

A Key Ingredient for City Manager Success: Effectively Communicating With Your City Council

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Panelists:

- Valerie Barone, City Manager, City of Concord
- Nelson Fialho, City Manager, City of Pleasanton
- Mona Miyasato, County Executive Officer, County of Santa Barbara
- Moderator: Kevin Duggan, West Coast Regional Director, ICMA

Why This Topic?:

- Cal-ICMA Survival Skills Project
- Elected Officials Often Site “Poor Communication” as a Reason for Dissatisfaction with the CM/CAO
- Effective Communication is Essential to Any Successful Relationship

Why This Topic?: It’s Not Easy!:

- Varying Expectations Between Parties re What Effective Communication “Looks Like”
- Can Be Taken for Granted—Not Sufficient Effort Made
- Trust is the Most Critical Characteristic in a Relationship and Effective Communication is the Key to Trust

Questions:

- Describe an Instance When You Worked with an Elected Official With a Different Communication Style and How Did You Address the Challenge?
- How Can You Maintain Communication With an Elected Official Who Refuses to Meet With You?

Questions:

- How Do You Establish Expectations Around Communication With the Governing Board as a Whole as Well as With Individual Members?
- How is Communication With Elected Officials Different in a “District Election” Environment ?

Questions:

- How Do You Encourage Effective Communication Between Elected Officials?
- What Communication Techniques/Systems Do You Use To Reinforce the Distinction Between Your Management Role and the Policy Role of Your Elected Officials?

Best Practices for Effectively Communicating With Elected Officials

1. Always Have Time for Your Elected Officials
2. Attempt to Get Governing Board Meeting Questions in Advance
3. Develop a Clear Understanding of Your Elected Officials Expectations re Communication/Information Sharing
4. Adjust Communication Techniques to the Needs of Individual Members While Establishing a “Floor” of Information for All

Best Practices for Working With Elected Officials

5. Be Particularly Sensitive to How/When You Communicate “Bad News”:
 - Timely
 - Accurate
 - Complete
6. Have Clear Guidelines re Elected Official Communication With Department Heads and Staff
7. Consistency Between Members (Not Say What They Want to Hear!)
8. Present Facts and Information Accurately and Completely

Best Practices for Working With Elected Officials

10. Don't Engage in Complaining Among Councilmembers
11. Focus on Not Only WHAT You Communicate, But HOW You Communicate It
12. Re-Establish Communication Expectations Whenever the Council Changes
13. Listen More Than Talk

Best Practices for Working With Elected Officials

14. Encourage/Promote Effective Communication Between Elected Officials
15. Exercise Patience!
16. Exercise “Emotional Maturity”!

The “Bottom Line”

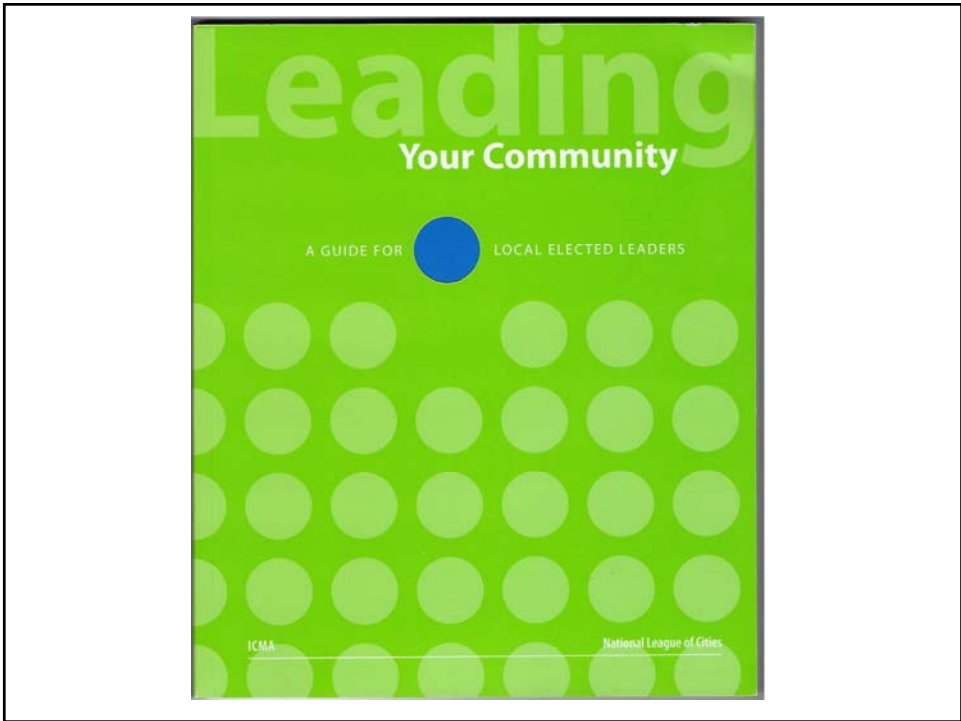
Effective Communication=Trust

Trust=A Successful Relationship

QUESTIONS

Resources:

- ICMA (International City/County Management Association): icma.org
- ILG (Institute for Local Government): ca-ilg.org



ICMA

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

