

## A Key For City Success: Effective Communication Between the City Council and City Manager

---

Mayors and Council Members' Executive Forum | June 19-20, 2019

## Panelists:

---

- Steve Hansen, Councilmember, Sacramento
- Larry Carr, Councilmember, Morgan Hill
- Christina Turner, City Manager, Morgan Hill
- Ed Shikada, City Manager, Palo Alto
- Moderator: Kurt Wilson, City Manager, Stockton

## Why This Topic?:

- Cal-ICMA Survival Skills Project
- “Poor Communication” is Often Given as the Reason for Difficulties in the City Council/City Manager Relationship
- Effective Communication is Essential to Any Successful Relationship
- A Successful City Council/City Manager Working Relationship is Critical to the Success of a Community

## 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 by One or Both Parties
- Trust is the Most Critical Characteristic in a Relationship and Effective Communication is the Key to Trust

## Questions:

---

- What Have You Found to be the Most Significant Challenges to Effective Communication Between the City Manager and City Council?
- What Techniques Have You Found Effective in Dealing With this Challenge?

## Questions:

---

- How Do You Establish Expectations Around Communication With the City Council Versus Communication With Individual Council Members?
- Should Communication With Elected Officials be Different in a “District Election” Environment?
- Why is it Generally Better to Communicate Through the City Manager Than With Individual Staff Members?

## Questions:

- How Can the Lack of Effective Communication Between Elected Officials Effect the City Manager and Staff and What Can be Done About It?
- How Can the Council and the City Manager Support Each Other in Effectively Communicating With the Public?

## Best Practices for Effective Communication

1. Make it a Priority—Take the Time
2. Develop a Clear Understanding of Mutual Expectations re Communication/Information Sharing
3. City Managers Should Adjust Communication Techniques to the Needs of Individual Members While Establishing a “Floor” of Information for All

## Best Practices for Effective Communication

4. Be Particularly Sensitive to How You React to “Bad News”.
5. Have Clear Understanding Regarding Communication With Department Heads and Staff
7. If You Have Concerns Share Them With the Manager, But at the Right Time and Place
8. Don't Jump to Conclusions Regarding Citizen Complaints

## Best Practices for Effective Communication

9. Don't Try to Get the Manager to Take Your Side in Disputes With Your Fellow Council Members
10. Focus on Not Only WHAT You Communicate, But HOW You Communicate It
11. Re-Establish Communication Expectations Whenever the Council Changes
12. Listen More Than Talk

## Best Practices for Effective Communication

13. Help to Develop a Consistent Message for the Council to Communicate to the City Manager and Staff
14. Communicate Agenda Item Issues and Concerns Before the Meeting
15. Exercise Patience!
16. Exercise “Emotional Maturity”!

## The “Bottom Line”

Effective Communication=Trust

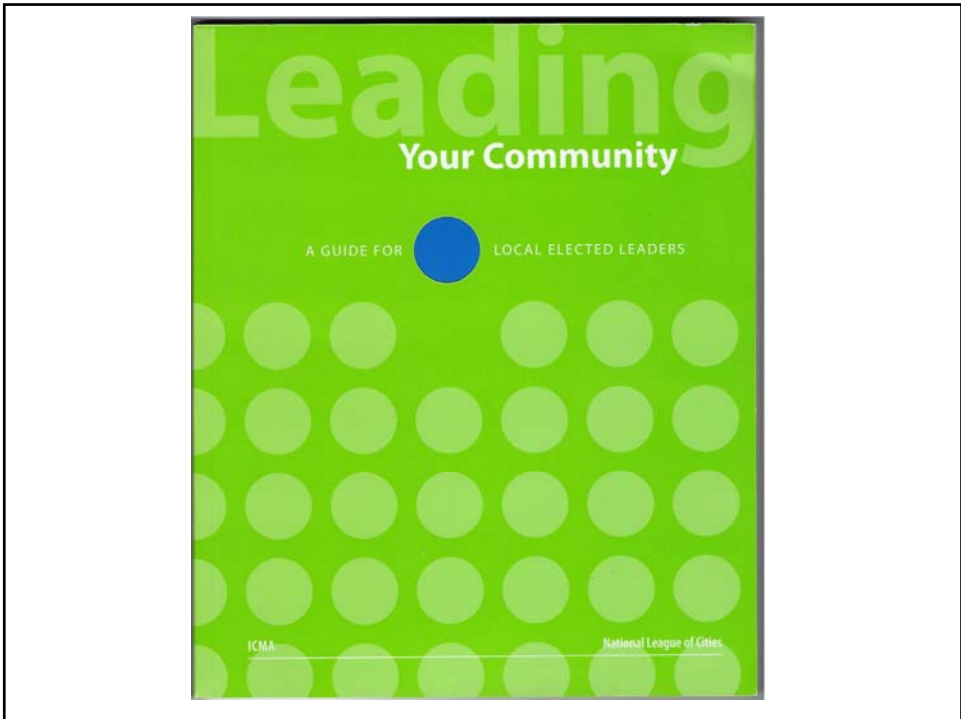
Trust=A Successful Relationship

## QUESTIONS

## Resources:

---

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





The logo for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). It features the letters 'ICMA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter 'I' is a simple vertical bar, 'C' is a circle with a small square in the center, 'M' is a simple vertical bar, and 'A' is a simple vertical bar with a small triangle at the top.

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY  
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

