EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATING WITH CONSTITUENTS

2019 COMMISSIONERS COURT ADMINISTRATIVE TRAINING
OBJECTIVES OF SESSION

• Develop your Message
• Communicate your Message
• Tools and Platforms
• Speaking the Language
Ralph Yarbrough campaigning on courthouse steps, Denison, Texas. 1934.

Photos by Russell Lee/Courtesy the Center for American History, UT-Austin
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO COMMUNICATE PUBLIC VALUE OF COUNTY EXPENDITURES?

• It’s Part of the Job
• It’s Your Duty
• Gain Public Support
• Increase the satisfaction of Constituents
• Build Trust Through Transparency
• Educate Citizens about County Government
COUNTY EXPENDITURES
TELL YOUR STORY
COMMUNICATION BASICS

Lasswell’s Communication Model

- WHO
- COMMUNICATOR
- SAYS WHAT
- MESSAGE
- IN WHICH CHANNEL
- MEDIUM
- TO WHOM
- RECEIVER
- WITH WHAT EFFECT?
- EFFECT
DEVELOP YOUR MESSAGE – OVERVIEW

• Identify Audience(s)
• Anticipate Audience Concerns & Interests
• What is the objective of your message?
  • What you say is not always what others hear.
• Take the time required to WRITE IT DOWN
• Discuss and share with others – NO SURPRISES!
IDENTIFYING YOUR AUDIENCES

- Who is your audience(s)?
- Civic Organization
- Neighbor
- Concerned Taxpayer
- Political Opponent
- …
ANTICIPATE CONCERNS AND QUESTIONS

• What was attendance like at public hearings?
• What budget increases/ decreases are anticipated?
• Be Sincere
• Be Honest
• Spontaneity is not your Friend
• Stay on Message
CRAFTING THE MESSAGE

• Take the Time to put the words on paper – if you can’t write it, you don’t know what your message is going to be
• Don’t Placate to the Audience
• Be Objective
KEY MESSAGE TREE

Overall Key Message
Contains Mission, Values, Vision, and Beliefs

Issue #1

Issue #2

Issue #3
MESSAGE TREE

• Use Simple 1-2-3- explanations
• Make every additional sentence quotable and able to stand on its own
• Don’t bore anyone with your details
• No technical jargon or acronyms
• Use analogies to explain complicated issues
• Never give long list of examples- cluster of 3
At _________________ County our goal is to_________________.

We do that by______________________________________________;
We do that by______________________________________________;
And we do that by___________________________________________.

Branch Issue #1:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Branch Issue #2:
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Branch Issue #3
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
BEST PRACTICES FOR CRAFTING THE MESSAGE

**DO**
- Be compassionate, understanding and empathetic (People want to be Heard)
- Be ready with your elevator speech. Practice it to perfection
- Be positive! Negativity breeds Negativity

**DO NOT**
- Do Not Blame Others.
- Do Not Make an issue out of something that no one else is.
- Do Not Build a platform for debate where one does not exist.
At __Cowpuncher__________ County our goal is to be a place that folks want to make home.

We do that by providing for public safety; We do that by maintaining safe county roads; And we do that by providing services that are important to our families.

Branch Issue #1:
_In the area of public safety, we aim to provide our Sheriff with the resources that he needs to keep our communities safe, and keep criminals off of the streets by maintaining our jail and providing for our County and District courts._

Branch Issue #2:
_We strive to provide safe all weather road surfaces for our growing rural populations by developing a highly skilled road and bridge workforce and providing the tools and equipment they need to ensure that your family and mine can travel safely around the county._

Branch Issue #3
_We are proud of the services, such as the county parks and library in Cowpuncher County. This along with the services offered by our great county departments make this county a great place to live and raise a family._
COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE - OVERVIEW

• Select the Media Platforms and Tools to Use
• Identify the Messengers (reporters)
COMMUNICATE YOUR MESSAGE - MEDIA

- Consider current platforms – website, email, Facebook, Twitter
- Where do you hear from your constituents currently
- Age demographics and platform considerations
- Op-Eds as a Tool
SOCIAL MEDIA
Majority of Americans now use Facebook, YouTube

% of U.S. adults who say they use ...

- YouTube: 73%
- Facebook: 68%
- Instagram: 35%
- Pinterest: 29%
- Snapchat: 27%
- LinkedIn: 25%
- Twitter: 24%
- WhatsApp: 22%

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018
A majority of Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram users visit these platforms on a daily basis

Among U.S. adults who say they use ___, the % who use each site ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform</th>
<th>Several times a day</th>
<th>About once a day</th>
<th>Less often</th>
<th>Daily</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snapchat</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Respondents who did not give answer are not shown. “Less often” category includes users who visit these sites a few times a week, every few weeks or less often.
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 3-10, 2018.
“Social Media Use in 2018”
PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Social media sites as pathways to news

% of U.S. adults who use each social media site and % of U.S. adults who get news from each site

Facebook
- Use site: 66%
- Get news on site: 45%

Twitter
- Get news on site: 15

Instagram
- Get news on site: 26

Snapchat
- Get news on site: 18

LinkedIn
- Get news on site: 21

Reddit
- Get news on site: 6

WhatsApp
- Get news on site: 11

Tumblr
- Get news on site: 4


PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Social media news use increases among older, nonwhite and less educated Americans

% of U.S. adults who get news from social media sites...

Note: Nonwhite includes all race and ethnic groups other than non-Hispanic whites.
Source: Survey conducted Aug. 8-21, 2017.
“News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2017”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
WAYS TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA
Proclamation proclaiming August, September and October as United Way months in Cooke County.

Cooke County United Way being recognized during Cooke County Commissioners’ Court this morning. According to a proclamation read by County Judge Jason Brinkley, the county proclaimed August, September and October as United Way months.
BROADCAST

PROVIDE USEFUL INFORMATION TO PEOPLE IN THE COUNTY
If you're heading north on Hwy 281 this morning outside of Comal County, please be aware! I'm sure it will be cleaned up soon, but it could take a while.

Allow some extra time if you're traveling FM311 this week. TXDOT has some repair work to do, and there will be alternating lane closures.
ENGAGE CITIZENS

SHED LIGHT ON ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE COMMUNITY.

ENCOURAGE PARTICIPATION
SELF- PROMOTE

NOW THAT YOU HAVE DEVELOPED A FOLLOWING – MAKE IT WORK FOR YOU!
Commissioners Court yesterday honored Ralph Martinez for 30 years of service to the residents of Comal County. Ralph works for the Facilities Maintenance Department, making sure the county’s downtown buildings are clean and well-maintained for the public and county employees. Thanks for all of your hard work, Ralph!
CRISIS COMMUNICATION

- Only effective if you have an existing community
- Share information as a trusted source
- Ex: Hurricane Harvey
ESTABLISH GUIDELINES

• Maintain control of account information
• Authorize a limited number of people to post to social media accounts
• Respond to negative comments, but then take the rest of the conversation offline
• Don’t placate
• Don’t post negative comments about others
• Don’t share “fake news” – unless you want to be the news
SHARE IMPORTANT INFORMATION
SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE

• Repetition – again and again and again…
  “Sticky” Messages

• What you say is not always what others hear
EXAMPLE: “STICKY MESSAGE” ABOUT COUNTY EXPENDITURES
SPEAKING THE LANGUAGE
ON-GOING EFFORT

• Audience discovery never stops
• Most decisions impacting constituents deserve a communication plan
• Effort pays off in the long run
IN SUMMARY

✓ Identify your audiences
✓ Create messages as a court
  ✓ “Sticky Messages”
✓ Decide on the media to use
✓ Be ready with your elevator pitch
✓ Be consistent in what you say
✓ Learn more about your constituents by implementing best practices
QUESTIONS?

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