

# Communicating with Your Citizens

*It's a Two-Way Street*

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# It's a Two-Way Street

## *Communicating with Citizens*

- Landscape Review
- Opportunity to Engage with Citizens
- Why bother? Keeping the public's trust
- How to broaden participation
- Tips and Techniques
- Listen & Learn



## Late 90's – '05: Road Rage - Era of Citizen Anger

*"They just don't get it – they're out of touch."*

- Gridlock, divided government
- Serious recession, economic uncertainty
- Drumbeat of anti-government campaigns
- Low Trust in government
- Divisive election, closest in history



# Gridlock is starting to break?

- Economic progress
- Gridlock breaking in Olympia
- Headway on big issues, high profile
- Voters not as angry state and locally
- Continued worry & anxiety nationally, internationally
- Voters more careful to scrutinize ballot/issues, less knee-jerk reaction
- You hear us, we'll hear you
- Watch the Economy



# Chance to re-engage with Citizens

- Not as highly charged
- Still skeptical – but not as quick to judge
- Opportunity for more rational debate
- Citizens want their voices heard, but also more willing to listen
- Aware the answers aren't always easy
- Tired of gridlock, want real solutions



# It's a Two-Way Street

Community Conversations - *Why Bother?*



# Community Conversations

## Outcomes & Opportunities

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



## Pitfalls & Problems

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.



# *Why Bother?*

## Clear Direction for Your City

- Build a foundation of trust
- Latitude for tough decisions
- Citizen input, chance to be heard, informed
- Chance for sides to hear differing views
- Address concerns, build consensus along the way
- Decisions based upon long-term best interest of the city, not short-term political influences



# Multi-Feedback

## Two-Way Communications

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- Council Meetings
- Community Forums
- Business and Civic Organizations
- AWC Citizen Feedback – Pulse Pads
- City Questionnaire via mail, email, website
- Opinion Leaders
- Public Opinion Research
- Other





# Expand & Recruit Community Participation

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- Get outside city hall
- Meet in Neighborhoods
- Business and Civic Organizations
- Banners in Visible Locations
- Post on Web Site
- Blast Emails – Forward, Pass it on
- Mail and Phone
- Personal Outreach



# Expand & Recruit Community Participation

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- Community Calendars
- Daily and Weekly newspapers
- Constituency Publications
- Local radio, local cable, TV
- Community Bulletin Boards – Schools, Churches, Community Centers etc.
- Banners – We want to hear from YOU!
- City Web site
- Top 10/100 Town Talkers
- Heads of civic org etc. – recruit their members
- Personal appeals, phone trees
- Voice mail recordings – don't forget to ask me about...
- Email signature – P.S. Mark your calendar – key staff and electeds
- Other ideas



# Agenda

## Community Forums

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- What to Expect
- Welcome, Candor, Respect for differing views
- Mostly hear to listen and learn from YOU
- Start with just the facts – everyone on the same page (15-20 minutes)
- Key Questions
- Breakouts / Report back to the larger group
- Record feedback for everyone to see
- Q&A and dialogue
- Summarize, compare – areas of consensus, differences, questions that need follow up



# Format Suggestions

## Community Forums

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- Council in listening mode
- Get outside City Hall
- Into Neighborhoods
- Facilitation - Possible Staff, civic leader or other facilitator
- Keep less formal, less intimidating
- Name tags, registration – emails
- No dais with rows of chairs
- Round tables ideally, face to face
- Wireless Microphone
- Snacks and Beverage

# Results

## *In Touch with your Community*

- Maintain public's trust
- Perhaps gain benefit of the doubt
- New, better ideas, solutions
- Stronger community involvement
- Lower the temperature
  - I may not agree, but at least "they" listened
- More informed public
- Dispel myths
- Balance loudest voices
- Community feels a real part of the solution, future
- Control the Agenda
- Decisions, Real Progress
- "They hear us!"





**Thank you.**

**Good Luck out there!**

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