICATION



## TAKEAWAYS

- › The public management and economic development process fundamentally differ. A manager should understand these differences and why they exist.
- › Successful economic development programs will explain why confidentiality is necessary.
- › The site selection process dictates the involvement of certain critical actors.
- › Fundamentally sound management approaches will enhance communication and better ensure success.

# NTIALITY MPLEXITY

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a large, ornate metal key. The hand is positioned in the lower half of the frame, with the thumb and index finger gripping the key's handle. The key is made of dark, weathered metal and has a complex, decorative shape. The background is dark and out of focus.

Unlocking the  
subplots  
of economic  
development

By Patricia Mitchell and  
Charles Abernathy, ICMA-CM

**Economic development is defined by most professionals in broad terms.** Usually viewed as activity that enhances a community's tax base, provides employment opportunities, and improves the quality of life, economic development can include everything from attracting retirees and tourism, to expanding health care services and retail development, to business recruitment and expansion.

The goal of this article is to shed light on what is often considered a traditional focus of economic development: recruitment and expansion of manufacturing jobs and capital investment. As the nation has begun to rebuild its manufacturing base, some communities are encountering an increase in recruitment or expansion opportunities.

This field of economic development most often requires a high degree of confidentiality because projects are frequently competitive with other states and project development often occurs outside of a manager's daily operating responsibilities. Thus, during the recruitment and expansion process, the contacts and communication between managers and economic development professionals are typically dealt

with, or processed, differently than day-to-day open and transparent management responsibilities.

But what if the manager is also the director of the economic development organization or department? How does the open and transparent process change when one person is both the manager and the developer working a recruitment project?

The two of us have had the somewhat unusual distinction of serving in both capacities. One of us heads a nonprofit economic development organization in addition to being a county manager and the other was a county manager and an economic development department head. Both economic development positions are structured as permanent, not interim.

Both counties have a strong manufacturing tradition. The perspective derived from serving in the dual roles has led to this article. A further distinction is that both of us are academics who teach public administration at the graduate level.

For local government managers who do not serve in both roles, we believe the confidentiality aspect and the relationship building required in economic development remain important issues that merit discussion.

### **Organization Is Crucial**

Economic development may be organized in numerous ways and communities might have more than one entity providing economic development activity. A local government might have both a department of economic development and a nonprofit functioning through a support agreement or memorandum of understanding.

Cities and counties might not have this specific government department and totally depend on a chamber of commerce or other organization. In smaller communities, the appointed manager may be the responsible party.

Various factors are involved in determining how economic development activity is structured within a community. Elected boards might not want a department for budgetary reasons. Political pressures of the business community might favor

a chamber organization. The nonprofit structure might appear to provide increased flexibility and an ability to “move on a dime.” Hybrid structures that are separate 501(c)(3) organizations and receive funding from local governments are not unusual.

Regardless of the economic development structure, the role of an appointed manager is central to decision making within the community and is fundamental to gaining support for economic development projects. Managers have the most direct line of access to elected officials, and even in jurisdictions where economic development decisions occur outside of the local governmental unit, including a nonprofit organization, the elected body’s support is key to a recruitment or expansion project. Thus, the manager is in a key position.

### Reasons for Confidentiality

An issue for economic developers, elected officials, and managers is the confidentiality surrounding a manufacturing recruitment and expansion project. Managers are typically involved in processes deliberately designed through democratic practices to maximize involvement and openness with residents, and particularly with the elected officials who have appointed them.

There is the necessity at some point to involve elected officials in economic development projects, and there might be ways to involve the public in the recruitment process, but we caution managers to understand the substantial and necessary issues surrounding confidentiality.

Companies require confidentiality; virtually every manufacturing location requires an assessment process that occurs without public disclosure. Why? Almost always, companies consider a relocation or an expansion in order to gain competitive and economic advantages. Manufacturing operations do not want competitors to gain knowledge of expansion plans.

If the decision involves a relocation the company might not want its own employees to know. A company also might not want shareholders to gain knowledge of an assessment. It is not uncommon for the company name to remain confidential and visiting company representatives to use only first names when they visit a community.

Likewise, a planned expansion of an existing company might involve a competitive decision within the corporate structure, and this competitive position might involve multiple states.

Both of us have been involved in economic development efforts. One project involved two expansions of existing manufacturing operations. One expansion added 135 jobs and \$27 million in investment, and the second involved 45 jobs and the construction of an 80,000-square-foot expansion.

The other project involved a \$57 million capital investment that included a building addition and more than 100 jobs. The company gave instructions from the beginning regarding “who could know what.”

The project was a multicommunity expansion where the company was bringing new technology to the market. It was competitive with 10 other states, and all the expansions were competitive within the company structure and each could have located elsewhere.

The entire recruitment and expansion process does seem to take on a cloak-and-dagger mentality that is unusual from the typical management view of openness. Local government managers, who also serve as the lead economic developer or who are assisting in that role, are often in a position where they must decide which role is primary at the time: open and transparent at the risk of breaking confidentially requirements and potentially losing a project, or meeting confidentially requirements at the risk of being less than transparent with the elected board and the public.

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#### 2014 ICMA Regional Summits [icma.org/SUMMIT](http://icma.org/SUMMIT)

- **March 6–7** Southeast Region  
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- **March 20–21** Midwest Region  
(Iowa City, Iowa)
- **April 3–4** Northeast Region  
(Princeton, NJ)
- **May 1–2** Mountain Plains Region  
(Dallas Metro Area, TX)
- **May 8–9** West Coast Region  
(San Jose, CA)

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## The economic development environment at times can create miscommunication and bruised egos. The overall goal of economic development must be kept in mind during and after a recruitment project.

State governments are involved in this process as well and a department of commerce at that level also typically requires confidentiality. The state of North Carolina, for example, coordinates the incentive and grant process for a manufacturing project, and projects are given code names.

Projects must be in competition with other states in order to participate in state grant programs. If confidentiality is breached, state funds possibly will not be granted. If state incentives are involved, North Carolina requires the governor to announce company locations and expansions. Local developers work the project for their community, but must follow the lead of the state.

Also in North Carolina, a public hearing must be held prior to finalizing a project incentive package, and the notice must disclose the proposed incentive package and the investment being made by the company. The company name, however, is not required to be disclosed until the formal announcement.

In sum, in order to recruit a manufacturing location to a community, economic development professionals and company representatives must allow the process and the decision to transpire largely outside of the public's view.

### Three Levels of Involvement

It is important for managers to understand who is involved in the recruitment process. The overview provided here demonstrates that each company visit must be handled based on the particular situation.

Most developers ask the location consultant or company representative who the company wants included. The company often has a team of advisers to assist with the decision. This might include site-location consultants, industrial realtors, and technical advisers. A department of commerce representative

is typically involved in coordinating visits between locations within a state.

We believe it is helpful to consider local participants as existing on three levels. This again points out potential conflict among roles with managers and developers who are trying to “bring a project home.”

**LEVEL 1: The initial visit.** It is our experience that the initial site visit typically includes a limited number of participants and the company is narrowly focused on a site or a building. Local players include the economic development director who either needs to have extensive knowledge about the site or a knowledgeable person on hand.

The first visit focuses on such technical specifications of the project as ceiling heights, expandability, water pressure, system capacity, zoning restrictions, environmental conditions, and subsurface soils. A developer must be able to provide accurate answers or quickly obtain answers to these site-related questions.

This initial stage of recruitment and expansion might be limited to two to four local individuals—developer, energy provider, utility representative, and site technical expert.

**LEVEL 2: The site-selection process broadens.** Surviving the initial cut means you have a building or property that potentially satisfies the needs of the company. A second level broadens into other areas of consideration, including labor availability, workforce skill levels, training opportunities at local community colleges, and support or supply services.

The evaluation process begins to focus on the likelihood of successful business operations in a community. The authors have found it helpful to include a local plant manager who can discuss workforce quality and community responsiveness. A number of site-selection processes involve a request to meet with local manufacturing representatives.

Incentives become more of a focus at this stage of recruitment. The local developer must be able to address community incentives, and this might mean that communities get involved at a significant level. The company and commerce might still require confidentiality, and a developer will need to weigh risk factors in communicating too much too early, and balance that with the processes of their local government.

Often this is the stage of the recruitment process where a manager working as a developer comes into almost direct conflict with the open and transparent requirements of the manager and elected officials relationship. This is also the time when trust becomes a critical factor in relationships.

**LEVEL 3: Your community is a finalist.** The final stage of the process expands the numbers of players. The company is now focused on general quality-of-life questions.

The company looks at the community from the perspective of moving managers to the location. Company representatives assess the quality of the school system, availability of cultural amenities and recreation, housing, and health care. Essentially, the process has

shifted to those quality-of-life factors that define the local community.

### Five Management Principles

We have developed five broad management principles that are designed to bring thoughtful consideration to the competing interests that are at work in the recruitment and expansion process. Building a foundation for economic development understanding and activity prior to a recruitment taking place (see numbers one to four) often maximizes opportunities for success. Handling communication effectively—the fifth principle—helps ensure success.

1. The economic development practice should include an upfront education process with elected officials and the economic development commission (EDC) board members on how economic

discussing incentives in a recruitment project. Policymakers need to understand that success is more likely if the developer is empowered to offer incentives with the understanding that the incentives require approval, public hearings, and contract execution.

The two of us differ on written policies. One of us believes written policies are probably helpful, and the other that incentives are case by case. Both of us believe deviating from an incentive policy is often necessary, with an economic developer often placed in the situation of having to respond to unique questions not addressed in a written policy.

4. The manager and the elected officials have to carefully consider the composition of the economic development policy board. The makeup of the policy board

includes six items; each jurisdiction must determine for itself when it's best to release the information. These are the six items:

- Number of jobs and level of salaries to be paid.
- Capital investment being leveraged.
- Production or manufacturing process used.
- Environmental soundness of the company.
- Specific physical location, though this might need to remain confidential until property is under contract.
- When confidentiality requirements allow, the name of the company.

### Review the Roles

Our intent in this article is to demonstrate the complexity of the economic development environment in manufacturing recruitment. The roles of the manager, the economic developer, and the elected policy-making body are sometimes in conflict during a recruitment process.

The economic development environment at times can create mistrust, miscommunication, and bruised egos. The overall goal of economic development—the enhancement of a community's economy through jobs and investment—must be kept in mind during and after a recruitment project.

The role of each player must be communicated, understood, and perhaps most importantly, respected. Building a foundation for economic development, including the five management principles provided, can help ensure successful relationships during and after the manufacturing recruitment process. **PM**

**Almost always, companies consider a relocation or an expansion in order to gain competitive and economic advantages. Manufacturing operations do not want competitors to gain knowledge of expansion plans.**

development works, including the intense competitiveness of the process. This understanding might include workshops or presentations by outside representatives from the department of commerce or economic development consultants.

2. An economic development strategic plan is a robust step to ensure clear direction and provide residents with an opportunity for input. Resident input and participation can occur at various stages, including the development of a plan or serving on an EDC board.

3. The economic developer needs to understand how far he or she can go in

will often depend on community desires. One of us worked with an EDC that is position appointed (i.e., CEO of hospital, superintendent of schools, and other official positions within the community).

5. The economic developer must directly communicate with the manager regarding industry visits, obligations that were made, and any issues surrounding the industry visit. If the economic developer is the manager, again the risk factors of “too much, too early” must be considered.

We believe the information that should be made available to the manager, and eventually to elected officials,



**PATRICIA MITCHELL**, CEcD, DPA, former county manager and economic developer, is assistant secretary of commerce,

Rural Development Division, N.C. Department of Commerce, Raleigh (patmitchell@skybest.com).

**CHARLES (CHUCK) ABERNATHY**, PhD, ICMA-CM, is county manager and director, department of economic development, McDowell County, North Carolina (charlesa@mcldowellgov.com).

# WHY TEAMS MATTER MORE THAN EVER

Collaboration is critical  
in today's economy

By Bruce Piasecki

## TAKEAWAYS

- › Even the most brilliant individual is less powerful than a cohesive, well-orchestrated team.
- › A coachable, loyal team player is the kind of employee your company needs the most.





# America loves a fierce individualist.

And yes, there is something inspiring about the lone leader and organizational manager blazing a path into the unknown but valuable future. And yet, while our culture will always celebrate the individual, I think the organizational world must acknowledge the truth behind the (alleged) Aristotle quote: “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” In other words, the near future will be all about innovation for sustainable value creation, led by teams.

In a world that becomes more complex by the day, command-and-control is out and employee engagement is in. The days when a larger-than-life personality is allowed to steamroller over the rest of the company are over. This destroys morale, which destroys results. Teams, not individuals, drive performance.

And make no mistake. The best organizations, the ones with real staying power, are fueled by well-run teams.

Teams are more important than ever because the way people work and do business has changed. Within the fierce competition that is the global economy, companies that get fast results because they excel at collaboration and innovation will rise to the top and rule the day.

And the ideas that allow an organization to achieve, grow, and prosper—as opposed to merely survive—will be created only when teams leverage their combined skills and hold themselves mutually accountable. No individual, no matter how brilliant, is likely to have the skill set

to take projects from start to finish in this fast-paced and complex environment.

The good news is, organizations can shatter this individualistic mindset wherever it occurs and guide employees to a better way to work while tapping into and maximizing their raw talent. But first, they must understand that managing teams with their web of hidden politics and complex interplay of human differences is extremely different from managing individuals.

## 1. Here are my eight insights on teams:

Great teams are led by captains. Like many popular terms, the word leader has become so overused and commonplace that it has lost meaning. Anybody can call himself or herself a leader; anybody can follow the “do’s” and “don’ts” in leadership manuals.

But it takes a special type of leader—a captain—to create not just a loose affiliation of individuals but a true team that’s centered around shared values and focused on a common goal. Captains are

quick to recognize the key capabilities of their team members, including strengths and weaknesses, and to build the plan around those capabilities.

**2. Fierce individualism has no place in teams.** Captains need to be sure that the “most valuable player (MVP) syndrome” is not allowed to define their teams and be on the alert for individuals who might be losing sight of the team that gave them an identity—the group with whom they worked to produce the fame for which they are now known. It is in these situations that such workplace ills as favoritism, sexism, and even criminal activity like embezzlement tend to flourish.

**3. Seek to hire coachable individuals rather than individualistic high performers.** Do everything possible to promote and reward teamwork rather than individualism. Whether your efforts are centered on pay structure, group incentives, verbal recognition, or some other technique, seek always to send the signal that it’s strong teams and not strong individuals that make up a strong organization.

**4. Teams hold the bar high for everyone, especially the superstars.** In all teams, there is an inherent desire to protect superstars and keep them winning. Never mind all the others whose quieter, though no less critical, contributions are downplayed. We are all aware of conditions when everyone else was willing to go along with a wrong.

We recall instances in history where the politics of fear enabled the Nazis,

**It takes a special type of leader—a captain—to create not just a loose affiliation of individuals but a true team that’s centered around shared values and focused on a common goal.**

and where embezzlement seems the norm. Yet it is harder to see when victory shines so brightly. Captains must be mindful of this human tendency, in themselves and in others, to look the other way, to give our victors the benefit of the doubt.

We must be vigilant and ever alert to wrongdoing. We must be willing to ferret out corruption in the highest echelons, to bench the most valuable player, even to fire the superstar for the good of the team and the sake of integrity.

Teams have to be willing to lose sometimes or they will eventually self-destruct. When teams keep winning, they can become addicted to victory—feel entitled to it even—and this is what can drive a team to illicit extremes. The lesson is clear: When we don't learn to tolerate failure, we will do anything to keep the public adulation coming.

Teams become great because they keep things in perspective. Team members understand the broader context of competition; namely, that there is always a larger league and a set of better players out there, no matter what has been achieved or what rung on a ladder you've just reached.

In other words, no one can always win. In fact, if a team becomes addicted to victory, it may take the Lance Armstrong route and go to illicit extremes to keep winning. An inability to tolerate failure makes a team easy prey for "the dark side."

**5. Great teams revel in the pleasure of persistence and the sheer thrill of striving.** Knowing that we will stumble and fall from time to time, yet get up and try again with some success, is at the heart of a great team.

I insist that it's critical to teach teams to be well prepared for assignments and to keep going in spite of hardship. When an organization enrolls an executive in leadership training, these lessons of teamwork should be emphasized:

- How to play through pain.
- How to resist the criminal opportunities inherent in becoming an MVP.

## **Effective teams learn by doing and stay focused on results; they are not bound by method or processes. And that gives them the flexibility and resiliency they need to thrive in the midst of flux.**

- How to keep your feet on the ground despite being a member of special teams with special force.
- How to outlive an uncomfortable appointment when your boss has selected you for a team where you are a bad fit, and how to behave when you are chosen for a team on which you do not want to play.

Life can be a tough slog, and victories are sporadic at best. Maybe we can't win, but we can keep going. This striving brings with it its own unique rewards. It is up to us to learn to appreciate them.

### **6. Successful teams share values, integrity, and a commitment to one another.**

In preparing for a team event, or in becoming a member of a team, a transformation occurs where team members end their individual associations and create a team identity through sharing with others the experience of that process. Once the team is created, a strong bond is already in place from that preparation and from the obstacles everyone had to overcome to get there.

In complex situations where outcomes are unknown, the temptation is always to play it safe. But in a world of constantly changing tides, yesterday's "safe" is likely to be today's "not enough." That's why teams must work on instinct, often at a moment's notice, and constantly move forward.

Effective teams learn by doing and stay focused on results; they are not bound by method or processes. And that gives them the flexibility and resiliency they need to thrive in the midst of flux.

**7. Effective teams take risks.** Because business climates are constantly changing, teams and the captains who lead them know that yesterday's guidelines can quickly become obsolete. That's why they don't allow themselves to be overly bogged down by rule following and order taking.

Rather, they push boundaries when it's proper, in other words, when ethical and moral lines aren't being crossed, because the greatest innovations happen beyond existing laws and rules. When led by great captains, teams regularly work beyond normal and limiting boundaries to increase productivity and success.

While it's important to encourage the kind of risk that involves seizing opportunities, it's also equally and increasingly critical to take steps to eliminate the risk of negative team behavior. I'm referencing here the risk of allowing "the dark side" to encroach on ethical behavior as evidenced in the stories of Bernie Madoff, Lance Armstrong, and the latest string of scams reported in the news.

The word team is more than just a business buzzword. If done well, building and captaining a team will determine whether you merely survive or instead thrive in this strange new economy. **PM**



**BRUCE PIASECKI, Ph.D.**, is president and founder, AHC Group, Inc., Ballston Spa, New York ([www.brucepiasecki.com](http://www.brucepiasecki.com); [www.ahcgroup.com](http://www.ahcgroup.com)). He is author of *Doing More with Teams: The New Way to Winning* (Wiley, March 2013, ISBN: 978-1-1184849-5-1, \$25.00; 800/225-5945, in Canada, 800/567-4797; [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).)

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# ENHANCE YOUR LEADERSHIP BY TAPPING INTO STAFF ATTITUDES

Understanding temperaments can help build collaboration

By Patrick Malone



## TAKEAWAYS

From this article, readers will:

- › Be able to identify three of the more common mindsets in the workplace.
- › Learn various ways to maximize the productivity of, and improve communication with, employees.

# Local government managers are expected to be innovative and successful. Whether it be public health, crime prevention, going green, or developing a self-sustaining economic base, the nation looks to them for successful approaches on every scale.

But leading in today's environment is not easy, especially for managers working with shrinking budgets, fewer qualified personnel, and less support from state and federal entities.

Recent events highlight these challenges. Both local elected and appointed officials struggle with how to involve residents and attract investment as they plan for the future. Residents expect more services and less taxes from their over-burdened communities.

And when the unexpected occurs—the devastating tornado in Moore, Oklahoma, or Superstorm Sandy's far-reaching effects—resources are stretched to the limit as communities grapple with the results of devastating natural disasters.

What today's managers need are as many tools as they can muster to do an extremely difficult job. Many times they approach this challenge by building skill sets or adding certifications for selected staff members. Not a bad approach but in the midst of the chaos, the best tools and most valuable organizational assets are not new technical talents.

The most beneficial tools within reach of the public sector manager are the minds of those they lead. Understanding and tapping into the mindsets of staff can build lasting synergy for organizations large and small.

## Practical Workplace Applications

Author Susanne Cook-Grueter's groundbreaking 2004 work on the developmental mind provides a solid foundation for understanding the importance to

leaders of tapping into specific mental attitudes possessed by those with whom they work. Cook-Grueter points out that when we understand the developmental mind we get a clearer picture of two key issues: 1) how well a particular individual is suited to the task at hand; and 2) how well the individual can read and interact with people who have different preferences.

The benefit to a public sector manager is clear: The greater our ability to assess others, the more effective we can be in tapping into the discretionary energy and thought processes of those whom we lead.

While the breadth and depth of these various temperaments is significantly more intricate than can be addressed here, three mindsets that are the most common found in the workplace are of particular significance to the local public official. When managers understand these temperaments, organizational innovation, synergy, and success are bound to follow.

This article includes three brief scenarios for each way of thinking, which are shown in italics; a detailed description of the developmental stages; and practical suggestions that can be used to create conditions for motivating in the workplace.

## The Opportunist

*Elaine was a long-time employee in the county's consumer protection office. Despite her many years of service, however, it wouldn't be fair to say she was well-liked by her coworkers. They tended*

*to describe her as cutthroat. In a recent team meeting with the agency director, for example, she was quick to point the finger at a colleague, insisting that a confrontation with a customer was not her fault. Team members weren't surprised because she never takes responsibility. In their experience, anytime anyone offered constructive feedback, Elaine quickly rejected it anyway.*

Elaine demonstrates one of the classic signs of an opportunist: a "me versus the world" mentality. One thing about opportunists is they're easy to spot. They tend to be self-oriented, manipulative, and they possess a drive to win in any way possible.

To make matters worse, they feel their approach is completely rational. This is because they see the world as a place where everyone is out for themselves. In the opportunist's view, people are simply competitors in a vast war-torn landscape.

Leading an opportunist is no easy task. They do little for team cohesion and are often more effective working alone. People typically don't like working for opportunists. They often feel betrayed by, and distrusting of, their opportunist colleagues.

As managers, it's important to try to get opportunists to see beyond their own perspective. Invest time in helping opportunists recognize that their actions have impacts on people and the organization in both small and large ways.

It is perhaps best to begin this conversation by acknowledging the value the opportunist brings to the organization (able to work independently, good in emergencies, decisive). Establish rapport and encourage opportunists to share their feelings about the organization. Once opportunists open up, it's much easier to help them understand the contributions of others.

## The Diplomat

*Steve is proud of his role in the parks and recreation office. In fact, he's so proud he can be counted on to wear his parks and recreation jacket all year. As a supervisor of three staff handling registration for the*

city's yearlong programs, he is well-liked by his employees, though they sometimes wish he would go to bat for them a little more often with the city manager's office.

*They have some innovative ideas for which they would like to get funding. But Steve is not one to rock the boat and pushing his supervisor too hard is just not something he likes to do.*

Diplomats, like Steve, make up the vast majority of first-level supervisors. They define themselves greatly by the organization where they work and by the approval of others. As such, they are loyal souls who thrive on harmony. Confronting authority figures and pushing for the approval of new programs, as in Steve's case, is not their strong suit since it creates an atmosphere of conflict.

They tend to do well in their roles, as assigned, but you're not likely to see them venture beyond those specified job functions. Likewise, diplomats are not the most talented at giving or receiving feedback.

While it might seem leading diplomats would be easy, such is not the case. It is true that diplomats help create a supportive atmosphere, but their risk-averse nature creates tension and frustration among those they lead. Not all work environments remain conflict free for long.

In fact, conflict in organizations is actually a positive thing if handled properly. Since diplomats define themselves through the approval of others, conflict puts them in a risky position they would prefer to avoid.

When leading diplomats it's important to help them build their confidence by aiding them in understanding that they have value beyond how they're seen by others. Diplomats most certainly bring skill sets that are needed by the organization, but their ability to recognize this is often clouded by a lack of internal strength.

A newly discovered self-confidence may help them develop the courage necessary to make tough decisions. It also gives them the fortitude to provide a candid evaluation to an employee or much-needed feedback to a supervisor.

## The Expert

*Sara is one of the more accomplished members of the city's office of planning and code compliance. As an architect, she brings an exceptional depth of knowledge in design, planning, and enforcement of city statutes.*

*No one could dispute her knowledge base, but many would admit she uses that expertise as leverage in any conflict. Worse, she's been known to use it in a ridiculing and hostile manner. Some have confronted her about this but without the requisite degrees in architectural science, their feedback falls on deaf ears.*

Experts like Sara are common in public service where technical skill is rewarded and fostered. Experts are

and with others who may not have their professional background.

Managers are well-advised to help experts appreciate the roles of others in achieving an organization's mission. This won't be easy, but experts are smart people.

Once they become more aware of the contributions made by others, they are more likely to be able to accept other viewpoints as valid. Strategically placing them on high-performing teams where they can contribute in concert with staff will also help mitigate the more negative inclinations of the expert mind.

To be fair, the opportunist, diplomat, and expert bring positive aspects to the workplace. Opportunists are

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adept at using hard logic and data to gain support for their ideas—something appealing to county commissions and city councils. Logic rules in the world of experts, and the average resident is easily impressed with their quick answers and airtight thinking.

Unfortunately, this impressive intellectual palette comes with a price. Experts are often one-of-a-kind, especially in small communities. As such, they are seldom challenged. When they are, they aren't likely to accept the feedback with grace unless it comes from someone they consider to be their expert-equal.

Experts are much like diplomats in their need to feel they matter in the workplace. What they lack are the fundamental skills or interest to work in teams

driven and energetic. Diplomats can bring people together even in the most challenging times. And experts, through their extensive knowledge, can play important roles in project management and change initiatives. But taken to the extreme, all three temperaments have serious limitations.

As today's local governments lead the way in innovative approaches to public leadership, tapping into the unexplored aspects of these mindsets can prove beneficial in tackling the challenges of that leadership. **PM**



**PATRICK MALONE**, PhD, is an executive-in-residence, Department of Public Administration and Policy, American University, Washington, D.C. (pmalone@american.edu).

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BY ANONYMOUS\*

# THE QUIET STRUGGLE

Personal experience with a chronic problem



I love to tell stories. It's a big part of how I manage and a big part of who I am. The funnier the better, as I also love to make people laugh. Jokes come and go, but I never forget a funny story, told well. This, however, is not a funny story.

We manage our communities under some fairly bleak conditions sometimes. We learn to manage them better over time as our skill sets improve with each passing project, challenge, and crisis.

Disease is something managers deal with too, of course, and alcoholism may well be an occupational hazard for many of us, just as for some of our coworkers. Like diabetes, alcoholism can be managed, but it is an insidious disease that will destroy our jobs, marriages, families, friendships, and lives if we fail to manage it well.

## The Beast Takes Hold

My story begins in the 1970s when drinking was one of the few things for a teenager growing up in a small rural

community to do. In college, I made new friends, met my future wife, and fed the beast as often as possible while living in a fraternity house and at my part-time job managing the on-campus pub where the live bands shook the building and the beer flowed freely.

Just rites of passage, or so I assumed.

After college, as I found myself working in local government management, working on my master's degree at night, and moving from community to community, I found solace and relief from the pressures of life by drinking to excess, mostly alone, in secret, whenever I felt like it. Few knew of the quiet struggle I was waging and for some time I really didn't fight back very hard, and when I did, it wasn't for very long.

## The Beast Becomes Stronger

The beast grew larger as family and job pressures grew. Whatever was bothering me could be suspended effectively—for a few hours anyway—with the aid of a vodka bottle hidden in the basement or

garage. After the umpteenth discussion with my loving and incredibly patient wife, I made an appointment with a private counselor.

During our second session he used the A word, telling me I was an alcoholic. Although that was certainly why I was there, the diagnosis pronouncement from a mental health professional hit me like a ton of bricks. I was devastated. Back to the basement and the cycle continued, but now it had an official name.

For the next couple of decades I mostly white-knuckled it. I could stay completely sober for months at a time, but would always succumb to drinking as external pressures mounted. Each time I fell off the wagon, I quickly returned to the worst of it, where I had left off before.

A beer or two with friends after a round of golf quickly led me back to the ABC store and my secret affair with the vodka bottle in the basement after the family had gone to bed.

## HERE'S THE POINT: THERE IS A FINE LINE BETWEEN ABUSING ALCOHOL AND ALCOHOLISM. IF YOU OR SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU THINKS YOU MIGHT HAVE A DRINKING PROBLEM, YOU DO. IF YOU NEED HELP TO DEAL WITH THAT, GET IT.

An after-work, three-month outpatient program at a local hospital did the trick for a while. I attended some AA meetings as part of the program and even a few afterward, but I didn't like them very much. As a local government manager, I felt too exposed and thought myself hardly anonymous given that my face, name, and title were often in the newspaper and on television as part of my day job. Another occupational hazard.

### A Breaking Point

I finally reached a new low several years ago, all in a few short months. I was still managing my job fairly well during the day, but the evenings brought me back to the basement to cope with life. I lost a close friend when his serial infidelity caused me to side with his wife and break off contact with him.

My oldest son graduated from college and moved far away, and I missed him. My daughter revealed to my wife and me some of her own difficult struggles. My teenage son started getting into typical teenage boy trouble, which tested me on a whole new level as I dealt with local law enforcement and judicial personnel with whom I worked professionally in less personal ways in my job.

My aging parents really started to have aging parent problems. And my dog died, seriously, just like in a country music song.

Managing in a recession presented some new challenges, too. After building organizations for 30 years I now had to partially dismantle one.

Slashing budgets required some big boy pants that I struggled to fill. Disciplinary actions with employees for on-the-job substance abuse issues made me feel like a total hypocrite. More pressure, guilt, and hangovers.

### Committing to Rehab

Finally surrendering, I drove to the mayor's house and told him I had a problem and needed to disappear for a month for treatment at a rehab facility downstate. Rather than fire me, he hugged me, wished me luck, and told me he was proud of me, even though moments earlier he had no clue I even had a problem.

The vice mayor reacted the same way, as did a few trusted coworkers who would have to cover for me while I was gone. Before I left town, I sent a mysterious e-mail to the rest of city council and the management team to the effect that I was taking some time off and would be back in a few weeks, maybe a month.

The treatment facility was in my old college town. At night, we were bused to AA meetings in church basements that were within a block of my old college haunts, where I had lived so carefree some 35 years earlier. I had come full circle, and it was both ironic and poignant to be getting help in the town where I had spent my undergraduate years feeding the beast.

### Get Help If You Need It

Sober since then, with the help of the new tools—weapons, really—that I gained in treatment and occasional AA

meetings when I know my drinking triggers are being pulled, I am doing fine now. Life is back to normal mostly. I am managing my disease, and my city, and my life.

My family, friends, and governing body seem to admire my efforts to get help. Upon telling them of my problem and what I have done to try to solve it, the most common reaction is one of respect, not disdain. And most people couldn't care less what I'm drinking now (diet soda) when we are socializing. There is no stigma to quitting among real friends.

Here's the point: There is a fine line between abusing alcohol and alcoholism. If you or someone close to you thinks you might have a drinking problem, you do. If you need help to deal with that, get it.

Your governing body should be supportive of your decision and is not likely to fire you if you are still good at what you do and you can show them that you can manage the disease and the community. And you get your life back.

You really don't have much choice. If the beast of alcoholism resides in you, you have to manage it or it will surely manage you. Left unchecked, it will destroy everything you hold dear. The only question will then be how much collateral damage is done: depression, accidents, DUIs, jail, despair, divorce, job termination, liver and brain function problems, death? It doesn't end well.

See, there is no cure for alcoholism. My beast will never die until I do. But like diabetes, it can be managed and contained. You can get help to deal with it.

Treatment programs work if you work them. I have finally discovered that life is far too precious and sweet to even think about letting the beast out of its cage again. **PM**

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\* The story in this article is honest and important, yet has the possibility of exposing a person and a family in a harmful way. *PM* staff made the decision that publishing it anonymously was more useful than not publishing it at all.

BY MIKE YAWN

# CONNECTING WITH CITIZEN ACADEMIES

A popular way to promote engagement and understanding

**Y**ou don't have to watch Jay Leno's "Jaywalking" to know many residents possess little knowledge about their government or its operations. This is particularly true at the local level. Ironically, residents know least about governments to which they are closest.

This paradox can create problems for local government leaders who must rely on resident buy-in, particularly when addressing such thorny issues as budget shortfalls, capital improvements, and restructuring. Although town halls and media campaigns can help local governments connect with residents, public managers have long sought better methods for promoting engagement and understanding.

## An Educated Citizenry

To this end, city and county governments have initiated programs promoting a better understanding of local governments. Various referred to as citizen academies or citizen leadership institutes, these programs seek to educate through direct contact with public officials, site visits, and hands-on activities.

An informal survey of programs in Texas, Florida, and North Carolina suggests these programs typically span five to 10 sessions, are offered free of charge to residents, and highlight such essential government functions as:

- History and charter overview.
- City council and charter officers.
- Finance, economic development.
- Public safety.
- Public works and planning.
- Parks, recreation, and community services (e.g., library, arts).
- Recap and graduation.

Sessions often feature presentations by agency directors, tours of facilities, and such hands-on activities as budget exercises, hikes in a park, or role-playing.

Counties may also offer some of these sessions (e.g., budgeting, public safety, planning), but as the administrator of one county program indicated, "Cities have an identity—fire trucks, a police force, and garbage trucks. But people don't think of things like mosquito control. That doesn't provide the kind of visible identity in county services, infrastructure, or physical presence that cities have."

Whether county- or city-sponsored, however, these programs strive to foster "knowledgeable and involved residents" who better understand "the services they receive for the taxes they pay."

Administrators occasionally rue the enrollment of gadflies, but their participation also provides an opportunity, as one administrator noted, "to bust some myths." Indeed, public managers shared their deep satisfaction when they witnessed "how people change their view of...government" after learning the responsibilities and duties of public servants.

The programs may also serve as a farm system for boards and commissions. "We need some new blood," noted one program facilitator, "but we need educated blood." Most program supervisors estimate that about 10 percent of citizen academy "graduates" go on to serve on boards and commissions, and at least one program administrator put the number as high as 50 percent.

The most fully developed programs employ systematic recruiting procedures, drawing residents from representative neighborhoods and backgrounds. Administrators hope that these participants will be optimally positioned to serve as informational resources for neighbors.

## Strategies for Success

Despite the obvious benefits of these programs, they carry costs, including meals,

class materials, and branding items that might include pens or T-shirts. These programs are also reliant on agency presenters to provide information and build connections with the community. These are efforts that require time and energy of staff often already stretched thin.

Governments must also cope with the fact that these programs, like all programs that fall outside the basic services designation, are often the first to be cut in budget-tightening times. These drawbacks, however, can be largely mitigated by employing several key strategies:

- Appoint a well-respected facilitator within the organization. Obtain broad internal buy-in.
- Develop strong relationships with local civic organizations, neighborhood associations, schools/universities, and other government agencies for recruitment and, possibly, to defray costs.
- Be aware of staff strengths and weaknesses, adapting session formats accordingly. For directors with poor presentation skills, for example, bring in a versatile assistant and rely more heavily on hands-on exercises.
- Maintain small class sizes, provide ample time for interaction, and incorporate activities.
- Exploit fun activities. As one "birth mother" of an academy said, "We put citizens in our bucket truck, and they think they are at a circus."
- Rely on evaluative tools and make changes as appropriate.
- Remain flexible, adapting the program to your organization and budget.

Citizen academies won't solve budget woes, reduce turnover, or stop lawsuits. But properly implemented, these programs can educate residents in budgeting, planning, and law enforcement and, in the process, end "Jaywalking" in all of its manifestations. **PM**



**MIKE YAWN**  
Professor, Political Science  
Sam Houston State University  
Huntsville, Texas  
mike.yawn@shsu.edu

BY CHRISTINE COMAFORD

# STOP SCARING THE COMPETENCE OUT OF YOUR EMPLOYEES

How to shift employees into their “smart state”

**M**ost leaders know that command and control is obsolete and that fear doesn’t motivate employees. In fact, command and control does quite the opposite. Only the worst “bully bosses” make it a practice to scream at an employee, call the individual abusive names, or threaten to fire the person.

Yet even good managers can unintentionally strike fear in the hearts of their workforce. More accurately, strike it into their brains. And the consequences are more dire than a manager might realize.

From time to time, all managers probably say or do things that spark unconscious fears in employees. They might dismiss their ideas or give performance feedback a little too harshly. The primitive fight, flight, or freeze part of the brain takes control. When that happens—when people are stuck in what I call the “critter state”—all they can focus on is their own survival.

In other words, everything that makes them good employees—their ability to innovate, to collaborate, to logically think through problems—goes out the window. All decision making is distilled down to one question: What course of action will keep me safest?

Obviously, an organization needs its employees to be in control of their whole brain—especially the parts responsible for the emotional engagement and intelligent decision making that lead to high performance. Today’s economy demands it. That’s why leaders need to know how to use the best tactics from neuroscience to get teams unstuck and shift them into their so-called smart state.

So how might we be inadvertently holding back our teams and crippling

an organization’s culture? What, exactly, are leaders doing to send people into their critter states? Here are some common offenders.

## **1. You help out by giving solutions. Or, you advocate when you should be inquiring.**

When we consistently tell people what to do instead of encouraging them to figure things out on their own, we develop a company full of order-takers instead of innovators. By training them to always ask, we create a workforce of employees who are perpetually frozen in their critter state.

On the other hand, when we engage them in solving problems themselves, we create a sense of safety, belonging, and mattering, which are the three things humans crave most after basic needs like food and shelter are met. And, of course, we help them develop a sense of ownership that will serve them—and the employing organization—well.

Start inquiring and see what happens. Ask: “How would you do it?” “What impact might your course of action have?” After you do this a few times with someone, the person will start expecting you to ask questions instead of give orders. He or she will start coming to you with ideas, seeking feedback and validation. And after a few of these sessions, the person will be saying, “I have a plan, here it is, and speak now if you aren’t okay with it.” Finally, she’ll stop coming to you altogether.

Aim for five inquiries for every advocacy. An advocacy is when a person gives orders and tells people what to do instead of engaging them in finding a solution, which is what inquiring does. You’ll be amazed by what a powerful

difference this makes with the employees and the organization.

## **2. Meetings are heavy on sharing and point-proving, light on promises and requests.**

Why might a meeting scare employees? Because confusion and uncertainty create fear. Meetings that are rambling and unfocused send people into the fight-flight-freeze of the critter state. On the other hand, short, sweet, high-energy meetings that have a clear agenda keep everyone in their smart state.

The key is to understand these five types of communication:

1. Information-sharing.
2. Sharing of oneself.
3. Debating, decision making, or point proving.
4. Requests.
5. Promises.

The typical meeting is heavy on the first three and light on the last two. Ideally, a person should focus on only enough information-sharing in order to solicit requests from parties who need something and promises from parties who will fill that need.

Tune up your communication by sharing information by e-mail and keeping meetings shorter as a result. If everyone learns that information will be shared 24 hours before a meeting, they will come better prepared to tackle the issues at hand and the result will be meetings that are efficient and effective, and that keep your team happy and clipping along to glorious accountability and execution.

## **3. You give feedback to employees without first establishing rapport.**

Imagine for a moment that your employees are antelopes. Because you have authority, they quite naturally view you as a lion. It’s not that you’re purposely ruling with teeth and claws. It’s simply their critter brains at work, peering out and coding who is a friend and who is a foe.

That means unless you can get employees to see you as just another antelope, you won't be able to influence them. They'll be too busy ensuring their own survival to accept your feedback.

I could offer neuroscience tactics for helping leaders get inside employees' heads and truly establish rapport. But most of them are too complex to convey in an article. Meta programs—how a person processes information is one of the most potent—so here are three shortcut phrases that help people feel safe enough to shift out of their critter state.

- **“What if. . .”** When you use this preface to an idea or suggestion, you remove ego and reduce emotion. You're curious—not forcing a position, but kind of scratching your head and pondering. This enables someone to brainstorm more easily with you.
- **“I need your help.”** We call this a dom-sub swap, because when the dominant person uses it, they are enrolling the subordinate person and asking them to rise up and swap roles. This is an especially effective phrase when you want a person to change his or her behavior or take on more responsibility.
- **“Would it be helpful if . . .”** When someone is stuck in the critter state and spinning or unable to move forward, offering up a solution will help illuminate a possible course of action or positive outcome.

**4. You focus on problems rather than outcomes.** First, some background. People lean toward three default roles—victim, rescuer, or persecutor. Dr. Stephen Karpman first created this concept, and his article detailing these roles won the Eric Berne Memorial Scientific Award in 1972.<sup>1</sup> The roles are interdependent—there must be a persecutor for there to be a victim for the rescuer to save—and they play out every day in the workplace.

Together, these roles make up the tension triangle—and when we're in it we're problem focused. We see everything as a problem, which causes anxiety, which leads to a reaction, which

## THE SOLUTION IS TO SWITCH YOUR FOCUS FROM PROBLEMS TO OUTCOMES.

leads to another problem. It's a self-perpetuating cycle.

The solution is to switch your focus from problems to outcomes. Instead of asking, “What's wrong?” and “Why is this happening?” we should ask, “What do we want?” and “How will we create it?”

Being outcome focused feels different. It's empowering and energizing and fills you with confidence. It firmly places you in your smart state, where possibility, choice, innovation, love, and higher consciousness are abundant.

Victims become outcome creators. Rescuers become insight creators. Persecutors become action creators. So, how do you make the switch?

First, identify each role that you and the other person are playing. Speak to the other person as the positive counterpart. If that person is in victim mode and you tend to be a rescuer, don't say things like “I'll make it better for you” or “Let me help you.”

Instead, say, “What outcome would you like?” and “What will having that do for you?” If you do this in every conversation, and teach others to make the shift as well, you will transform your culture and quickly start getting the outcomes you want.

Also realize that “change” can be framed the wrong way. Almost all leaders want—probably need—their organizations to change. It's the only way that growth can be achieved. Yet, people inherently resist change.

In fact, according to business development executive Rodger Bailey's groundbreaking work on meta programs

in the workplace,<sup>2</sup> 65 percent of Americans can tolerate change only if it is couched in a specific context (see author Shelle Rose Charvet's book on meta programs, *Words That Change Minds*, for a source on Rodger Bailey's work<sup>3</sup>). That context is “sameness with exception.”

What does this mean? Essentially, it means leaders need to present the change as merely an improvement to what already is being done: The bad stuff is being removed, and good stuff is being added. Seriously, this is the best way to package a change message. And don't use the C-word. Use “growth” instead.

By the way, resistance isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's just the first step on the organizational path. The other four steps are mockery, usefulness, habitual, and new standard. But once you can clear the resistance hurdle—and it will go fairly quickly when you present change the way I just described—you're well on your way.

Did you recognize leaders—even yourself—in the list above? If so, you're not alone. And the good news is that once you can make some relatively simple changes, you are likely to see dramatic improvements in your results.

All leaders want to outperform, outsell, and out-innovate the competition. And most of us have teams that are quite capable of doing so. We just need to stop scaring the competence out of them. **PM**

### ENDNOTES

1 Stephen Karpman, “Fairy Tales and Script Drama Analysis,” *Transactional Analysis Bulletin* 7, no 26 (1968): 39–43. For more information on Dr. Stephen Karpman's work, see <http://www.karpmandramatriangle.com/index.html>.

2 Rodger Bailey's work in NeuroLinguistic Programming (NLP) particularly his Language and Behavior (LAB) Profile, is the foundation of Shelle Rose Charvet's *Words That Change Minds*.

3 Shelle Rose Charvet, *Words That Change Minds*, 2nd ed. (Kendall Hunt, 2010).



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BY ALLEN ELKIN

## RELAX ALREADY!

### 10 habits of highly effective stress managers

**I**f you're reading this, chances are you're one of the millions of people who are stressed in every aspect of their lives: at work, at home, in relationships, financially, and even by little things like traffic jams and rude cashiers.

Unfortunately, the stress epidemic sweeping our country is not only widespread, it's also on the rise. According to a 2012 study by the American Psychological Association, 77 percent of Americans say that they "regularly experience physical symptoms caused by stress"; 73 percent have "experienced psychological symptoms"; and 48 percent feel that "their stress has increased over the past five years."

It's impossible to get through life without encountering stress, and unfortunately, most people don't learn the correct ways to cope with it. That's why symptoms ranging from feeling tired, irritable, and worried to experiencing muscle tension, indigestion, a lowered immune system, and even heart disease are so common.

The good news is, managing your stress isn't a magical process. It's all about mastering new behaviors and finding new ways of looking at yourself and your world. If you're committed, you can retrain how your body and mind react to all types of stressors. You're more in control than you may think you are.

Here are the 10 habits of highly effective stress managers:

**Know how to relax.** To keep stress at bay, you need to know how to let go of tension, relax your body, and quiet your mind. Keep in mind that there is no one right way to relax. Some people prefer meditation or focused breathing, while others gravitate toward a more active approach, with techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation.

Attaining a state of greater relaxation, however, need not be limited to formal

approaches. Any activity that distracts you from the stressors of your world can be relaxing. It can take the form of a hot bath, a stroll in the park, a cup of coffee (decaffeinated, though), or a good book or favorite TV program.

**Eat right and exercise often.** You may not like hearing that your unhealthy diet and sedentary lifestyle might be affecting your ability to handle stress—but it's true. Your body needs a balanced, healthy diet to maximize your ability to cope. This means giving your body the right nutrients that will supply adequate reserves of vitamins, minerals, and other essential elements. And don't forget the liquids. Your body needs to be adequately hydrated in order to operate optimally.

Don't forget about exercise too, which can reduce stress, help you relax, and make you feel happy. Engage in some form of physical activity regularly—at least twice a week and more often when possible. The secret of exercise is building it into your life by scheduling it.

**Get enough sleep.** Everyone knows what it's like to wake up tired, drained, and grumpy after a bad night's sleep. Your body and mind just aren't prepared to tackle stress, and as a result, problems and irritants seem even more overwhelming than usual. Keep in mind that while individual needs vary, most people do well on seven or eight hours per night, so make a reasonable bedtime a priority.

Try to get to bed at a consistent time, leaving you enough hours of sleep before you hear your alarm. Before bed, don't get over-stimulated by exercise or an argument with your partner or spouse. Keep the room dark and cool. Stay away from large meals just before bedtime. Avoid stimulants like smoking or caffeinated drinks. And reserve the bedroom for sleep (and sex) if at all feasible.

**Don't worry about the unimportant stuff.** Many—if not most—of life's stressors are relatively inconsequential. But putting things into perspective is often much easier said than done. Ask yourself: "On a scale of 1 to 10, how would I rate the relative importance of my stressor?"

Remember that 8s, 9s, and 10s are the biggies and can involve such major life problems as serious illness, the loss of a loved one, a major financial loss, and so on. Your 4s, 5s, 6s, and 7s are problems of moderate importance: a lost wallet, a broken-down car, or a broken water heater. Your 1s, 2s, and 3s are your minor worries or stressors: forgetting your wallet, having your watch battery die, or getting a bad haircut.

Now, rate the level of worry and distress you feel about that stressor. Again, use a similar 10-point scale, where 10 represents a great deal of distress.

Finally, compare the two numbers. If the amount of stress you're experiencing is larger than the importance of the stressor, you're probably overreacting.

**Don't get angry often.** Anger is a stress emotion that affects your mood, your patience, your ability to effectively relate to others, and even your physical health. That's why knowing how to avoid becoming angry and losing your temper is a skill well worth mastering. Learning how to control the expression of your anger, which can often make a bad situation worse, thus creating more stress, can also spare you a lot of grief and regret.

Much of your anger comes from various forms of distorted thinking. You may have unrealistic expectations of others—and of yourself—that trigger anger when they aren't met. Your anger may arise from low frustration tolerance, where you exaggerate your inability to cope with discomfort. You may be "catastrophizing and awfulizing" or creating some can't-stand-it-itis.

**Be organized.** You don't have to label every drawer in your house or structure your calendar down to the minute, but it is important to feel a sense of control over your environment. A cluttered and disorganized life leads to a stressed life. If you're skeptical, just think about how frustrating it feels to get out the door 10 minutes late in the morning because you couldn't find some important papers or your keys.

Getting organized means developing effective organizational strategies and tools. For some, clutter is the prime culprit. For others, the lack of an organizational strategy becomes the roadblock; for example, wondering where, exactly, you stored a particular file.

to-do lists and your calendar (paper or digital), you have a powerful organizational tool to help you gain control over your time. To know where your time goes, you may try keeping a simple log, tracking how you use your time. Doing this for even a few days gives you a good picture of what needs to be changed.

**Have a strong support system.**

Don't neglect meaningful people in your life. After all, they can support you, provide a listening ear, make you laugh, distract you, and even offer solutions to life's problems. For these reasons, spending time with your family, friends, and acquaintances is an effective stress buffer.

peers, their religion, their teachers, the media, their employer, and more, and those adopted values cause them to behave, interact, eat, vote, believe, and live in ways that are unfulfilling.

Ask yourself: What do I want to get out of life, and what is truly important to me? What may have seemed worthwhile and important at one point may not be as valuable and meaningful to you now. The greater the congruence between your values and your goals, and between your decisions and your actions, the lower your stress level will be.

**Have a good sense of humor.** The old saying "laughter is the best medicine" has stuck around because it's true. Whenever you can laugh at a frustrating situation or even yourself, you're well on your way to putting stressors into perspective and not allowing them to infect your mindset. Plus, laughter and smiles—whatever their source—simply feel good and are a natural mood booster.

Laugh at life's little hassles and annoyances. Don't take yourself too seriously. And remember this bit of wisdom: He who laughs lasts.

These qualities are the most important skills and behaviors for reducing stress and creating stress resilience. But don't let applying them to your life stress you out.

Pick just one or two strategies to focus on, and once you've incorporated them into your life, move on to a few more. Before long, you'll be enjoying life's pleasures and satisfactions more while devoting less time and energy to draining, unhealthy worries and frustrations. **PM**

## THE GOOD NEWS IS, MANAGING YOUR STRESS ISN'T A MAGICAL PROCESS. IT'S ALL ABOUT MASTERING NEW BEHAVIORS AND FINDING NEW WAYS OF LOOKING AT YOURSELF AND YOUR WORLD.

Fortunately, once you've identified what your organizational challenges are, you can overcome them with help from others and advice from books, articles, and these days, online instructional videos.

**Manage time efficiently.** How aware are you of how you spend your time? How much of your day is productive, and how much time is spent doing nothing, procrastinating, or goofing off?

While there's nothing wrong with a little downtime, you do need to use your time wisely and be in control of your schedule if you want to minimize stress. No one likes the feeling of having a long to-do list and little time in which to accomplish those tasks—especially because of poor time management.

A good place to start is creating and using organizational lists. By combining

If you find that your social support system is a little thin, consider ways of meeting others like joining a book group, playing a sport, or hiking, walking, or biking in a local park. Going online can make this process much easier.

Your local church or synagogue can also bring you into contact with people who share your values and goals. And don't rule out a volunteer experience. You can help others and meet new friends.

**Live according to one's values.**

Examine your values and goals, assessing whether they truly represent who you are and where you want to go in life. Pursuing values that aren't reflective of the kind of life you want can lead you to an unhappy and stressful place.

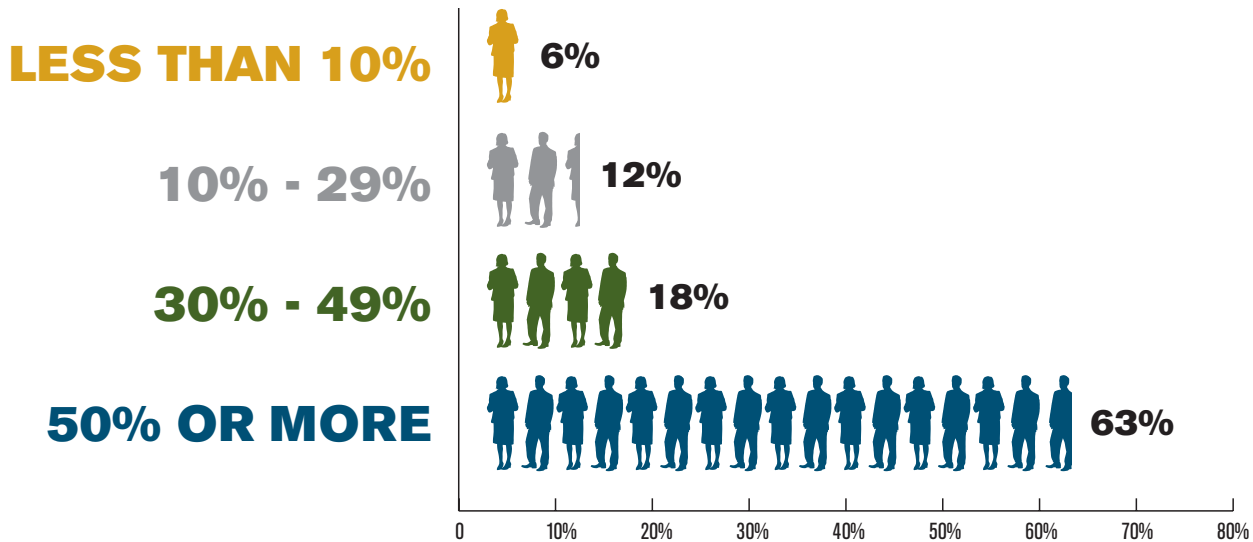
People can cling to core values that they inherited from their parents, their



**ALLEN ELKIN, Ph.D.**, a clinical psychologist and director of The Stress Management & Counseling Center, New York, New York, is author of *Stress Management For Dummies®* (Second edition, Wiley, May 2013, ISBN: 978-1-118-52392-6, \$22.99). For information, visit [www.wiley.com](http://www.wiley.com).

## BY THE NUMBERS

This chart shows the percentage of local government employees covered by collective bargaining agreements according to responses to ICMA's survey *Alternative Service Delivery 2012*.



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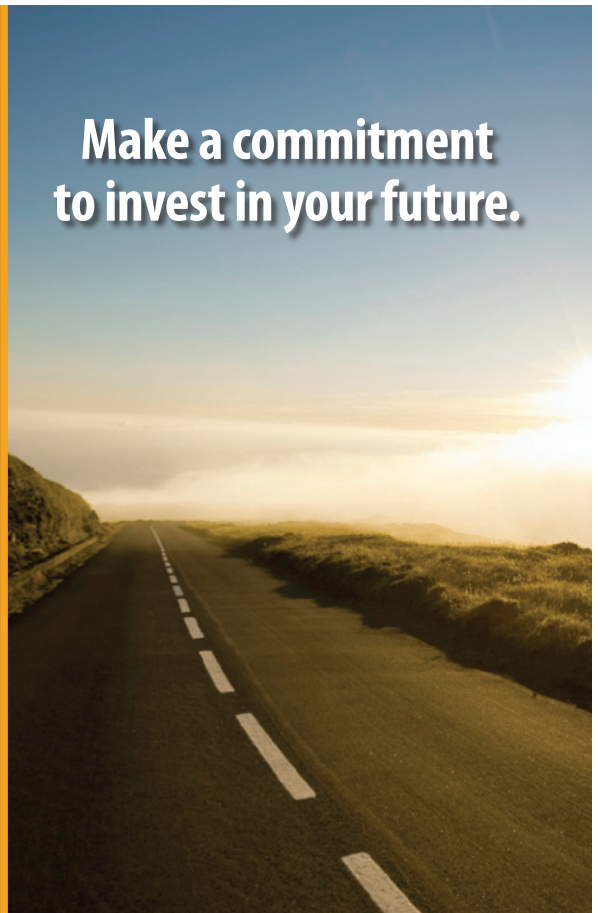
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BY ALLEN DINKEL

# CONSIDER IT A PACKAGE DEAL

Reflections on the hand dealt a manager's family

**T**o many, I am the city administrator; to one lady, I am her husband; and to three girls, I am dad.

For the past 24 years, I have been a city manager or administrator in four Kansas cities. For 36 years, I have been married to Paula and for 31 years, I have been Dad to Emily. Wendy was born a little more than two years later, and Macey surprised us when she was born some 10 years later.

Since I have served my entire local government management career in cities of 2,000 to 6,000 population, there is a great chance of everyone in the community knowing my family. They see us at community events, at church, and at school events. I used to remind the girls that everyone in town was watching them, and I would find out about their secrets.

activities. The girls were involved in school activities, including sports, debate, speech, choir, and band, Girl Scouts, and 4-H.

The family is noticed because of my status in the community, and throughout the years, my wife and daughters have experienced the negative side of being part of a manager's family. Minor issues like a classmate getting a speeding ticket or being arrested by a police officer affected my daughters at school.

Once, during a controversial city issue, I was riding a bicycle as one daughter was running down the street trying to get in shape for an upcoming cross-country season when we were both verbally threatened by a person who sped by us in a car. My daughter was scared, and I felt bad that she was being dragged into the controversy.

**SINCE I HAVE SERVED MY ENTIRE LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT CAREER IN CITIES OF 2,000 TO 6,000 POPULATION, THERE IS A GREAT CHANCE OF EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY KNOWING MY FAMILY.**

### A Family Affair

Unlike many other occupations, when a local government hires a manager or administrator, it not only gets a person to handle the day-to-day operation of the local government, but also a package deal with the family.

With our family, the cities got a dad who spent time helping with the youth track program, the softball team, or the 4-H program. Paula was involved as a mom at school; baked cakes and cookies for church events; or served as volunteer for a number of different committees and

My family has also had to deal with the times when the "political" winds had shifted and it was time to seek another position.

### When Disaster Strikes

On April 21, 2001, I was serving as manager in Hoisington when one-third of the city was struck by a devastating tornado. Any manager who has had to deal with a disaster that affects a large portion of a community knows that he or she will be thrust into the middle of the event. In my family's case, we added to the drama

as our house was destroyed, too.

My wife has always understood that I have a job to do; however, in the aftermath of the tornado, she had to deal with post-storm issues most family members were dealing with together because I was at work 18 hours a day.

I, on the other hand, was the center of attention. I was busy with city issues and dealt all day with residents who had lost their homes and businesses, the news media, the governing body, the FEMA officials, and the host of others who needed attention. My family literally had to "take a number" to see me.

They found a motel room in a neighboring community 10 miles away, while I slept in my office for five days. My family knew I was busy, but we had a rule that any family member could walk into my office if the door was open even though I may be with someone.

### Finding Perspective

Daughter Macey was six at the time and would love to come in and sit on my lap as I was visiting with someone. The good part is that it became an accepted practice. As I understand now, the disaster will end but the family won't.

Paula and I have been fortunate to have three children who have done well from the classroom to athletics or whatever they participate in, and yes, I am one proud father. During one annual evaluation with a governing body, a comment was made that I talk too much about my kids. I commented that I probably do and I am proud of their achievements, but I also replied that everyone in the city would be talking about them if they were in trouble.

For more than 24 years I have enjoyed the challenges of working in a local government management position, but I always remember it is more important to be a husband, a father, and now a grandpa. **PM**



**ALLEN DINKEL**  
City Administrator  
Neodesha, Kansas  
adinkel@ci.neodesha.ks.us



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# Regional Summits 2014

ICMA members and state officers are invited to attend the Regional Summit in their region to network with colleagues, participate in a professional development opportunity in the form of an ICMA University workshop, discuss ICMA issues and programs, and provide feedback to the ICMA Executive Board and staff. ICMA Executive Director Bob O'Neill with Felicia Logan, director of Leadership Development, will lead an ICMA University workshop on a topic of importance to local government management.

Mark your calendars and plan to attend this unique offering in your Region.

## 2014 Regional Summit Dates and Locations:

**Southeast Regional Summit**  
March 6–7 | Williamsburg, Virginia

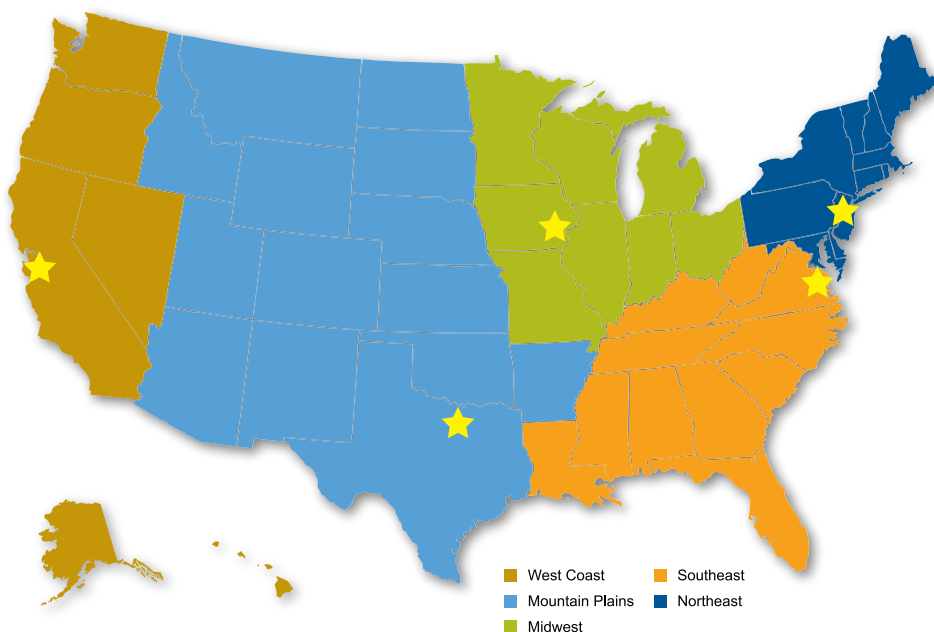
**Midwest Regional Summit**  
March 20–21 | Iowa City, Iowa

**Northeast Regional Summit**  
April 3–4 | Princeton, New Jersey

**Mountain Plains Regional Summit**  
May 1–2 | Dallas Metro Area, Texas

**West Coast Regional Summit**  
May 8–9 | San Jose, California

Hotel TBD  
For more information,  
visit [icma.org/SUMMIT](http://icma.org/SUMMIT)



The **Young Professionals Leadership Institute (YPLI)** precedes each Regional Summit on Tuesday and Wednesday (Southeast Regional YPLI: March 5–6; Midwest Regional YPLI: March 19–20; Northeast Regional YPLI: April 2–3; Mountain Plains YPLI: Apr 30–May 1; West Coast YPLI: May 7–8). **Managers are encouraged to invite assistants, assistant managers, and those who are beginning their career path in local government to attend this special leadership skill building institute.** The cost is \$99. For more information, visit [icma.org/YPLI](http://icma.org/YPLI).

This Institute is made possible with generous support from our partner, ICMA-RC.

