

The State of The Water Industry

I was reading an article recently in a magazine I receive on line about a nationwide survey of water & wastewater utilities concerning the biggest challenges facing the water industry. It wasn't a huge surprise to see that 80% of respondents say they are losing money on the services they provide. I would suggest that here in Nebraska we would fall right in line with that statement.

The public in general takes water for granted and thus has no concept of the cost of providing clean safe water. How to portray the value of clean drinking water to the public is in my opinion the largest obstacle facing public water supplies. If you walk up to a person and just ask what would you do if there was no drinking water, you normally just get a shoulder shrug.

Mention that if there is no clean water you can't brew your morning coffee, or that without ample clean water breweries couldn't produce beer and suddenly you have their attention. It is odd sometimes what it takes to get someone's attention, but that is one of the biggest obstacles we face in the water industry.

Below is a list of the top 13 challenges the nations water systems face according to the survey.

None of them can be properly addressed without sufficient revenues.

- 1. Condition of water/wastewater infrastructure**
- 2. Lack of public appreciation for the value of water**
- 3. Funding for capital improvement projects**
- 4. Water scarcity/supply**
- 5. Replacing a retiring workforce**
- 6. Drought potential**
- 7. Customer/community relations**
- 8. Recovering costs for service/investment – Eighty percent of utilities (water, wastewater, and combined systems) said they were not able to recover the full cost for providing service.**
- 9. Government regulations**
- 10. Emergency planning and response**
- 11. Energy usage/cost**
- 12. Climate change**
- 13. Utility security**