

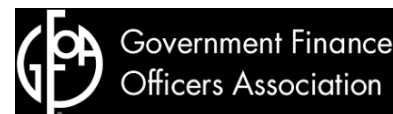


Smart Management for
Small Water Systems

Communicating Water to Your Board

September 7, 2018 | Webinar

www.efcnetwork.org



This program is made possible under a cooperative agreement with the U.S. EPA.

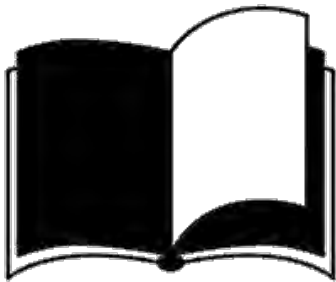


On this webinar...

- ✓ **Role** of board, staff & customers
- ✓ **How** to communicate effectively about water
- ✓ **What & when** to communicate to your board



Duty of Care



- Exercise good judgement
- Make decisions based on available information & resources

Duty of Loyalty



- Decide & act in good faith
- Make decisions in the best interest of the utility

Duty of Obedience



- Obey the law
- Make decisions that are faithful to the mission, bylaws & policies of the utility



Public Water Systems

Provide **safe** drinking water at most **appropriate cost**

- ✓ **Water Quality**
- ✓ **Reliability**
- ✓ **Affordability**





Safe Drinking Water Laws



Safe Drinking Water Act
passed by congress in 1974

Permit, monitor, report & enforce
Training and technical assistance



Board Member's Role



Be a good **team member**

Be prepared for meetings

Set **policies** for effective & legal system operation

Support Certified Operator

Budget, training, safety, salary

Oversee **finances**

Fund maintenance

Act transparently

Communicate to customers





Staff's Role

Maintain **system**

Jack of all trades, repairs, testing,
maintenance, trouble shooting

Understand the entire treatment process

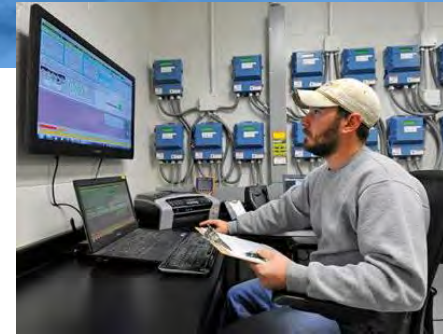
Understand and comply with all
regulations (including certification)

Implement & enforce policies

Maintain financial **records**

Provide **customer service**

Keep the board **informed**



Customers' Role

Understand the importance of the water utility

Stay **informed**

Communicate the desired level of service

Install water efficient devices

Fix leaks

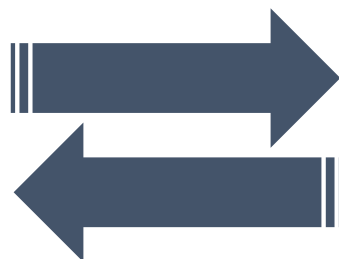
Be a wise water consumer



Customers



Utility staff



Board/council

Communicating to Your Board



What's your communication strategy?



Start with a Story





Why Storytelling?

Demographic-proof

Timeless

Contagious

Easy to remember

Inspirational

Appeal to all types of learners

“Put the pen down” moment





Take AIM

Audience

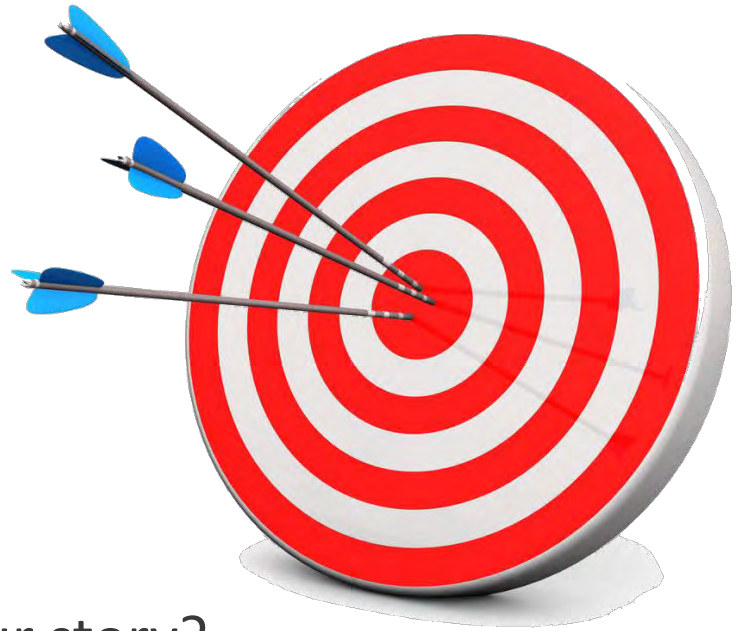
Who is listening to your story?

Intent

What is your reason for telling your story?

Message

What do you want people to understand, do or remember as a result of your story?





A – Audience

Who are you talking to?

What are their priorities?

How do they make decisions?

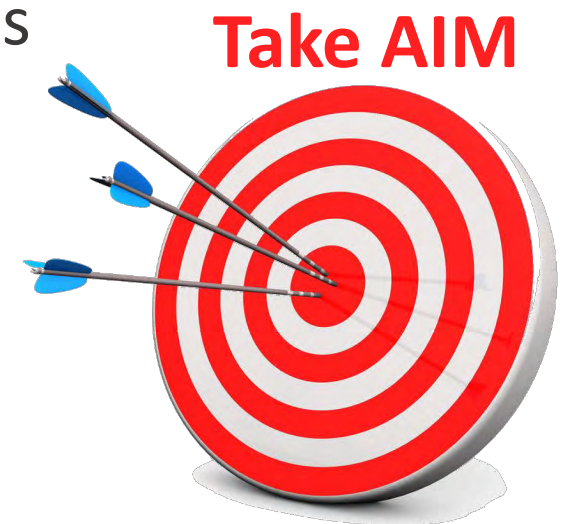
Logical or emotional

How do they best receive information?

Verbal, written reports, graphics

What are their triggers?

What are their stressors?





What is the board thinking about?

Health/Sustainability of Community

Following policies and procedure for effective performance and legal operations

Finances – fiduciary duty

Transparency

Customer Service/Citizens



I – Intent

What is the reason for the story?

Introduce a new topic

Influence

Inform

Motivate to an action

Promote



M – Message

What's the takeaway message?

Tell them directly

the right lesson

Let them decide

What should we do?



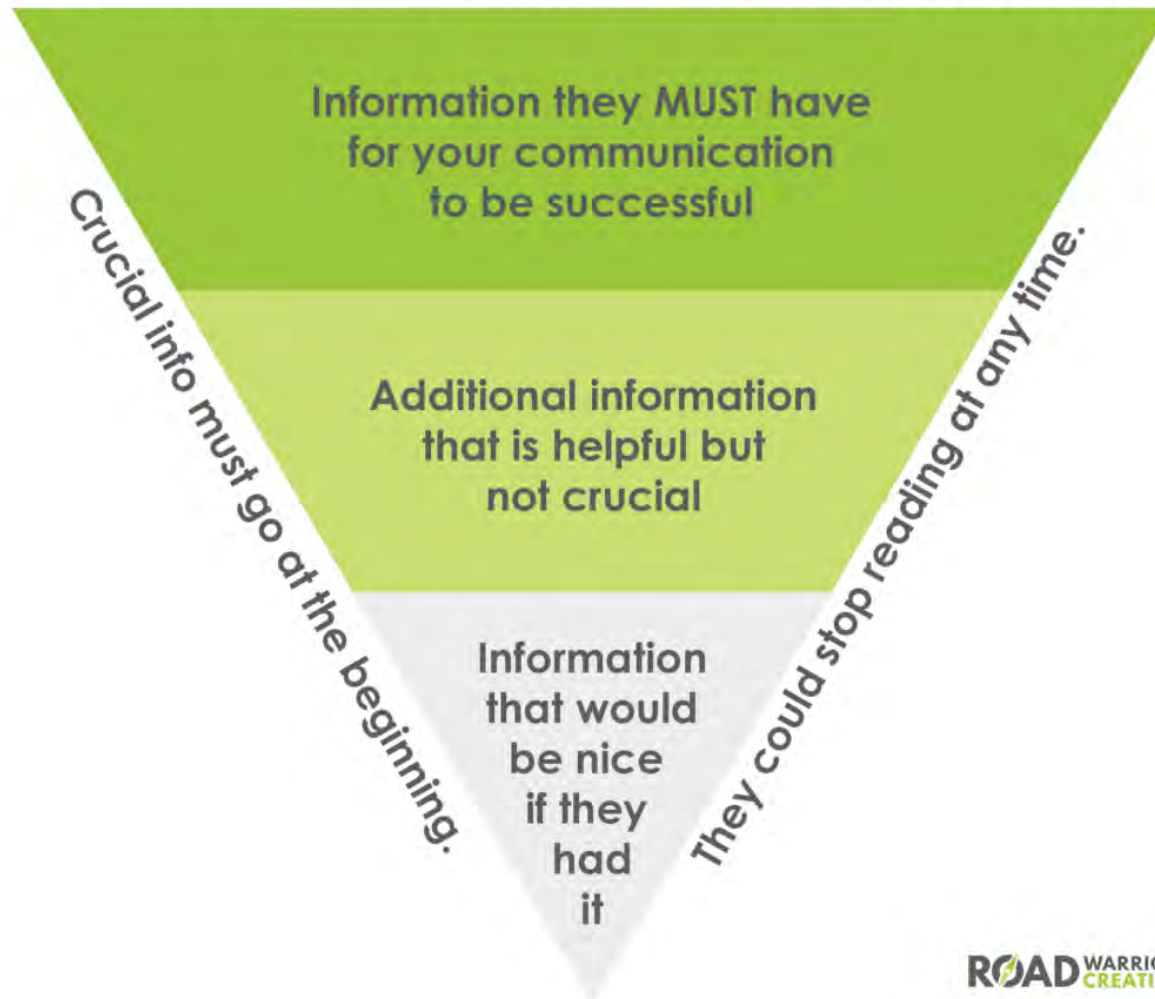
After the Story





Prioritize information

INVERTED PYRAMID: NEWS WRITING



ADDITIONAL INFO

This part is just the
cherry on top

SUPPLEMENTAL INFO

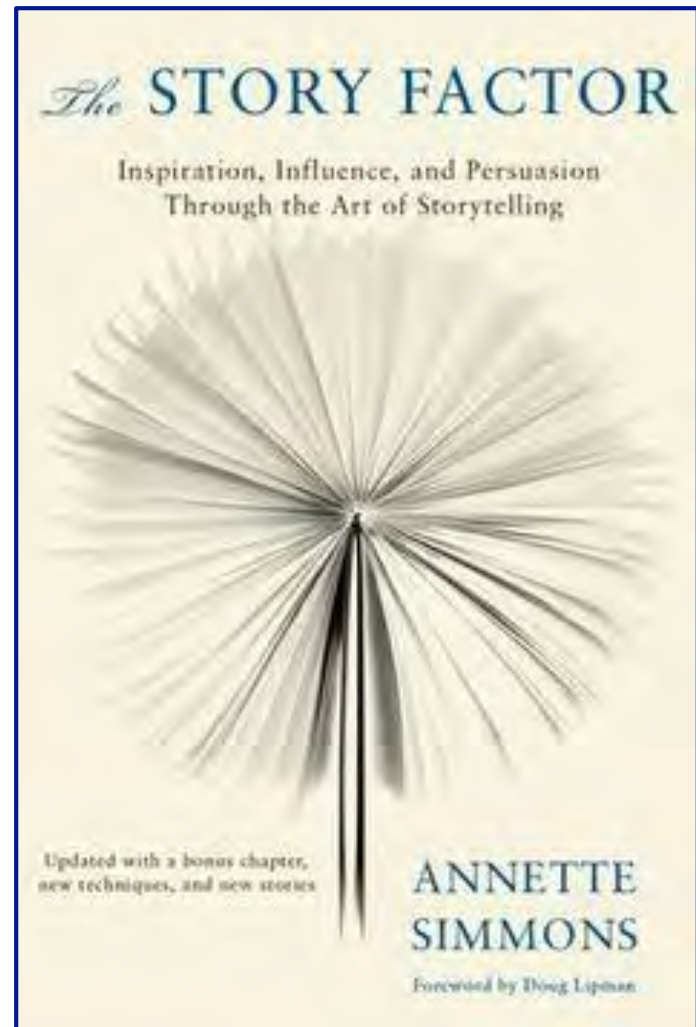
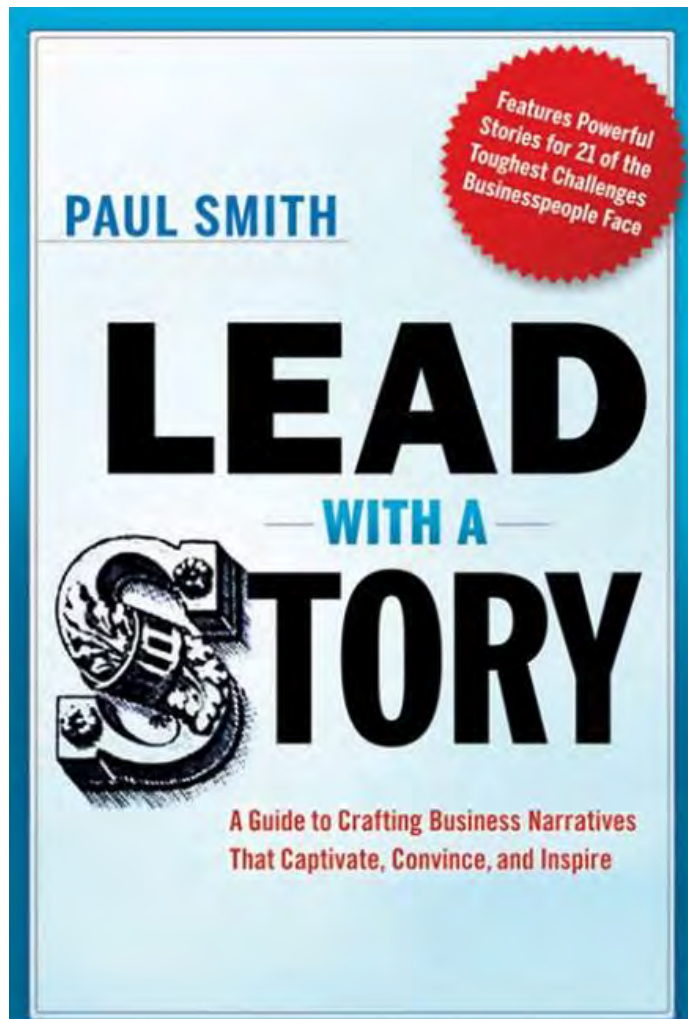
This part makes it even
better, but not
necessary

**INFO YOU NEED
TO KNOW**

Gotta have this
part first



Storytelling Resources



**TAKE
OUR
POLL**



When to Communicate

Mostly at regular meetings

Maintain compliance with open meetings

Prior to meeting, include:

- Place on meeting agenda

- Presentation materials

- Costs

- Written summary



What to Communicate & When

Monthly

- Pressing issues
- Income/water sales

Quarterly

- Capital purchases and plans

Annually

- Consumer Confidence Report
- Annual report, if desired





Level of Detail

Micromanagement

Avoid too many options

Steer board discussion to substantive items

Important differences

Life expectance

Warranty

Maintenance costs

Energy usage

Labor needs



What type of information should be in the monthly report?



1. Compliance Issues/Status



Health/safety
of community



2. Large Operational Changes

Give heads-up to board (no surprises)
What to expect?





3. Water Supply Status

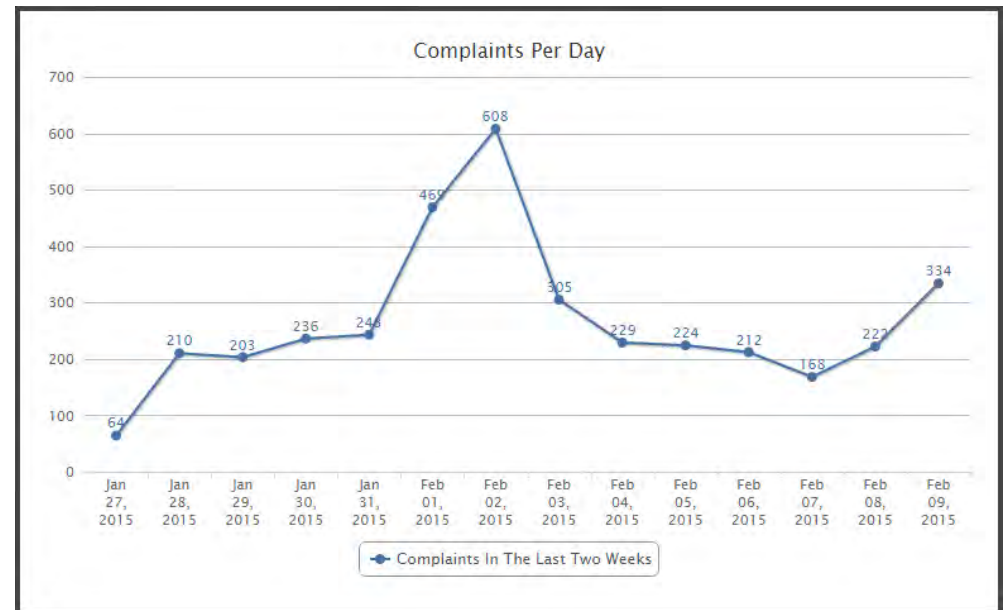
Problems/issues

Or maybe it's just fine



**Sustainability
of Community**

4. Results/Tracking of Goals



**Long-term goal
planning**

5. Exceptional Employees



**HR and
Performance**

6. Bad News

Don't be afraid to give bad news

Sooner is better – even without all details

Board hates surprises



Transparency



7. Resources Required to Operate

Not a lump sum – detailed lists of costs

Show various types of expenditures

Ex. Chemicals, energy use, salaries, contracts





8. Overview of asset conditions

Water loss rate

Age of pipeline infrastructure

Leaks/mile

Benchmarks with other similar systems



**Efficiency &
Sustainability**



9. Large issues with contractors

Projects not going well

Early heads up (no surprises please!)



**Policies/Legal
& Finances**



What To Leave Out

- Day to day problems (do log these though)
- How to operate the system
- Minor employee issues
- Minor customer issues
- Detailed state of assets (except when funding)
- Small issues with service providers
- Minutia of purchasing decisions



Board Communication Best Practices

Never lie or guess.

I'm not sure. I need to get more information to give you an accurate answer. Let me get back with you at the next meeting.



Board Communication Best Practices

Keep Your Cool.

If things don't go well – just recommend you step back and offer to discuss again at a future meeting





Board Communication Best Practices

Use visuals.

Photos, props, tours, videos

Instead of just telling them, ***show*** them



Board Communication Best Practices

Don't sugarcoat anything.

The board can handle bad news

If you feel there is a substantial red flag –
give a heads up

No surprises





Board Communication Best Practices

Don't make too many assumptions.

Sometimes the board has good points to consider!



A blue-tinted photograph of industrial machinery, possibly a large pipe or valve, serves as the background for the top portion of the slide.

Board Communication Best Practices

Do the work for them.

Don't just tell them the problems

Provide possible solutions

Tell them the return on investment up front

Provide financing options

What happens if they “do nothing?”

Board Communication Best Practices

Don't give them *too many* options

They rely on your expertise to help guide their decisions

Narrow it down to what you think are the best options





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