



## City Attorney Escape Room:

- *How to package legal advice for non-attorney clients*

Cal Cities, 2021 City Attorneys' Spring Conference  
Friday, May 7, 2021; General Session, 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Attorney Development and Succession Committee  
Subcommittee on Essential Skills

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- The Cast



**Jennifer Mizrahi**  
*City Attorney*  
*of Desert Hot Springs*  
Stream Kim, Hicks,  
Wrage & Alfaro



**Deepa Sharma**  
*Senior Associate*  
Burke, Williams &  
Sorensen, LLP



**Seph Petta**  
*Partner*  
Shute, Mihaly  
& Weinberger

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• Commentary



**Joe Montes**  
*City Attorney for  
Alhambra and  
Santa Clarita*  
Burke, Williams &  
Sorensen, LLP



**Dan Sodergren**  
*City Attorney*  
City of Pleasanton



**Helen Holmes Peak**  
*City Attorney for  
San Marcos*  
Lounsbery Ferguson  
Altona & Peak

• Questions and Answers



**Naree Chan**  
*Deputy City Attorney*  
Oakland City  
Attorney's Office



**Derek Cole**  
*Managing Partner*  
Cole Huber LLP

● Three Acts



**Act 1**

Assignment  
Intake

**Act 2**

Working the  
Issue

**Act 3**

Presenting  
Options to the  
Client



**Act 1**

Assignment Intake

## Takeaways

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1. Putting out fires (@#\$% happens)
2. Accept that mistakes occur
3. Communicate early and regularly
4. Cultivate a culture of reporting mistakes
5. Focus on problem solving (not blaming)
6. Transform stumbling blocks to stepping stones (learn from mistakes)
7. Own the consequences of mistakes

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## Act 2

### Working the Issue

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## Takeaways

1. Check in early and often with your team
2. Double-check information
3. Conduct independent research
4. Use the resources of Cal Cities
5. Contact other city attorneys
6. Consider how best to communicate with department heads
7. Maintain good working relationships with staff

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## Act 3

### Presenting Options to the Client

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## Takeaways

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1. Hone your instincts
2. Ask clarifying questions
3. Present materials in an accessible format
4. Be budget conscious
5. Proactively foster a good working relationship with clients
6. Be direct, specific, and focused (avoid TMI)
7. Practice the art of delivering bad news

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Q & A

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