Conquering Climate Change Communication Challenges

What are Your Challenges?

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The objective of all communication is to create change.

A tool to create change

A Communication strategy
The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.

George Bernard Shaw (maybe)
Communication Training Outline

Today

- Brief overview of climate communication challenges
- Insights from Southern Nevada Water Authority
- Note taking considerations

Tomorrow

- A Three Steps Plus+ communication strategy building process
- Build a personalized communication strategy outline
Key Communication Training Objectives

1. Ability to develop a climate communication strategy to mindfully create change

2. Ability to respectfully address, in any and all situations:
   “I am not sure the climate is changing”
What are your primary climate change communication challenges?
1. Engaging in climate adaptation
2. Changing the planning approach
3. Investing in adaptation actions
4. Integrating climate science into decision making
A Story from Southern Nevada Water Authority

**Background**

- Wholesale water provider

- Provide drinking water to > 2 million residents and 40 million visitors annually

- 90% of water supply is from Colorado River, 10% local groundwater

- Traditional resource plan assumptions: annual supply volumes are fixed and explosive growth will continue indefinitely
We Took Steps to Overcome Inertia

- Internal capacity building
- Guest speakers
- Imbed into planning group
- Asked questions about traditional planning process

- Make incremental change
- Suggested climate uncertainty wasn’t that different from other uncertain variables
Key Lessons Learned

• Build Trust
• Be patient
• Avoid criticizing
• Highlight common ground
• Repeat, repeat, repeat
• Take advantage of a crisis
Engaging in climate adaptation:
• changing the planning approach
• investing in climate adaptation
• integrating climate science information into decision making
Challenging Internal Utility Communication Attributes

- Water as a “silent service”
- Organizational structure
- Talking about uncertainty
- Not an “engineering” conversation
- Highly politically divisive conversation – in a political decision making structure
Challenging Climate Change
Communication Attributes

• Difficulty developing a common baseline understanding

• Wicked Problem
Developing a Common Baseline

1. **Intuitive** – simple, easy
   - Designed to make a single view of the world around us
   - Highly sensitive to context

2. **Reflexive** – process complex information
   - To go back to easy and simple!
   - Hard work, anxiety producing
   - Has shortcuts – heuristics – we don’t even notice

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Two Modes Of Thinking – Intuitive And Reflexive, Daniel Kahneman, 2008
Wicked Problem Attributes

- Scientifically complex
- Socially – and politically --complex
- Multiple Stakeholders
- Interconnectivity of issues
- Data is incomplete or contradictory and highly uncertain
- Solutions are costly
- Solutions cannot be tested prior to use
- Solutions can create new problems
- There is no timeline end
Wicked Problems

Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well informed just to be undecided about them

Laurence J. Peter
Buy-in Requires: Engagement & Understanding
Develop Communication Products that Travel

You -> Your boss -> Division Manager -> Planning Group -> General Manager -> Governing Board/City Council -> Community
3 Steps Plus+
A Communication Strategy Development Process

1. Identify what your audience wants
2. Identify the information they need
3. Build a communication strategy that merges Rule #1 and #2
1,2,3 PLUS+

4

Build your own understanding and confidence in the materials – you need to be able to teach it!

5

Anticipate, Prepare and Practice for critical conversations
Note Taking Considerations

Step 1: Think Audience Needs
Step 2: Think Information: background & new
Establish a common value connector that ties to the utility mission
Audiences – What do they want to know?

1. When will we know more for certain, and therefore be able to plan, with certainty?

2. How do we plan under large uncertainty?
   - Technical
   - Communication
Challenge: Yours or theirs?

Why should our utility:
  • Engage in climate adaptation?
  • Change our planning approach?
  • Invest in climate adaptation?

Don’t get them mixed up!
Think about specific questions you might want to build a communication strategy to address tomorrow.
Think about Information Fill

What will you share from the training?
What else do you need?

- Impacts of change on the natural and built world
- Implications on water utility management
  - Vulnerability Assessment
  - Water Supply
  - Water Quality
  - Demand
  - Regulatory
  - Compliance
  - Finance
- Implications on community
Impacts and Implications of Warmer and Shorter Winters for Water Supply


Global Warming

Warmer and shorter winters

More rain on snow

Earlier Spring melt and runoff

Increased risk of flood damages to facilities

Altered recharge of groundwater aquifers

Altered aquifer levels and safe yield from groundwater sources

Altered groundwater quality

Possible needs for new sources of supply to meet peak demands in late summer and fall

Altered surface water quality

Altered process requirements for water treatment plants

KEY

- Climate Changes
- Impacts
- Implications
Impacts and Implications of Warmer and Shorter Winters for Water Supply

You will use these notes to support the exercise tomorrow.
| Potential information filler need | Potential new information need |
Questions?