

We all look forward to Superbowl Sunday; lots of food, good friends and commercials that cost millions and millions to produce. We see the funniest, the zaniest, the sexiest...all in an attempt to get our attention to buy.

The same principals holds true for any type of public outreach effort.

Whether it pertains to water rates, water use or water quality, at one time or another as responsible operators, we will have to craft a message to our customers. Actually, a problem doesn't need to exist before a campaign begins.

After all, the mantra of the source water program is prevention is the best medicine. The key to success in any outreach campaign is targeting your message to a specific audience and having them respond to your message.

### **Sevens Steps to a Good Outreach Plan**

**Step 1** Define the driving forces, goals and objectives

**Step 2** Identify and analyze the audience

**Step 3** Create the message

**Step 4** Package the message

**Step 5** Distribute the message

**Step 6** Evaluate the outreach campaign

**Where do we go from here??**

*Excerpted from the EPA's "Getting In Step" Publication*

To develop an effective outreach campaign, first you need a plan to identify the forces that are driving the need for an outreach campaign. This will determine the scope and focus it on exactly what will get the job done. *Exp. City needs to increase utility budget for maintenance and updates.*

With the driving force(s) established, you can now move on to develop goals and objectives. I used to get these two things confused, but a professor once described the difference as "goals are where you are going and objectives are how you are going to get there". I've never forgotten. Try using this acronym for establishing objectives, **SMART**: **s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**ction-oriented, **r**elevant and **t**ime-focused. *Exp. Increase water rates, implement water conserving ordinance, decrease wastewater debris, garbage cans, public restrooms*

Establish who your audience is...there is rarely one audience. For example, you have board members, industry, residential and local businesses. And within these categories are subcategories of users. One thing in common is this: most people are primarily interested in saving time, saving money and earning prestige more so than protecting the environment. Finding out what's important to these various audiences will help craft the message.

The power of example is greater than the word so when selecting your audience, focus your efforts on those most likely to adopt new behavior and let them spread the message or behavior in their own spheres of influence. You'll be amazed at how this has a mushrooming effect.

Remember, awareness is the first step toward behavior change. If people are not familiar with an issue or a problem, awareness and education must precede any calls for action. It's unrealistic to expect board members to vote for an increase in a budget until they know what the money is to be used for, why the expense is necessary and who will

benefit. Awareness and education activities are usually required before asking people to take an action that will cost them time, money or resources.

Package the message. One of the most important things you can do is sharpen your writing skills. Look at the difference in how the same information is presented.

<b>Less Vivid</b>	<b>More Vivid</b>
There are about 26 million septic systems	Septic systems treat and release about 4 billion gallons of wastewater per day.
Hog production in a five-county area generates approximately 750 tons of manure per day.	Hogs in our coastal counties produce more manure each day than a city of a half-million people.
Population is expected to increase about 15 percent annually over the next five years.	We'll need to build 10,000 homes, 6 schools, and a hospital by 2008 to keep up with the current growth trends.

What a difference! Here are some key concepts to keep in mind as you work towards “good writing”:

- ▲ *Write simply and directly*
- ▲ *Use the active voice*
- ▲ *Make sure your writing conveys your intentions*
- ▲ *Don't hesitate to start over*
- ▲ *Avoid using technical terms, jargon and acronyms*

Repeat, repeat, and repeat!! As the saying goes, “out of sight, out of mind”.

Next question: how are you going to deliver your message? You all have the perfect vehicle... the utility bill so use it to the max!! Timing is important too. When water use begins to rise in the spring, plan your message to be in the utility bill preceding typical peak season. Consider “piggybacking” your message. If you are trying to address pet owners and animal waste, put the information in Humane Society newsletter or a similar device.

Evaluation....ugh!! Enough said. But it doesn't have to be that way.