Communication to the Public

Using Branding and Other Tools to Get the Message Out

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Workshop Goals

- Understand why communication is important year-round, not just during a crisis
- Learn more about communication tools commonly used by public and private organizations
Agenda

- Metropolitan Water District overview
- Why communication is important
- Common communication objectives
- Communication tools
- Summary
About MWD

- 6 counties; 5,200 Square Miles
- 18+ million people – half of the state’s population
- Regional economy: $600+ Billion
- Projected growth: ~220,000 people/year
- MWD provides about half of southern California’s supply
Metropolitan’s External Affairs Group

- Media Services
  - Printed publications, videos, advertising, press releases and media relations

- Customer and Community Support
  - Educational efforts with schools, sponsorships, inter-agency relations and large events
Metropolitan’s External Affairs Group cont’d

- Legislative
  - Federal, state and local interaction with elected officials
Communication is the key

- Good communication builds trust, relationships and understanding
- What does poor communication bring?
Example

- Algae bloom in a local reservoir is causing musty odor and taste.
- Poor or no communication could lead to rapid increase in calls to customer service, negative press coverage, and consumer lack of trust.
- Good communication will help people understand and stay calm.
Common Types of Communications Objectives

- **Urgent**
  - Alert customers to water contamination

- **Short-term**
  - Ask customers to temporarily reduce water use during shutdown

- **Long-term**
  - Inform customers about tap water quality
  - Promote rebate programs
Tools of the Trade

- Advertising
- Print and Electronic Communications
- Publicity
- Branding
- Presentations/Meetings
- One-on-one interaction
Advertising

- You control the message and where it goes
- Costs money
Example

- MWD recent water conservation campaigns
  - Use humor to cut through the clutter
  - Simple simple simple messages
  - Appeal to a diverse audience
Advertising

You’re suffering from an overactive sprinkler.
bewaterwise.com

Don’t blame your sprinkler for overwatering. It’s only doing what it’s been told.
bewaterwise.com
Television Advertising
Radio Advertising

“Fred” 60-second radio spot to promote water conservation
Print and Electronic Communications

- Brochures, fact sheets, reports, bill inserts
- Web sites
- Videos
- Public service announcements
Examples

10 Ways to Save Water Outdoors

Outdoor water: Better saved than sorry.

In all probability, you’re using your sprinkler far more than you need to. Go to bewaterwise.com and use the Watering Index to learn the optimum setting for your sprinkler. Better yet, landscape with beautiful native and California Friendly plants that thrive on two-thirds less water.
Publicity

- Press releases and media kits
- Good relationships with reporters
- Appointed and trained spokespeople
- Press events
- Newswires, b-roll, satellite news feeds
Example: publicity

Going Native
Why mixing is right for California's own plants

The beauty of natives
How to choose and use plants that are most at home in the Yard
Branding

A brand is a set of expectations and associations evoked from experience with a product, service or company. A way of thinking.
Value of Brand Building

- No need to continually resell
- Talk about programs collectively
- Establish marketing and offering roadmap
- Create bigger context
- Easy to expand
California Friendly Brand

“California Friendly” aims to inspire everyone to be water-wise
Examples of branding

Displays at Home Depot and other gardening stores
Presentations

- Speakers’ bureau
- Outreach to community groups
- Standard presentations and handouts
Community Meetings

- Organize community meetings
- Engage all stakeholders for full participation
- Report back on results
One-on-one interaction

- Be responsive
- Be positive
- Be engaging
- Be clear
- Listen
Summary

- Good communication is important year-round, not just during a crisis
- There are several communication tools to use to achieve objectives