

PRECONFERENCE WORKSHOP



# WATER REUSE 1998

W3:

Key Components for Any Successful  
Public Outreach Program

# **Developing a Public Involvement Program**

**Wendy Nero**  
*Managing Director*  
*Hill & Knowlton*  
*Tampa, Florida*

- I. **Public involvement and utility decision making background**
  - A. **Historical utility decision making: decide, announce, defend**
  - B. **Societal changes: general distrust of big government; access to information; willingness to take action**
  - C. **1994 AWWARF survey: majority of respondents want more involvement in how their utilities make decisions**
  - D. **Failing to effectively involve the public: project protests, delays, loss of credibility, increased project cost**
  
- II. **Definition of public involvement**
  - A. **Case-specific, varies with the nature of the project/issues**
  - B. **Wide spectrum of communication strategies**
    - 1. **Public relations: image building, not controversial**
    - 2. **Community relations: some interaction, may be controversial**
    - 3. **Conflict resolution: intense dialogue, highly controversial**
    - 4. **Public involvement requires two-way communication between the utility and the public about issues or projects that are of concern to stakeholder groups**
  
- III. **When might public involvement be necessary?**
  - A. **Impacts to personal property—usually related to capital improvements and siting activities**
    - 1. **Aesthetic**
    - 2. **Noise**
    - 3. **Inconvenience**
  - B. **Health effects—water quality and treatment technology**

- C. Rate increases/structure modifications
  - D. Environmental impacts
- IV. If public involvement is so great, why isn't everyone doing it?
- A. Fear of losing control over decision making
  - B. Belief that "We are the technical experts and therefore we know what is best for the public."
  - C. Bad experiences
  - D. Not knowing how
  - E. Protecting public budget from "nonessential" spending
- V. Additional questions to consider
- A. How much "involvement" do I really want?
  - B. Am I willing to "share" decision making responsibility with the public?
  - C. Do I have staff and financial resources to implement a meaningful public involvement program?
  - D. What will happen if I don't involve the public?
- VI. *Public Involvement Strategies: A Manager's Handbook*: ten step public involvement strategy
- A. Frame the problem
    - 1. Identify facts and assumptions
      - a. Fact: "Failure to implement SDWA requirements will result in..."
      - b. Assumption: "The best location for the new storage tank is..." or "This alternative is not cost-effective"
    - 2. Develop a project need statement
      - a. Focuses discussion on issues specific to the project
      - b. Establishes consistent public message
  - B. Identify constraints
    - 1. Regulatory requirements

2. Timing
  3. Technical feasibility
- C. Identify decision steps and project milestones
1. In order to be effective, public involvement needs to be linked to the decision process
    - a. What decisions will need to be made?
    - b. Who makes them?
    - c. How will input be provided?
    - d. What impact will public input have on how the decision is made?
  2. Project milestones represent key opportunities for outreach
- D. Understand potentially affected stakeholders
1. The "public" is not homogenous
  2. Stakeholders and the issues they care about will change over time
  3. Not all stakeholders need the same amount of involvement
  4. You must take the time to understand their needs
- E. Determine must-resolve issues
1. Not all issues are created equal
    - a. For example, cost may be of concern, but ensuring environmental protection is of greater concern
    - b. Understand the relative importance of each, by stakeholder group
  2. Focus on those that can stop the project and/or have the greatest public interest
  3. Credibility of the utility or related unit of government is often overlooked
- F. Determine the appropriate level of public involvement
1. For the project as a whole
  2. At milestones or key decisions
  3. By stakeholder group

4. General public

G. Select processes and techniques

1. Range in cost, difficulty to implement and purpose
2. Define purpose first, then select techniques
  - a. Getting information to the public
  - b. Getting information from the public
  - c. Exchanging information with the public
  - d. Resolving conflict

H. Getting information to the public

1. Print materials (fact sheets, Q&A, brochures)
2. Media relations (template articles, guest editorials)
3. Bill stuffers
4. Video
5. Electronic media (e.g., Web sites)

I. Getting information from the public

1. Surveys (telephone, mail, personal)
2. Interviews, small group meetings/presentations
3. Focus groups
4. Public hearings

J. Exchanging information with the public

1. Citizen committees
2. Facilitated workshops
3. Live television or radio call-in shows
4. "Chat rooms"

K. Resolving conflict

1. Third party facilitation

L. Develop a public involvement workplan

1. Think of it as any other task (e.g., demand projections, alternatives analysis, etc.)
2. Schedule activities according to milestones and decision steps
3. Assign lead and support staff
4. Develop budget

M. Implement and monitor the plan/manage change

1. Monitor effectiveness
2. Assess change and impact on project
  - a. Regulations
  - b. Elected officials
  - c. Stakeholder issues/concerns
3. Manage expectations

VII. Conclusion

- A. In many cases, public involvement may not be "optional"
- B. There are important benefits of a well planned and effectively implemented public involvement program
  1. Preserve schedule
  2. Save money
  3. Enhance credibility and trust
- C. Public input results in a better project that creates long-term benefits for the community



Wendy Nero

*Managing Director*

*Strategic Counsel  
Public Affairs Management  
Water Resource Planning*

*Education:*

*Master of Science  
Water Resource Planning  
Southern Illinois University*

*Bachelor of Arts,  
Environmental Science  
Morehead State University*

*Affiliations:*

*American Water Works Association, Public Affairs Council*

*American Water Works Association, Florida Section*

Wendy Nero is a managing director based in the Tampa office of Hill and Knowlton. N  
Prior to joining Hill and Knowlton, Nero was a water resource planner for CH2M HILL,  
Wendy has designed and implemented public involvement strategies for reclaimed water  
Nero, who received her master's degree in water resource planning from Southern Illi

# Communicating with the Media

**Patricia Tennyson**

*Vice President/Director of Client Relations*

*Katz & Associates*

*La Jolla, California*

- I. The benefits of effective media communication
  - A. Educate your customers
  - B. Help ensure fair and accurate media coverage
  - C. Turn unsolicited media attention to your advantage—even in a crisis
- II. Taking control of an interview
  - A. Interview myths and realities
    - 1. All interviews are equal
    - 2. You must give an interview if it is requested
    - 3. The reporter will always take things out of context
  - B. Elements of control
    - 1. What the reporter controls
    - 2. What you control
    - 3. Establishing interview ground rules
  - C. The interview decision
    - 1. What to do when a reporter calls
    - 2. When not to give an interview
    - 3. Speaking off the record
- III. Communicating effectively
  - A. Have an interview strategy



1. Develop effective messages
2. The art of bridging
3. Interview dos and don'ts

B. Nonverbal communication

C. Your on-camera appearance

IV. Prepare and train your staff

A. Decide who should speak

B. Coordinate efforts

C. Prepare for a crisis

V. Build productive relationships with media representatives

A. Learn how the media work

1. Be deadline sensitive
2. Understand the needs of different types of reporters
3. Remember that a reporter is always a reporter

B. Speak the media's language

1. Learn the jargon
2. Write like a journalist
3. Provide visuals

C. Be available, helpful, and persistent

VI. Look for opportunities to tell your story

A. Take advantage of project milestones

B. Think outside the box

C. Be proactive



Patricia A. Tennyson

*Vice-President*

*Strategic Counsel  
Public Affairs Management  
Intergovernmental Affairs*

*Education:*

*Master of Science  
Public Administration  
San Diego State University*

*Master of Science  
Library Science  
Texas Women's University*

*Bachelor of Arts,  
Social Science  
Southern Methodist  
University*

*Affiliations:*

*Association of California  
Water Agencies*

*WaterReuse Association  
Public Education Committee*

Patricia Tennyson is the Vice-President/Director of Client Relations for Katz & Asso  
Most recently, Patricia served as the public affairs director of the San Diego Count  
Prior to her work at the Authority, Patricia was chief of staff to San Diego City Co  
Patricia is a frequent conference speaker and published writer, receiving several aw

## **Questions To Ask When A Reporter Calls**

- **When and where is the interview?**
- **What is the interview format?**
- **How long will the interview take?**
- **What is the story about?**
- **Why does the reporter want to talk to me?**
- **Who else has the reporter talked to?**
- **What will the line of questioning be?**
- **If it is a radio or television interview, will it be live?**

- Will there be an audience or call ins?
- Can I use props?
- What should you bring to the interview?

## **Common Bridging Phrases**

- **The fact is ...**
- **On the other hand ...**
- **Let me add that ...**
- **That reminds me ...**
- **But let me put that in perspective ...**
- **What I'd really like to focus on ...**
- **The real question is ...**

- **The fact is ...**
- **I don't know the answer to that, but what I can tell you is ...**

## **Interview Dos and Don'ts**

### **Do**

- Anticipate negative questions and have a response prepared.
- Defuse negative questions with a short, honest reply and then bridge to your message.
- Do correct misinformation or rumor.
- Avoid technical language or jargon.

### **Don't**

- Don't be defensive or hostile or answer no comment.
- Don't ever say anything to a reporter - even "off the record" - that you don't want to see in a story.
- Don't speculate. If you don't know the answer, say so and then bridge to your message.

## **How to Pick A Company Spokesperson**

- **Pick the top person available.**
- **Pick someone who knows enough to handle all questions.**
- **Pick someone who personifies the image of the company.**
- **Pick someone who has had media training.**
- **Pick someone who speaks clearly and is easy to understand.**



City of San Diego  
Metropolitan Wastewater Department  
Conditions and Challenges  
1988 - Present

Every project lends its own unique set of circumstances to the community outreach/proje

**Meeting Compliance:** San Diego is one of the only cities in the United States that does

**Reliability:** San Diego is literally at the end of the potable water pipe, relying 90 pe

**Meeting Flow Capacity:** A challenge from the very onset of the program was to determine

**Capital Improvements:** Tandem with the expansion of the sewerage system was a rehabilita

**Discharge:** Increased wastewater flows and newly located facilities translated into the

**Biosolids Management:** The City of San Diego is also working under a California Coastal

**Transborder Pollution:** For 60 years, San Diego has experienced pollution in its souther



Sara M. Katz

*Founder and President*

*Strategic Counsel  
Public Affairs Management  
Coalition Development*

*Education:*

*Bachelor of Science,  
Economics  
San Diego State University*

*Affiliations:*

*American Water Works Association*

*WaterReuse Association of California*

*Press Club*

*Association of Environmental Professionals*

*LEAD San Diego*

*La Jolla Golden Triangle Rotary Club*

Sara M. Katz is the founder and owner of Katz & Associates, Inc., a full-service comm

During her 20 years of public outreach and political experience, Sara has developed

Under Sara's supervision, the firm has grown to more than two dozen employees while

A frequent conference speaker and published writer, she was the 1995 recipient of th