

Chapter 6: CCI Commissioner Handbook:

County Communications and Public Relations

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What today's session is REALLY about

- How to forge a relationship between your Board/your County, and your citizens/taxpayers
- Awakened and nurtured through communications
- Framed through the lens of your service and stewardship stories
- Leading to familiarity, trust and public support for you and the role of County Government

TODAY'S CONTENT

Consider How To:

- ✓ Reclaim the conversation about the purpose of County Government
- ✓ Connect what people care about with your role in their lives
- ✓ Personify the role of government
- ✓ Build and sustain public familiarity and trust in your Board of County Commissioners and your County government

TODAY'S CONTENT

- Introduce: How To Tell Your County Story:
 - ✓ Mine for stories of service and stewardship
 - ✓ Evaluate 'so what' and 'why should I care' from the citizen's perspective
 - ✓ What is the public benefit?
 - ✓ Telling the human story triggers citizen engagement

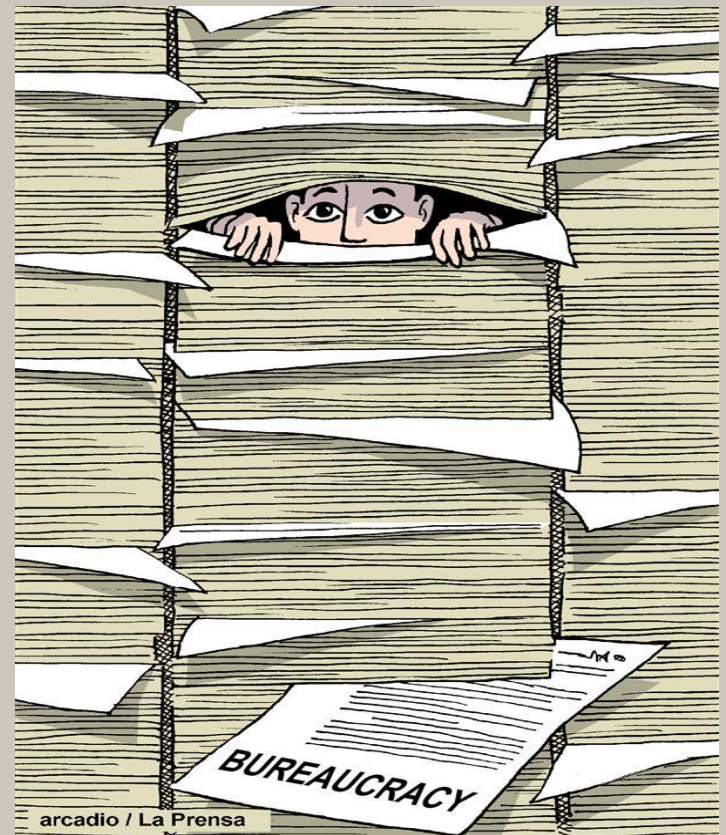
TODAY'S CONTENT

- Provide a structure for understanding how to:
 - ✓ Prepare for
 - ✓ Manage
 - ✓ Leverage
 - ✓ Sustain media relationships to a mutually-beneficial end

Public Perception of Government



Search ID: prin18
Democrats and Republicans enter into yet another intellectual debate about the issues



Public Perception of Government

- Americans' trust in federal government at all time low
- Perception of misdeeds of one government is evidence of universal misconduct
- Inability to separate branches of government

Public Perception of the Media

Gallup Poll September 14, 2016

- Divisive presidential election has eroded Americans' trust and confidence in the media
- Dropped to its lowest level in Gallup polling history
- Only 32% saying they have a great deal or fair amount of trust in the media

Journalism School Teachings - Our Reality

Society of Professional Journalism Code of Ethics referring to the role of the professional journalist:

- *“Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public’s business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.”*

Media Coverage of County Government

- What drives media pursuit of government?
 - Their role as government watchdogs
 - They EXPECT us to be good stewards of public assets and to do the right thing
 - When we don't - it's news

Understanding Journalists - They are:

- Neither friend nor foe
- Often unfamiliar with the fundamentals of the topic they pursue - need a subject matter expert
- Storytellers with a direct link to our constituents
- Have a job to do and will do it with - or without - our help

State of the News Media - Our Opportunity

- Many *local, community* newspapers are evolving to a new normal
- Recognizing the role of local newspapers in building citizenship working with government
- Taking a civic journalism approach -- aspiring to:
 - Retain role as watch dog
 - Abandon role as attack dog
 - Add role as guide dog

What does the media want most?

- Polite, timely responsiveness - 25%
- Access - 25%
- Reliable, accurate information - 25%
- A credible source - 25%

What do we want?

- Objectivity in reporting
- An opportunity to put our best foot forward
- Reasonable time to respond
- Fair and full disclosure of the news angle in play
- To be a trusted, reliable resource

Four Steps to Successful Media Relations

- **Prepare** for the opportunity by being proactive in your news media plan and relationships
- **Manage** the unexpected
- **Leverage** your investment
- **Sustain** media relationships to a mutually-beneficial end

Step One: Prepare

- Are you news media relationSHIP ready?
 - Have a media response protocol/policy?
 - Widely known by all employees?
 - Have a ‘media as our partner’ culture?
 - Proactively engaged in media relations?

Step One: Prepare

- Are you news media relationSHIP ready?
 - Practiced in stating the public benefit/impact of all Board decisions?
 - Continually mining for human stories of your service?
 - Do you have the best messenger aligned with your key messages?

Step One: Prepare

- Reputation is tested by the unexpected
- Maintain a running list of reputation vulnerabilities and crisis management plans:
 - Natural disasters
 - Personnel issues
 - Litigation
 - Ethics issues
 - Controversial land uses
 - Accusations of misdeeds

Step Two: Manage the News Media

First impressions matter. Always be:

- Polite
- Responsive
- Accessible
- Available
- You will become known/will earn a reputation as a reliable, responsive source

Step Two: Manage the News Media

- The interview begins when you pick up the phone. Nothing is off the record.
- Note name of the caller and media outlet
- Note the reason for the call/subject matter
- Note the deadline
- Note the best way to reach contact reporter and best timing

Step Two: Manage the News Media

- If the topic is a personnel issue, a criminal matter under investigation, a litigation issue, a child welfare issue make your limitations clear
- Do what you say you'll do - remember the deadline

Step Three: Leverage your investment

- We all have a story to tell. Know yours.
- Seize the moment with key messages.
- What message do you most want your constituents to know in context of this story?
- Messages are building-blocks for the story
 - Simple/clear - no jargon
 - Sound bite format
 - Consistent

Step Four: Sustaining the relationship

- Understand what makes news
- Understand media's #1 news source
- Mine for human interest stories that personify acting in the public interest
- Continue to grow your reputation for responsiveness, accessibility and availability
- Be a trusted media resource

What About All the Good News?

- The public benefit/human stories of our investments in:
 - Public Safety
 - Natural Resources/Parks/Trails/Open Space
 - Transportation
 - Human Services/Public Health
 - Fiscal Responsibility
 - Partnerships among others in the community

How are stories conceived?

- Public benefit, human stories are happening daily in your organization. Look for them in:
 - Your budget book/spending priorities
 - Your public meeting agendas/decisions
 - Your service successes
 - Your legislative actions on behalf of the community
 - New programs/projects/initiatives

Storytelling Success is in the Framing

- The greatest commandment of storytelling:

MAKE ME CARE

- ✓ Personify the role of government
- ✓ Feature a human face/a beating heart
- ✓ Connect what people care about
with the role of government in their lives
- ✓ Answer the ‘so what’ and ‘why should I care’
questions

Storytelling Done Well - Paired with Visuals

- Increases community engagement
- Accelerates comprehension
- Tugs at heartstrings
- Connects and persuades
- Makes ideas stick
- Builds familiarity and trust

Personal Technology & the County Website

Is your website responsive/mobile friendly?

PEW RESEARCH CENTER DATA

- 68% of Americans own some kind of smartphone

Smartphone Use for Government Info.

- U.S. Smartphone Use in 2015 (Pew Research)
- 40% use smartphone to ‘look up government services or information’
- Underscores the influence of personal technology on how we communicate
- Increased opportunity to be the primary source for our own information

Social Media and County Communications

PEW RESEARCH CENTER DATA (November 2016)

- 8 in 10 Americans (79%) use Facebook
- Twitter (24%)
- Pinterest (31%)
- Instagram (32%)

Douglas County Online Newsroom

- [Douglas County Website](#)
- [Douglas County Online Newsroom](#)

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Funds strengthen County's safety net

More than \$131,000 in grant funds were approved this week to 16 nonprofit programs that help serve the most vulnerable populations in the County.

The funds, received by the County annually from the Philip S. Miller Trust, are distributed to a variety of programs that focus on enhancing the quality of life for Douglas County residents, through emergency food assistance, medical care, youth development or crisis counseling. ...[Read More](#)

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Evacuation planning saves times, lives

Did you know that 80 percent of Americans live in counties that have been hit with a weather-related disaster since 2007, yet nearly 60 percent of American adults — including 56 percent of those living in Douglas County — do not have a plan in place if disaster hits? [...Read More](#)

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IN SUMMARY

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Q&A

Now let's talk!