



Best Practices for Civic Engagement

Be Kind

- Be kind to everyone, no matter where they stand on an issue.
- Cultivate kindness through mindfulness practices that heal negative emotions.
- Politics makes strange bedfellows. You never know who will become an ally.

Know Your Audience

- Speak their language and appeal to their values: Economic, family, personal interests...
- Listen to and watch meetings to get a sense of decision maker's values.

"It's All About Relationships"

- Focus on what you agree on to build relationships. "Agree to agree."
- Relationships can seed ideas, provide insights, and cultivate understanding.
- Build relationships with decision makers, including staff. Staff are equally important!

Stick to Facts

- Research solutions: engineered solutions, technologies, policies, planning, places that are doing the right things and why they are doing them.
- Explore the science, economics, quality of life enhancements, whatever data you can find that illustrates value. Use this to make as simple and as clear a case as you can.

Provide Justifiable Solutions

- Provide rationales that appeal to public sentiment and community values.
- Economics are often fundamentally important to justify a vote or action.
- Human safety and quality of life are also very important to a favorable decision.

Market Solutions

- "Marketing materials" should be visually appealing and succinct.
- Use simple and easy to understand language, not jargon.
- Display data using graphs, charts and other visualizations.
- Use social media thoughtfully and with kindness. Be a voice of reason!

Be Strategic

- "Think, think, and then act." Explore multiple approaches before taking action.
- Consider "multi-pronged" approaches with several strategies.
- Keep it interesting and adjust strategies to align with changing contexts.

Timing is Important

- Warm up a topic through education: editorials, speak to leaders, and send emails
- Controversial issues, grant opportunities, funding cycles, and other opportunities may lend relevance to your solution.

Collaboration is Key

- Even great leaders rely on the support of those who follow them.
- Play to the strengths of your team: divide roles and talking points accordingly.
- Source subject matter experts and facilitate formal presentations for decision makers.

Optics are Impactful

- Show up at meetings, workshops, and open houses often.
- Nod loudly when you agree with what is being said (if politically reasonable.)
- Visibly ponder interesting points and reasonable solutions that are offered.
- Don't sit with your collaborators. Spread out!!!

Speaking at Public Meetings

- When you do speak, *speak from the heart*. Really feel into your heart.
- Feel afraid and step up anyways. It gets easier.
- Follow your comments with an email expressing gratitude, providing resources, and offering to answer questions.

Include Statements of Purpose and Vision

- "This city, county, state... has the opportunity to do the right thing, to be a model, to transcend mistakes made by other municipalities, to secure a better future for our children, and to safeguard the economic well-being of our community."

Win the long-game

- Don't expect to win after the first pitch. This is a long game.
- Incremental progress is progress.
- Patient action is powerful and will succeed!

Contact me for coaching and support!



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