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BUILDING QUALITY COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS:

A PLANNING MODEL TO GAIN AND MAINTAIN PUBLIC CONSENT[©]

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FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

No matter how good a corporation's overall environmental management system or its environmental health and safety department function, there is no guarantee that management will be able to build that new plant, introduce that new product, or maintain existing permits. The key to success and survival is the corporation's relationship with the local community and a variety of regulatory and special publics. Sadly, these relationships are often either ignored or poorly maintained. Communication with the community and special publics is the crucial ingredient. Keeping these relationships at appropriate levels requires periodic audits of community relationships and of communication techniques and approaches.

When it comes to talking about news that is unpleasant, controversial, or simply bad, the following comments from management are not uncommon:

- "The less we say, the better."
- "Let's wait to see who really cares about this."
- "Why do they want to know about that?"
- "They shouldn't be interested in this!"
- "That's not important . . . don't tell them!"
- "Just tell them the important stuff. They'll just get nervous if you tell them everything."

The mindset exemplified by these comments will only lead to high profile trouble. Throughout the world, public concern on an individual basis over the environment continues to grow. Neighbors, employees, area residents, customers, children, and government officials all have questions and concerns. They want to know about the:

- Nature of the risk;
- Actions to be taken;
- Environmental effects;
- Management of response to serious or worst case problems;
- Effects on future generations; and/or
- Effects of very long-term exposure to extremely low dosages of toxic compounds or energy fields.

These concerns are legitimate and powerful because of the community's ability to stop, shutdown, or hold up corporate projects. If a corporation's communication plan fails to address the community's questions, there will be no relationship with the community, and in all likelihood attempts to gain the community's trust, cooperation, and consent will be seriously jeopardized, if not impossible to achieve.

Today's business operating environment finds a public very sophisticated about science, environmental impact, and current issues. Contrary to industry and management assumptions, and despite this high level of knowledge, the public often sets rationality aside, making decisions using highly emotional approaches, ideas, and even hunches. Why is this so? Because community decision-making is always values-driven. As corporate management plans to assess its relationship with the community, it should recognize at least 10 communication realities:

1. Public consent is required, continuously.
2. Public involvement is necessary, ongoing, and often government mandated.
3. Public involvement can kill projects as well as permit them.
4. Public officials expect the business to win and maintain the public's support.
5. The news media will focus on the conflict, controversy, and opposition.
6. Personal self-interests, values, and needs take precedence over social values and needs.
7. Industrial and business facilities are often seen as threats to personal and self-interest values.
8. Business facilities have few inherent political constituencies and little political clout.
9. Personal fear is a factor.
10. Complex and scientific information about risk and probability – even when openly and clearly communicated to broad audiences – can, and often does, cause grave concern.

Business executives, scientists, bureaucrats, technologists, and government officials who believe there is a magical way to bring total rationality to environmental decision-making are destined to live lives filled with Maalox moments. The irritations to the process caused by values-driven decision-making are very real:

- Emotional communication has replaced reason.
- Activism has overtaken scientific investigation.
- Exaggeration often overwhelms precision.
- Grassroots manipulation is the new realism.

Science, data, and facts are important, but in the public decision-making process their importance is only as *background* to building emotional comfort that allows the public to accept a proposed environmental change. If the public's concerns are not addressed, or worse, minimized, trivialized, ignored, or belittled, the public – whether the community, neighbors, activists, elected officials, or some combination of all these – in a position to manage the destiny of a company, a product, or an environmental situation, will take control and bring about defeat.

Management's principal linkage to these powerful interests is through communication, and much of the information communicated flows out of the environmental audit process. As such, in this monograph we will examine the critical communication concepts that, if correctly applied, can help businesses take advantage of information gained through environmental health and safety (EHS) audits to develop an effective strategy to gain and maintain consent from the community.

This monograph is constructed to meet several objectives:

- Audit checklists are included to help evaluate existing communication plans, strategies, policies, and tactics.

- Planning document models are included to aid in constructing communication-based relationships which will minimize the chances of failure and maximize the obtaining of community consent.
- Communication plan formats are presented for use as both audit and operational models.

Major communication audit points appear throughout this monograph. They call attention to fundamentally sound approaches and will help establish specific communication strategies and techniques that should be a part of the communication plan. These audit points are based on the attributes successful communication strategies have in common.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 1:

Successful environmentally related communication programs and strategies have seven major attributes:

- Proactivity;
- A focus on consequences over tactics;
- Fundamentally ethical behavior;
- Values-sensitive strategies;
- Conversation-based relationships;
- Prioritized action and decision plans designed from a community perspective; and
- Continuous, seamless communication operations.

1. Proactivity. Act now; talk now; listen now. This is what the community expects; what employees, neighbors, government, and opponents expect. Those who lay back fail.
2. Focus on consequences over tactics. Realistically look at the effects of proposed words and actions. If they will make individuals angry or more resistive, change them. If what is planned will negatively impact community core values, change the plan. Advertising, meetings, face-to-face exchanges, and local do-goodism will not overcome bad, untimely, engineering-driven, or dumb ideas.
3. Fundamentally ethical behavior. If a company behaves or talks in a way that is unacceptable to the community, success – based on the community's standards rather than its own – is impossible.
4. Values-sensitive strategies. It is not possible to get the community to approve, re-instate, or continue actions that negatively impact community core values, property taxes, health and safety, the environment, personal comfort, freedom from fear, etc. To be successful, strategies must accommodate the value system of the community and of those most directly affected.
5. Conversation-based relationships. Get out and talk to people face-to-face, belly button-to-belly button. Small group and individual meetings are best. Humanize, be empathetic, use community-oriented language.
6. Prioritize actions and decisions from a community perspective. Put the company in the community's shoes – those of a neighbor, opponent, those most directly affected – and honestly project the impact of planned words and actions on those individuals. This avoids mistakes that prevent success.

7. Continuous, seamless communication operations. Effective community relations are ongoing and done on a daily basis. The corporation that gears up at the last minute will have no base of support, no common connection with the community, and no help from public officials. Far too often, companies over-rate their preparation and under-rate the community's anger. They ignore the community's true feelings, trivialize the risks they pose, and then disparage the community's opposition, representation, and science. Intermittent, timid, cutesy, insincere, and highly technical communication are ingredients in the recipe for losing support.

Public emotion is running high, especially following a string of major environmental disasters that include Chernobyl, the *Exxon Valdez*, the Sandoz chemical spill in Switzerland, the well fires and oil spill off the coast of Kuwait during the Persian Gulf War, the Shetland Islands oil spill, and various plant explosions. Research shows that poor environmental behavior of countries and businesses worries people – and in very large numbers.

Another factor has further complicated the scene. Aggressive government intervention around the world is forcing businesses and individuals to be more conscious of how their actions affect the environment. In the United States, criminalization of environmental rule and law infractions is escalating. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has in place an aggressive criminal prosecution process to hit businesses with tough penalties quickly. Such actions are widely supported by the public. In fact, most polls demonstrate that the public thinks the government should go even further and be even tougher.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 2:

Reduce the media's power by planning for and accommodating the media's behavior patterns and communicating directly with those most affected by your actions.

The news media, virtually worldwide, are emotionally committed on the issue of environment. Routine reporting has become alarmist in nature, irrespective of what the facts might indicate. Allegations, no matter what the source, are carried instantly, often without any verification. *Interpretation* of events, issues, and problems on the flimsiest of information is now the daily routine. Media behavior, driven by competition and deadline pressure, gives rise to the attitude of, "If we make a mistake, we can fix it tomorrow . . . ," no matter what the impact on a company's reputation, market share, or value.

The media have become *interventionist*, often cooperating with and even helping to stage environmental situations that gain enormous visibility, whether based on reality or simply the "hunch" of an environmental activist organization. Plaintiff's attorneys aggressively pursue media interest to create emotional situations and attract "victims" to class action lawsuits.

The media have become *speculators*, almost always devoting their interests to the worst case scenario. Business can complain about this, but the fact is the public depends on the news media's *exaggerations* to help create a climate of fear, which builds leverage against environmental decisions that make the public uncomfortable.

These media behaviors and attitudes are uncontrollable. Therefore, one important business goal is to communicate as directly as possible with those most directly affected. What is crucial from a communication planning perspective is to recognize that these situations will occur and that they can be minimized through the structure, language, intent, and execution of corporate communication. The concepts and strategies in this monograph are all designed to reduce the media's power, influence, and interest in company actions.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 3:

Build community trust and comfort continuously.

A communication plan that doesn't address the basic trust building needs of the community – from the community's perspective – will fail.

When we analyze successful corporate community communication programs – successful from the community's perspective – even if a siting is not immediately needed or a permit is not granted, we find that these programs focus relentlessly on building community trust. Community trust-building programs share at least seven common elements. They:

1. Provide advance information;
2. Seek community input;
3. Really listen (respond to community concerns);
4. Demonstrate that community ideas have had impact;
5. Keep in touch (through aggressive question answering);
6. Speak in community language; and
7. Bring the community into the decision-making process.

We will talk about each of these specifically when we discuss the model consent building process later in this monograph.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 4:

Good relationships are based on ethical behavior.

Community relationships which lead to public permission to move ahead work better when based on fundamentally sound, ethical concepts, and openness.

Levi Strauss & Co. has developed an excellent model of ethical principles against which any behavior model can be taught, soundly analyzed, or planned:

- Honesty;
- Promise keeping;
- Fairness;
- Respect from others;
- Compassion; and
- Integrity.

Each of these elements can be defined according to the culture in which they are applied. It must be done visibly and without reservation. The truth is, the public as a whole is raising the bar of expectation for the behavior of individuals and organizations that have control over environmental decision-making. In addition, regulatory agencies are increasingly imposing new standards of integrity and compliance on organizations that have difficulty in these areas, often very harshly and publicly.

This aggressive, ethical approach leads to a simple and direct environmental communication policy involving four internal and external concepts:

1. A willingness to talk;
2. Relentless truthfulness (from the audience/public perspective);
3. Willingness to answer any and all questions from any and all sources; and
4. Recognition that there are no secrets, that everything comes out eventually.

THE MASTER PUBLIC CONSENT MODEL

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 5:

- Build or analyze your plan using successful models.

The Public Consent Model explained here in detail provides an excellent series of audit checklists to analyze and evaluate existing plans and processes. Each section can be used as a benchmark checklist for action and criteria for comparison and modification.

Figure 1 on page 7 demonstrates in a single master diagram the communication and behavior structure upon which public consent rests. While the resulting structure looks sturdy, it is in fact incredibly fragile and ready to crumble virtually at any time.

Section A: Organizational Faults (Behaviors and Assumptions to Avoid)

At the bottom of the model are illustrated the behaviors, notions, assumptions, (even delusions) that tend to destroy effective communication and public consent building. These are the cracks, the fissures, the faults that lie below the best-laid foundational concepts for effective communication.

Avoiding these faults is a conscious, non-stop auditing and evaluative process in effective environmental communication. Here are some examples as illustrated in Figure 1.

- False assumptions: "The public cares more about jobs and the economy than the environment."
- The media is to blame: Unfortunately irrelevant; the media doesn't sign permits.
- Erroneous data: Usually means we didn't do enough homework.
- "We've got the connections": A delusion quickly made real when public officials stop talking to us or oppose us.
- "It's obviously needed": Only to those whose bonuses or careers depend on the outcome.
- Overrate preparation: Because the telephone isn't ringing doesn't mean no one cares. Remember, being an opponent is not a full-time job.
- Denial/delay: "If we don't talk about it, maybe no one will find out."
- Empathy/arrogance: If we talk in scientific, technical language without responding to the emotional concerns, we will not be credible.
- No respect for opposition: Opponents, media, and citizens without credentials will always have far more credibility than we do.

- Underrate negative community emotions: Neighbors and opponents don't get angry until something actually starts happening that affects them (that is why companies so often feel they are blind-sided).
- No Plan B or Plan C: There is an arrogant, usually mistaken belief that the first site/approach/technology proposed is the one that will ultimately be approved (it almost never is).
- Self-talk/self-delusion: If we tell ourselves often enough that something is correct, we believe it.

Section B: Foundation Concepts (Every Concept Missing Makes the Structure Even More Fragile)

A place to begin planning an environmental communication program is around a core group of positive foundational ideas and behaviors that meet or exceed community expectations:

- Advance Information: Be prepared to get information out to those most directly affected early, often, and whenever they feel they need more.
- Environmental Commitment: At every step avoid arguing, haggling, or negotiating; simply do more than is expected.
- Face-to-Face Interaction: Large meetings, although necessary, can also turn into lynchings. Focus the most effort on smaller meetings where company representatives can be face-to-face with neighbors, friends, supporters, and even opponents.
- Independent Verification: Early in the communication process structure either outside advisory groups or experts acceptable to all sides who can look at the facts, look at the data, apply some rationality to the emotionally-charged atmosphere, and bring wisdom to the process.
- Openness/Accessibility/Honesty: Be accessible; follow the four-point communication policy outline on page 6. Openness and honesty undermine the power of negative opposing forces.
- Positive Actions: Examine the timeline of decisions, engineering questions, government action, and citizen involvement, and plan positive, favorable responses at every available opportunity. Positive attitudes and actions also undermine the power of activism and negative opposition.
- Property Value Guarantees: If a proposed or implemented company action will affect the value of the possessions or property of those who live nearby, immediately initiate some mechanism for protecting the value of those possessions and property. This is a common practice across the United States. Many models are available. Avoid being forced to guarantee values as a last ditch negotiating nugget. Volunteer it; get started; be ahead of the opposition.
- Public Involvement in Decision-making: Set up credible advisory committees. Credibility is determined primarily by the presence or representation on company advisory groups of those who are either unconvinced or who are unalterably opposed. Avoid setting up cheerleading squads. They have no credibility and are likely to say and do things that will embarrass the company and cause irreparable damage.
- Responsiveness: Stay ahead of the communication needs of identified audiences and those most directly affected. There is no question the company will be asked that will come as a

surprise. Prepare to answer all questions as early as possible. Raise questions "out of sequence," well before the time the opposition would normally bring them up, and answer them. This tactic calms public officials, neighbors, employees, and others who are concerned about how the company will behave in environmentally related situations.

- Public Oversight: Invite public officials and the media in early, ahead of regular deadline requirements. Openness, although occasionally painful, undermines the power of opposition and the position of unsympathetic policy makers.
- Stimulate Community Input: Hold meetings the company initiates – usually small, but occasionally large group meetings. Ask for input from the community; then demonstrate that you have listened to the input.
- Values/Ethics/Principles: Recognize that all decisions in the community are values-driven. Those values include powerful personal issues like health and safety, valuable possessions and property, peace of mind, pride in the community, absence of conflict, freedom from fear, and economic security. They involve gut level emotions that are more powerful than all the facts the company can possibly muster. A communication plan that does not recognize the values-driven nature of public decision making is a communication program that will not succeed.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 6:

Workable plans depend on good community assessments, including socio-economic information.

Community assessment involves gathering useful intelligence and information about the community including its political structure, demographics, business, environmental, community, and other organizations, and the local news media. In addition to gaining an understanding of the community structure, the assessment also identifies issues and concerns in the community that may affect company operations. The information gathered during the assessment process forms the basis for the corporate community relations program – approaches appropriate for the community and for what the company is trying to accomplish.

Model Form #1, pages 10 through 19, is a sample community assessment survey.

Model Form #1

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT SURVEY

This Community Assessment Survey process provides a perspective on where a proposed site stands with key audiences including employees, local governmental officials, the media, and the community-at-large. It will help pinpoint community needs as the community relations planning process begins.

Name: _____

Branch: _____

Date Completed: _____

Part I: Evaluation of Community Position

1. How many people are employed at your branch? _____
What percentage of employees live in the community? _____

2. Within the next five years, do you anticipate the employment level to:
_____ Increase _____ Decrease _____ Remain the same
Comments: _____

3. What is the annual value of the local goods and services your branch buys from vendors in the:
\$ _____ Community \$ _____ State \$ _____ Other \$ _____ Total

4. What is the annual payroll for your branch? \$ _____

5. How would you rate the economic outlook for your community?
_____ Poor _____ Fair _____ Average _____ Good _____ Excellent

6. What current issues or activities (i.e., permitting violations) do you have under way, which could affect your relationship with the local community? _____

Part II: Community Relations

1. How would you define your branch's community in terms of its geographic boundaries? _____

Population: _____

2. How close is the branch to:
The nearest residential area? _____
School? _____
Play Area? _____
Church? _____
Hospital? _____

3. What is the frequency of the branch's formal and informal communications with the community?

4. What is the nature of your communications with the community? _____

5. What is the tone of the branch's contacts with the community?
_____ Friendly _____ Neutral _____ Hostile

6. Who in your branch does community relations work on behalf of our company?

7. Our company's image in the community is generally [Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent, Don't Know] for:
Your Branch: _____
Corporate: _____

8. What makes you say that?

9. Please rate our company's image on:
Environmental Stewardship: _____
Safety: _____
Community Service: _____
As a Corporate Citizen: _____

10. Is your branch generally considered by the community as a good employer? _____ Yes _____ No
Why? _____

11. What is the current status of your branch's relationship with the community?
_____ Little or no communication.
_____ Frequently hostile communication.
_____ Frequently friendly communication.
_____ Some communication on certain topics.
_____ Excellent two-way dialogue.
12. What do you consider your branch's greatest strength in its relationships with the community?
13. What is the branch's greatest weakness?

14. Do you believe the business leaders in your community understand your branch's goals and needs? _____ Yes _____ No
15. Does the branch manager (or other personnel) maintain contact with business and other community leaders? _____ Yes _____ No
16. How many contacts have you had in the last 12 months and with which groups?

17. Describe the contacts: _____

18. In the next six months, do you know of any public hearings, meetings, visits by key government officials, or other key events at your branch?
_____ Yes _____ No
19. Please list them: _____

20. How often [Rarely, Occasionally, Often, Regularly] does your branch receive complaints from the community about:
_____ Environmental problems _____ Traffic
_____ Odors _____ Other operational aspects
21. How would you rate your branch's involvement or participation in activities in the community?
_____ Low _____ Average _____ High

22. Please detail your activities: _____

23. Does your branch have a formal management-supported program for community contacts?
_____ Yes _____ No

24. If formal, please describe them: _____

25. Are the volunteer efforts of your employees the result of a formal program or informal,
independent activities, or both? _____

26. What community clubs, groups, or associations are your employees currently involved in? _____

27. Does the branch's management encourage employee participation in these activities?
_____ Yes _____ No

28. Have you had any contact with environmental groups or organizations in your community? _____
If so, which ones? _____

29. Is the branch's management actively involved in community organizations?
Which ones? _____

30. List local environmental or other activist organizations: _____

31. What contact have you had directly or indirectly with local environmental or community
organizations? _____

32. How often does your branch receive requests for support from community organizations, schools, governmental groups, and professional organizations?
_____ Rarely _____ Occasionally _____ Often
33. How many speeches/presentations have facility representatives made in the last 12 months? _____
To what types of organizations? _____

34. What is your current level of contributions to community organizations?
\$ _____
35. To which organizations? _____

36. Do you believe these contributions benefit your branch as well as the recipients?
_____ Yes _____ No
37. Describe the community's attitude toward our company over the past five years:
_____ Changed substantially
_____ About the same
_____ Worsened
38. Does your branch have any direct involvement with the local school system?
_____ Yes _____ No
39. Describe the involvement: _____

40. Have you ever had an "Open House"? _____ Yes _____ No
41. If yes, when and how many people attended? Was the event successful?

42. How do you measure the level of trust, respect, and appreciation for our company's presence in the community? _____

Part III: Employee Communications

1. Do you believe that your facility thoroughly communicates its positions, objectives, and programs to its employees?

_____ Yes _____ No

Comments: _____

2. In what way? _____

3. Through what avenues do you communicate to your employees? _____

4. Your employees' attitudes toward our company is generally [Unfavorable, Neutral, Favorable] for:
_____ Your Branch _____ Corporate

5. How do employees communicate their feelings/attitudes to management?

6. What is the current status of the relationship between the branch's management and the employees?

_____ Poor communications and bad feelings
_____ Some problems, but a desire to work together
_____ Good communications and relationships
_____ Other (Explain)

7. What do you consider your branch's greatest strength in its relations with employees?

What is the greatest weakness? _____

8. How do your employees usually receive information about your branch and the company? _____

9. Do you have any special awards programs for employees?
_____ Yes _____ No

10. What are they? _____

11. Do you have an annual branch picnic or similar social event for employees?
_____ Yes _____ No

12. What is the event? _____

Part IV: Government Relations

1. What is the current overall status of your branch's relationship with local government officials?
_____ Poor _____ Fair _____ Average _____ Good _____ Excellent

2. What do you think is the local and state government's attitude [Unfavorable, Neutral, Favorable, Don't Know] toward our company:
_____ Your Branch _____ Corporate

3. How is local government viewed by the community at large?
_____ Favorably _____ Neutral _____ Unfavorably

4. What do you consider your branch's greatest strength in its relations with local government? _____

What is the greatest weakness? _____

5. Is your branch a member of:
_____ Local Chamber of Commerce _____ Industry Group (Specify)
_____ Other (Explain) _____

6. From what source(s) does your branch receive information on local and state government activities related to your operations? _____

7. Do local or state politics have any effect on the operations at your branch?
_____ Yes _____ No
8. What has been the history of local government's participation and support or non-support of issues affecting your branch? _____

9. Does the branch manager or other personnel maintain regular contact with the following?
_____ Elected City/County _____ State Representatives
_____ State Senators _____ Federal Officials
On what issues? _____

10. Do government officials visit your branch? _____ Yes _____ No
11. In what context and when? _____

12. How many such visits per year? _____

13. Are any employees at your branch elected officials?
_____ Yes _____ No
14. What positions do they hold? _____

15. Describe your branch's relationships with local, state, or regional environmental officials: _____

Part V: Media Relations

1. How many of each news media cover your community?
_____ Newspaper _____ Radio _____ Television
_____ Other (Specify) _____

2. What is the current status of your branch's relationship with the media?
_____ Little contact
_____ Some contact during news events
_____ Frequent contact

3. Please describe the most recent contact with the media and the result:

4. What kind of coverage [Unfavorable, Neutral, Favorable, Don't Know] do you think the media gives our company for:
_____ Your Branch _____ Corporate

5. What do you consider your branch's greatest strength in its relations with the media?

What is the greatest weakness? _____

6. How often do the local media contact your branch?
_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Sometimes _____ Frequently

7. How often do you contact the local media?
_____ Never _____ Rarely _____ Sometimes _____ Frequently

8. Are news reports about your branch generally complete and accurate?
_____ Yes _____ No

9. Do you have a system for receiving and handling routine and emergency news media inquiries?
_____ Yes _____ No

10. Describe the system: _____

11. How would you describe the relationship between the branch and the media?
_____ High level of trust _____ Moderate trust
_____ Minimal trust _____ No trust

12. Do you or someone else from your branch maintain regular contact with local reporters?
_____ Yes _____ No
13. Who? _____
14. Do you have a designated branch spokesperson(s)?
_____ Yes _____ No
15. Who? _____
16. Have your spokespersons received training for dealing with the news media?
_____ Yes _____ No

Section C: Key Audience Supports

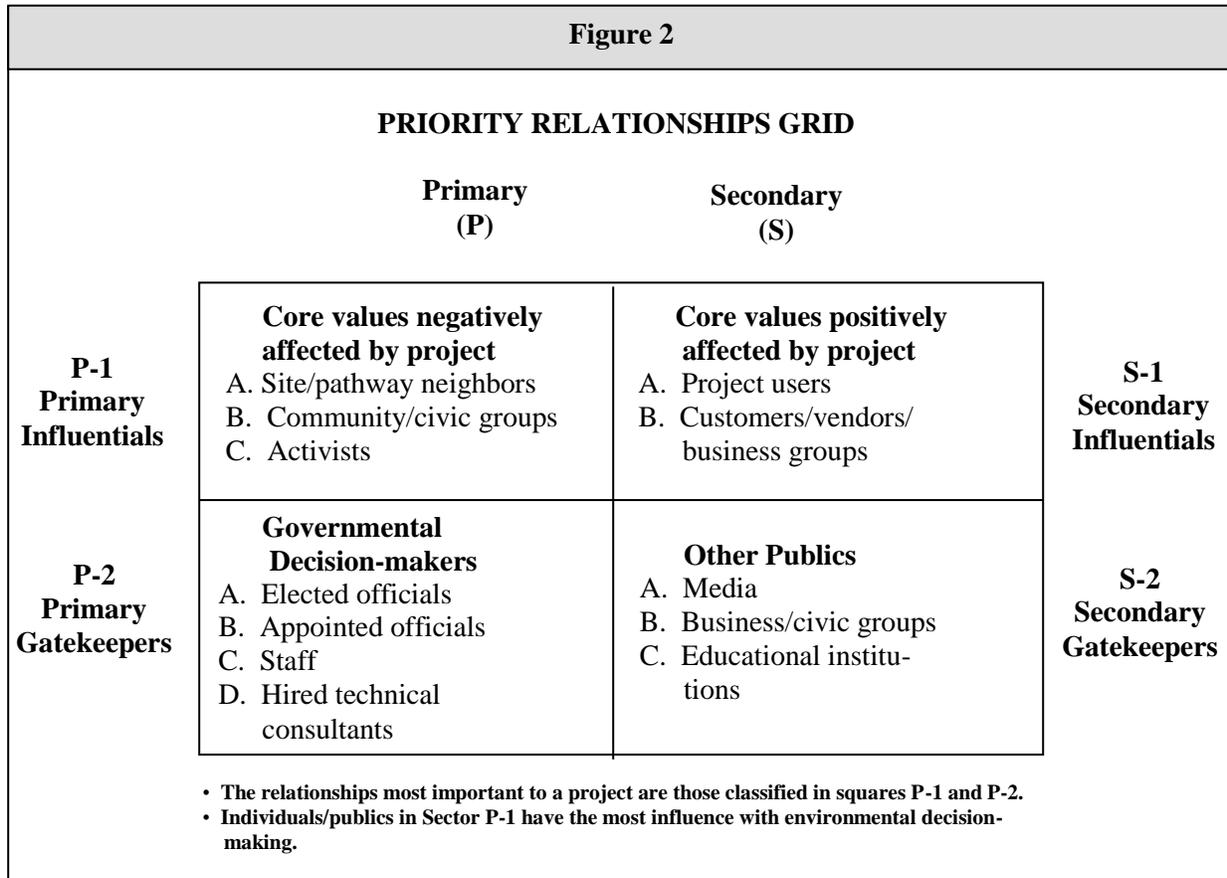
Figure 2 on page 20 reflects the grid priority approach to understanding relationships based on how a given segment of the public is affected by environmental action.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 7:

Successful strategies involve early and continuous audience study and prioritization based on core value impacts.

The strategy for prioritizing relationships is governed by core value impact. Here is how the prioritization process works:

1. Identify and classify all publics into primary and secondary categories depending on their core value impact. Within each category, every public is placed into one or two grid sectors.
2. Publics that usually have the most influence (the P1 sector) are those whose core values are negatively affected by a proposed facility, action, remediation, or legislation. Publics whose core values are negatively impacted should receive the highest priority for building and maintaining relationships. (Unfortunately, it is these publics who are often ignored, downplayed, or labeled as "crazies" by management.)
3. Early identification of publics who are severely impacted is essential, as is the development of an "effective relationship" with these publics throughout the process.
4. P1 audiences must receive the highest priority in the communication strategy for staff time and budget.
5. The goal of "effective" relationships is to find ways to mitigate, negotiate, or eliminate negative impact.
6. Publics whose core values are negatively impacted will react to you with suspicion, caution, anger, and hostility. While not a very inviting set of attitudes, it is precisely these emotions that must be successfully addressed or public permission will not be retained or obtained.



There always are “unconvinced.” They are influential because:

1. An organized, vocal, uncontrollable minority whose core values are negatively affected will usually be more successful with locally elected officials and opponents than a majority of the community that may be neutral or supportive.
2. While the ultimate power is held by a majority of the public in general, the dynamics of public politics often gives a disproportionate and controlling amount of power to a minority that is organized and vocal when the majority is passive and unorganized.
3. Governmental decision-makers will usually not take an action that is opposed by an organized and vocal group of citizens whose core values are negatively impacted.
4. "Negative impact" on individuals and publics tends to have greater weight than positive impact.
5. A real negative impact is given greater weight and has more influence than a prospective future positive benefit.

The message of Figure 2 tends to fly in the face of current conventional communication wisdom. Time and time again when vocal negatively affected influentials are ignored or contact is delayed until the end of the process, the potential for victory is diminished.

Section D: Elements of Influence

Enormous pressure is placed on the *Public Consent Model* when sectors of influence focus their power against it. Just nine of the many possible sectors of influence, which can alter the outcome of a company's communication strategy, are shown in Figure 1:

1. Academics: No matter what the data or facts tend to demonstrate from the perspective of the company's academic experts, every side in the discussion can bring in its own academic experts. The result is the "battling Ph.D.s" phenomenon where different conclusions are drawn from the same data. The consequences are a confused public and elected officials reluctant to make decisions.
2. Business Associations: Often visible and supportive in the early going, business associates quickly disappear from the scene when government regulators come around or activists decide to demonstrate outside their doors.
3. Business Opponents: Often one company's environmental difficulty is another's marketing opportunity. Rumors, false information, and sloppy communication can occur and do substantial damage, even if they merely distract from what must be accomplished.
4. Community Activists: Activists are energized by the increasingly emotional way in which business reacts to their statements, ideas, actions, or threats. If corporate communication follows the guidelines described in this monograph, the company will be unassailable and, therefore, can operate without fear of these individuals and organizations.
5. Community Institutions: These could be local churches, mosques, synagogues, or temples. When employees are concerned about company behavior they may not talk to company officials, their supervisors, or human resources personnel, but they may go to their places of worship and talk to ministers, priests, rabbis and other spiritual leaders. These religious groups will then bring pressure on the company and on government to resolve the situation or to negotiate or mediate a solution.
6. Customers: If what has been done is bad enough, silly enough, or stupid enough, customers will think twice about buying from the company – at least until the situation is resolved.
7. Environmental Activists: While activists may well seem unconvinced, the company's interaction with these individuals and groups is crucial to its credibility with key audiences, most notably public officials and perhaps even the company's own employees.
8. Media: A lot of time is spent worrying about and attempting to control the news media. Instead, do the right things to begin with. Put the media in a position where they can report on the company and its activities as progressive, rational, and environmentally oriented.
9. Voters: Public officials have learned that if they appear to cave in to the wishes of business, or make the decisions too easy, or impose too few restrictions, they will be tossed out of office. Besides, almost every player is a voter.

Section E: Support Header – Credibility

A successful relationship with the public is based on credibility, but what is credibility? Credibility has four attributes:

- It is conferred by outsiders upon the organization, individual, product, or issue. It cannot be built or created. It is always externally conferred.

Figure 3

PRINCIPLES OF UNASSAILABLE BEHAVIOR

Unassailable Approach

Credibility Destroying Approach

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Responsiveness: When problems occur we will be prepared to talk about them internally and externally as aggressively as we respond to them operationally. 2. Openness: If the public should know about a problem we are having, or about to have, which could affect them or our credibility, we will voluntarily talk about it as quickly and as completely as we can. 3. Concern: When business problems occur, we will keep the community and those most directly affected posted on a schedule <u>they set</u> until the problem is thoroughly explained or resolved. 4. Respect: We will answer any questions the community may have and suggest and volunteer additional information in the event the community does not ask enough questions. We will respect and seek to work with those who oppose us. 5. Cooperation: We will be cooperative with the news media as far as possible, but our major responsibility is to communicate compassionately, completely and directly with those most directly affected by our problems, as soon as possible. 6. Responsibility: Unless incapacitated or inappropriate, the senior executive on-site is the spokesperson during an emergency. 7. Sensitivity: At the earliest possible moment we will step back and analyze the impact of the problems we are having or causing, with the intention to communicate with all appropriate audiences to inform and to alert. 8. Ethics: If we are at fault, we will admit, apologize for and explain our mistakes as quickly as possible. 9. Compassion: We will always show concern, empathy, sympathy and remorse or contrition. 10. Generosity: We will find a way to go beyond what is expected or required, even to "do penance" where appropriate. 11. Commitment: We will learn from our mistakes, talk publicly about what we've learned, and renew our commitment to keeping errors, mistakes and problems from re-occurring. Our goal is zero errors, zero defects, zero mistakes, zero crises. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aloofness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wait to respond – "no one may notice." • Develop our own story. 2. No Commitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuse to talk; volunteer nothing. • Answer only if they get the question right. 3. Delay: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stall responses. • Hire big-time outside expert to study; report something next year (maybe). • We can't talk until we know all the facts. 4. Disdain: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid opponents; disparage them. • Belittle uneducated questions and people. 5. Umbrage: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "They have no business being involved in this." • "There is no news here, why do they care?" • "Be careful not to appear responsible." 6. Stonewall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Not to my knowledge." • The lawyers will convey our "no comment." 7. Hunker Down: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything we learn will be saved for litigation. • We'll talk only as a litigation prevention strategy. • "If they can't get it right, we don't and won't have to talk to them." 8. Arrogance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No apology; no admission; no empathy. • "Up yours." 9. Reticence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "We can't set a precedent." • Do nothing that can be interpreted as taking responsibility. 10. Avoidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Offer them ten percent less than they need." • Let them sue; we'll investigate, stall and pay as little as possible as far from now in time as possible. 11. Abstention: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our mistakes are our business. Accidents happen; everything in life carries some risk. • Zero is impossible. • We'll do the best we can and that will just have to do. |
|---|--|

- Credibility is often a function of a reputation for openness, honesty, accessibility, and promise keeping – the attributes that make up what we normally call ethical behavior.
- Credibility in the future is predicated principally on past behavior.
- The credibility necessary to attract and support public consent in the long term is built on a behavior framework that is unassailable.

Communication Principles

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 8:

The public expects generally unassailable behavior, even when mistakes are made.

Figure 3 on page 22, the *Principles of Unassailable Behavior*, demonstrates a contrast between the unassailable approach and the credibility destroying approach.

Unassailable behavior leads to trust and community comfort . . . or at least neutrality. Often, winning is a function of lack of opposition rather than overwhelming votes or public action. Trust is a very fragile commodity.

Figure 4 below, *Trust Retention Contrast Analysis*, demonstrates visibly how behaviors and actions either build or lose trust.

Figure 4	
TRUST RETENTION CONTRAST ANALYSIS	
<p style="text-align: center;">Trust Retaining:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The other party feels that you have listened, <i>actually heard</i>, and <i>have accepted</i> the value of their positions and feelings.• Visible sacrifice, accommodation, compromise, or some of each.• Acceptance of community ideas, values, and concerns is directly reflected in what you do and how you do it, what you say and how you say it.• Some portions of your self-interest are clearly subordinate to the needs and wants of the other party.	<p style="text-align: center;">Trust Subtracting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Just go tell them our story." "They'd better believe it."• "Our plan is the plan." "The deadlines are final and can't be changed." "We have a schedule to meet."• "They just don't understand how costly this is; we can't just change on a whim." "Rewrite the original proposal with more reasons why we can't give in to them." "Say it louder and more often."• "If we say this often enough, they know they'll have to believe it, they'll know it must be true." "It's not really any of their business anyway." "Butt out."

Figure 5 below, *Ten Ways to Lose Trust and Credibility*, demonstrates vividly, and without the need for further explanation, how easy it is to damage relationships, audience support and alliance.

Figure 5	
TRUST RETENTION CONTRAST ANALYSIS	
1. Don't involve people in decisions.	6. If you don't know the answer, fake it.
2. Hold onto information.	7. Don't speak plain English.
3. Ignore people's feelings.	8. Be a bureaucrat.
4. Don't follow up.	9. Delay talking to other organizations.
5. If you make a mistake, deny it.	10. Send your introverted scientists.

Public Interest and Concern

There is a pattern of public interest and concern that requires extensive communication planning execution. The most frequently recurring areas of public interest are:

- Health and safety;
- Natural environment;
- Social environment;
- Cultural environment;
- Technical considerations;
- Financial considerations; and
- Economic considerations.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 9:

Trust-building communication programs address or respond to key audience concerns and values, especially during high-profile environmental situations.

Checklist #1 on pages 25 and 26 reflects seven major public interest areas of environmental concern requiring specific response management, especially during high-profile situations such as lawsuits or repermitting. Use the checklist to audit an environmental project for problems or issues that could be raised in relation to these issue categories.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 10:

Build in broadly based, environmentally sensitive concepts and principles.

Figure 6 on page 27 describes one of the most generally accepted operating approaches, the *Ceres Principles*. Originally called the *Valdez Principles*, after much discussion, analysis, and some controversy, the principles were redefined and renamed. The importance of the principled approach, using *Ceres* as an example, is that increasingly, even at the local level, environmental responsibility is

Checklist #1

**CHECKLIST OF PUBLIC INTEREST, CONCERN, AND INQUIRY
DURING HIGH PROFILE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATIONS**

Category A – Public Health and Safety

1. Groundwater Contamination: The potential for contamination of groundwater resources should be minimized.
2. Surface Water Contamination: The potential for contamination of streams and other surface water should be minimized.
3. Gas Migration: The potential for undetected sub-surface migration of landfill gases should be minimized.
4. Odors: The number of people potentially affected by odor problems should be minimized.
5. Noise and Dust: The number of people potentially affected by noise and dust should be minimized.
6. Birds: The potential effect of birds on air traffic safety and nearby land uses should be minimized.
7. Rodents, Insects, and Litter: The potential health and nuisance effects to people and nearby land uses as a result of rodents, insects, and litter should be minimized.

Category B – Natural Environment

1. Mineral Resources: The loss of mineral resources should be minimized.
2. Agricultural Soils: The quantity and quality of agricultural soils lost should be minimized.
3. Forest Resources: Impacts on forest resources should be minimized.
4. Terrestrial Ecology: Impacts on terrestrial flora and fauna should be minimized.
5. Aquatic Ecology: Impacts on fish-bearing streams should be avoided.

Category C – Social Environment

1. Future Land Use: Impacts on planned future development should be minimized.
2. Existing Land Use: Impacts on people and existing land uses should be minimized.
3. Agricultural Land Use: Impacts on agricultural land use should be minimized.
4. Community Characteristics: Changes to the character and stability of the local community should be minimized.

Category D – Cultural Environment

1. Heritage Resources: Impacts on significant heritage resources should be avoided.
2. Archaeological Resources: Loss of significant archaeological resources should be avoided.
3. Visual Aesthetics: Impacts on local visual aesthetic characteristics should be minimized.
4. Cultural Communities and Facilities: Impacts on distinctive cultural communities and on community facilities should be minimized.

**CHECKLIST OF PUBLIC INTEREST, CONCERN, AND INQUIRY
DURING HIGH PROFILE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATIONS**

(Continued)

Category E – Technical Considerations

1. Geotechnical Factors: The site should be able to be developed using proven engineering practices and with a minimal requirement for import or export of earth materials.
2. Capacity and Flexibility: The site should have sufficient capacity and flexibility to meet the waste disposal needs of the Master Plan Area over the planning period.
3. Servicing: The work required to provide necessary site servicing including water, leachate disposal, electricity, and road access should be minimized.

Category F – Financial Considerations

1. Overall Facility Cost: These costs, including site acquisition, development, operating, financing, closure, and long term care costs, should be minimized.
2. Haul Costs: The costs of transporting waste to the site should be minimized.
3. Affordability: The facility should be affordable as defined in OMB guidelines and the financial impacts on the Master Plan Area associated with the development of the facility should be minimized.

Category G – Economic Considerations

1. Property Taxes: Site development should not significantly affect property tax rates.
2. Resource Utilization: Reductions in revenues generated by agricultural land and other natural resources should be minimized.
3. Employment and Income: Net losses of local employment and income should be avoided.
4. Property Values: Impacts on local property values should be minimized.

viewed as part of the global bio-system rather than as just a local issue or problem. The exercise is to examine the fundamental principles that govern how a company manages its environmental affairs and compare them with an appropriate model such as the *Ceres Principles*. The more a company can reflect this approach, the more comfortable the community and government will be with what the business is doing.

Other Communication Principles Formats

Communication principles are statements of how a company and its employees will operate on a day-to-day basis in key areas of community concern. Figure 7 on pages 28 and 29 is a model from a company that operates one of the largest landfills in America.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 11:

Managing communication with government and planning for governmental needs is a crucial success factor in environmental communication.

Figure 6
THE CERES PRINCIPLES
<p>By adopting these Principles, we publicly affirm our belief that corporations have a responsibility for the environment, and must conduct all aspects of their business as responsible stewards of the environment by operating in a manner that protects the Earth. We believe that corporations must not compromise the ability of future generations to sustain themselves.</p>
PROTECTION OF THE BIOSPHERE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of emissions of substances that may cause environmental damage. • Safeguarding of ecosystems affected by our operations.
SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Careful use of renewable resources. • Conservation of nonrenewable resources.
REDUCTION AND DISPOSAL OF WASTES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste reduction through source reduction and recycling. • Safe and responsible disposal.
ENERGY CONSERVATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of energy efficiency in our operations, goods and services. • Use of safe and sustainable energy sources.
RISK REDUCTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimization of environmental health and safety risks to our employees and surrounding communities.
SAFE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction of products or services that pose environmental, health and safety hazards. • Informing our customers of products' environmental impacts.
ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correcting of damaging conditions we have caused to health, safety or the environment. • Redressment of injuries.
INFORMING THE PUBLIC
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing those who may be affected by the conditions we cause. • Dialogue with neighboring communities.
MANAGEMENT COMMITMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of upper-level management in environmental issues.
AUDITS AND REPORTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual self-evaluations. • Completion of the CERES Report.

Figure 7

THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

1. We will operate in a manner that protects the environment, health, and safety of the citizens of the communities where we operate as well as our employees.
2. We will comply with all federal, state, and local environmental laws, regulations, and permits.
3. We will anticipate environmental regulations and take appropriate actions that may precede laws or regulations.
4. Internal and external specialists will be available to address environmental issues at all times.
5. Environmental assessments will be conducted for all real estate we own or plan to buy or sell.
6. We, in addition to state protection agencies, will audit our operations routinely for conformance to existing environmental standards.
7. Our personnel will participate in continuing education, studies, programs, and other activities to help develop long-term solutions to environmental issues.
8. We will communicate our environmental policy to all employees and to all others involved in or affected by our operations. The company will be responsible for environmental performance and results. Facility and area managers will:
 - Monitor and certify compliance.
 - Promptly report noncompliance conditions to appropriate regulatory authorities.
 - Take direct action, including curtailment of operations, if necessary, to prevent serious harm.
9. We will respond openly and promptly to public inquiries about environmental issues our operations may create and initiate communications with others who might be affected.
10. Managers and employees will promptly communicate to management significant environmental developments that may have an impact on employees, communities, or the public.
11. We will promote the development and adoption of scientifically sound and balanced environmental policies, laws, and regulations through active support of and participation in governmental legislative and rule-making processes and other forums dedicated to providing public officials with technical information and advice.
12. We will factor aesthetics into all future siting decisions and maintenance of existing sites.
13. We will develop and communicate to appropriate local authorities' environmental incident plans for any operations that potentially impact a community.

(Continued)

14. We will work in good faith with non-governmental and advocacy organizations and individuals to resolve environmental quality problems.
15. We will develop, establish, practice, and maintain internal environmental standards for situations not adequately covered by current law or regulation, or where we believe more stringent measures are necessary to protect the environment.
16. We will select contractors and vendors who demonstrate proper concern for environmental protection and who will subscribe to the corporation's Environmental Commitment.
17. We will aggressively participate in the educational process to raise the level of awareness among children and young adults about effective solid waste management systems.
18. Our company will commit itself to furthering public awareness of solid waste issues, with the top priority being reuse, then reduction, then recycling, then resource recovery, then incineration, then landfilling.
19. We will aggressively reduce the amount of material entering the waste stream or our landfills by building or cooperatively operating recycling centers of the latest and most environmentally compatible design.

Public and Government Involvement

To truly develop a relationship with a community or set of audiences to obtain public consent requires more than putting out news releases, press kits, and videotapes. Face-to-face as well as large and small group interactivity is a prerequisite from the perspective of both audiences and public officials (remember, public officials are the ones who have the power to grant or give permission). Developing public involvement begins to build new or enhances past behaviors that are the source of trust and credibility.

COMMUNICATION AUDIT POINT # 12:

Proactivity + Communication + Compliance
=
Good Community Relationships

Figure 8 on page 30, Public Involvement Techniques, demonstrates a wide variety of direct and indirect information gathering and dissemination techniques. The lesson is that the higher a problem's profile, the greater the variety and intensity of public involvement techniques that need to be used to stabilize the public attitudes, keep key audiences in position, and maintain credibility.

Relationships between government officials and various constituencies in a democracy are governed by a unique set of core values that public officials embrace as a part of holding office. These public official core values include:

- Protection of individual rights and core values;

Figure 8

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES

**DIRECT METHODS OF
INFORMATION DISSEMINATION
TECHNIQUES**

Briefings	Guest speaking	Open houses
Brochures	Handbills	Personalized letters
Direct mailings	Information fairs	Purchased advertising
Door-to-door visits	Information hotline	Slide shows
Drop-in center	Mobile office	Telephone
Fact sheets	Newsletters	Videos
Flyers	Newspaper inserts	Volunteers

PURPOSE

To provide detailed information to a targeted audience in your own words and on your schedule.

**INDIRECT METHODS OF
INFORMATION DISSEMINATION
TECHNIQUES**

Feature stories	Press conferences	Public service announcements
Guest editorials	Press interviews	
News releases	Press kits	

PURPOSE

To provide information to the media and the general public.

**INFORMATION GATHERING
TECHNIQUES – PURPOSES**

Information contact person – Identify a point of contact where the public can place a single call and receive either an answer or be called back with information.

Interviews of community leaders, key individuals – To identify reactions to, and knowledge of project. To identify issues of concern and historical controversies. To identify other groups or individuals to be contacts or added to the mailing list. To assess the political climate and relationships among various interest groups.

Mailed surveys or questionnaires – To assess public awareness of project actions, public issues, and concerns. To assess values and issues of concern to the public.

Telephone survey – To assess public awareness of meetings, project actions, public hearings, etc. To track the movement of public opinion to the project.

Focus groups – To gather emotional/intellectual reaction to possible activities.

Door-to-door – Give site neighbors the opportunity to directly express opinions.

Open forums – For the public to have an opportunity to ask questions and express views.

Brainstorming sessions – Give diverse group of public opportunity to define problems and develop alternatives.

**CITIZEN AND AGENCY INVOLVEMENT
TECHNIQUES – PURPOSES**

Advisory groups of key publics – To advise on policy and technical matters, critically review results, help find compromises between competing local interests, advise on public involvement approaches, and promote consensus with constituents.

Public workshops/task forces – Small diverse groups to explore specific topic solutions to particular problems.

Project liaison – Contact person in key public groups and agencies that is kept fully informed of project activities.

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION/CONSENSUS BUILDING
TECHNIQUES – PURPOSES**

Facilitation leader – To impartially lead discussions.

Mediation process – To re-establish communication when all positions are polarized and move parties to mutual understandings and agreement.

Nominal group workshop – To build consensus on project actions, issues, or mitigation plans.

Delphi technique – To identify options using independent experts.

Public values assessment – To combine public values with technical facts to identify alternatives that most closely meet what the public has said is important to them.

**ANALYSIS AND DOCUMENTATION
TECHNIQUES – PURPOSES**

Computerized comment storage and retrieval system – To objectively summarize and make available public comments.

Summary and evaluation reports – To provide written documentation of activity, attendees, issues, and comments, and to evaluate the public involvement program.

- Protection of minority rights and core values;
- Protection of the public from negative events;
- Due process for all;
- Consensus motivation; and a
- System for integrating all available science, technology, data, and other important factual information into the process as background to the emotions and values of the public.

An effective environmental communication plan also anticipates public official expectations. These expectations include:

- Early, frequent communication;
- Specific answers to questions;
- Owning up to mistakes and stupidities;
- Covering for their fears and misgivings;
- Going beyond what "is required";
- No surprises; and
- Direct cooperation and contact with the opposition.

Typical behavior of government environmental protection and pollution control agencies means that only parts of the huge monoliths move at any given time. Frequently, the remainder of the body has no idea which parts are moving, at what velocity, or in what direction. Once movement by one part is detected by another part, countermeasures are often initiated and the original movement is altered, cancelled, or redirected. A company must be cautious not to become a victim. Yet, to conserve time and resources, and to implement the best solution, a company must manage the relationship with these agencies aggressively. It is called managing the record. There are five steps and two important objectives:

OBJECTIVE ONE: Create a process that will help lead these governmental agencies toward making decisions and completing actions according to an agreed upon schedule.

OBJECTIVE TWO: Set a public record that demonstrates the company's consistent, aggressive, and positive efforts to move the government process along and solve the problem.

1. Request and hold a monthly review meeting with appropriate government officials.
 - Use a similar agenda for each meeting:
 - Review of agency progress against its own timelines;
 - Company concerns about what the agency is doing;
 - Correction or explanation of previous comments, actions, or upcoming decisions; and
 - Review of company community relations plans and actions.
2. Brief local officials, specific thought and opinion leaders, and other interested parties on progress (or lack there of) monthly.
3. Develop a monthly letter to the EPA's Regional Administrator, which raises issues, clarifies concerns, and generally prods the agency to move things ahead on a variety of fronts.
4. Support the governmental agency's own vested interests:

- Help it show progress to its own publics (for the federal EPA these are typically Congress, other Federal agencies, and the Administrator and other senior officials of the EPA in Washington).
 - Help environmental protection agencies use the company as the potential "success story" it is.
5. Assist the bureaucracy:
- Predevelop documents these governmental agencies need:
 - Presubmit the company's own version of an "order" which can trigger an early start to the discussion; and
 - Resubmit engineering or other related data that governmental agencies may not have seen.
 - Pre-approve processes and plans, where possible.
 - Prioritize issues and problem areas, pre-agree or pre-approve as many as possible leaving only the crucial issues to discuss and negotiate.
 - Conduct seminars or briefings (open to others in EPA, local officials, community leaders, other audiences or publics) on:
 - The community relations and legal process the company intends to follow;
 - Technical/scientific issues related to the site and other aspects of the process; and
 - Other issues, questions, or problems whose explanation will accelerate governmental agency knowledge and help move the process forward.

CAUTION

Even with this level of effort, a company's urgent, consistent, positive action will move the process along in a fashion that much of the time may be only barely noticeable. But without it, there may be no movement for great periods of time.

Extremely slow action; people who do not do their homework until absolutely forced to; key government personnel changes at critical times that cause delay after delay; and very little coordination except when driven by external forces, events, or publicity are typical behavior patterns that make companies victims in dealing with environmental agencies.

MODEL APPROACH AND DOCUMENTS

One genericized model approach and four model documents based on real situations follow. They are all quite instructive to consider.

- Model Approach #1: Public Affairs Priorities in High-Profile Environmental Situations
Seven goals with objectives, strategies, and tactics for managing high-profile environmental situations.
- Model Document #1: Superfund Communications Strategy
Five guiding philosophies/strategies, which form the basis for specific activities to prepare for, participate in, and respond to EPA mandated community relations and public communications activities.
- Model Document #2: A Chemical Plant Greenfield Siting
A collection of important prerequisites and realities to be addressed as a siting project moves forward; complete with communication project phase plans.
- Model Document #3: Communication Plan for Siting a Municipal Solid Waste Facility
An outline for coordinating a public and private communication strategy for siting a solid waste facility, including all appropriate elements of a communication plan – environmental, government, legal, technical, media, neighbors, opponents, and special publics.
- Model Document #4: Communication Plan for Siting a Medical Waste Incinerator
Communication plan analysis for managing a communication process in the face of growing public opposition (and possible project failure).
- Model Document #5: Sample Format for a Superfund Community Relations Plan including tables of contents for a Communications Control Book and a Contacts List Data Base

Model Approach #1:

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS PRIORITIES IN
HIGH-PROFILE ENVIRONMENTAL SITUATIONS**

Note: Two essential tasks in managing high-profile environmental situations are providing vision and leadership and focusing on the critical goals and key strategies. Here are seven key goals with objectives, strategies, and tactics. Adapt them to the needs of your program and process.

Goal 1: Aggressively Manage the Process:

- Your role is to be the chief explainer of the entire effort.
- Your role is to be the manager of the people and the people-related components of the project.
- Your role is to generate and then manage the strategy.
- Your role is to create and carry the principle messages and to "animate" the process to facilitate understanding – internally and externally.
- Your role is to be the creator of the appropriate perceptions among critical audiences.

Objective: To keep the process moving forward by always having a Plan B, C, and D in place.

Strategy:

- Explain issues, techniques, and tactics before the questions arise.
- Focus on the key messages.
- Mold perceptions rather than educate the public.
- Communicate directly with key audiences using vehicles you control, like video, direct mail, and newspaper advertising.
- Choose tactics that focus on the goal – eliminate distractions.
- Escalate your decisiveness to reduce instability and lack of direction.

Tactics:

- Communicate through the daily newsletter.
- Be powerfully visible. Set the course and the policy; let others chair the committees.
- Create and use an effective, doable timeline.

Goal 2: Maintain and Build Critical Audiences:

- Old audiences:
 - Area residents;
 - Township residents;
 - Township residents within the two-mile radius of the site;
 - Business leaders; and
 - Local and state political officials (appointed and elected).
- Build your base audience of company employees and retirees.

- Expand and develop other natural audiences:
 - Senior clubs/civic groups;
 - Religious groups;
 - Senior citizen organizations; and
 - Fraternal organizations.

Objective: To keep audiences most directly affected in tune with our concerns and theirs, and to be able to move them to action when necessary.

Strategy:

- Regular direct contact by mail and phone.
- Regular indirect contact through paid advertising, public appearances, the grapevine, and third party conversations.
- Provide feedback quickly to what is heard, said, and done.

Tactics:

- Build your base audiences:
 - Employees.
 - Retirees.
 - Create an organized group of retirees who would recruit and carry the message to the community through their activities. The retirees would also influence the behavior of those in the plant on these issues.
 - Create events where these audiences can mingle and develop relationships.
- Target old audiences:
 - Develop monthly letter (more frequently when decisions approach) describing the progress made.
 - Continue promoting applications for the Property Value Guarantee Program.
 - Maintain personal contact with key groups like the Chamber of Commerce.
- Develop new, natural audiences:
 - Recognize through announcements, financial support, or awards the work of key groups in the community.
 - Establish a benchmark survey in the awareness groups.

Goal 3: To Grow Personal and Corporate Relationships with Public Officials (local, regional, and state)

- Build personal relationships through:
 - In-person contact, telephone, and personal letter/clipping-type mailings; and
 - Tools that are developed to fit the needs of these public officials.
- Use surrogates where appropriate, but generally as a secondary source of contact or to open doors.
- Use existing pathways:
 - Technical contacts from within with state and federal environmental and other regulatory agencies;
 - Union leadership; and
 - Encourage and foster contacts to government and political organizations.

Objective: To ensure that the right public officials know who your company is, what your company does, and what your company needs.

Strategy:

- Use the "Adopt-A-Politician" concept as the basis for a permanent plant-based program.

Tactics:

- Tie in corporate public affairs.
- Make regular direct contact with key county/major state officials.
- Assign officials and politicians to other members of the plant team.
- Work to build key executive branch relationships, open doors, and generate feedback from state Capitol.
- Stay in touch using periodic (i.e., monthly) brief bulletins on issues, questions, and concerns.
- Respond to feedback immediately.
- Use natural contacts that exist between the plant, retirees, and business leaders.

Goal 4: Manage the Legal Process:

This process includes:

- Township counteraction strategy in the event they cite us for zoning violations.
- Grandfathering under the new zoning plan.
- Site-related issues such as graves and historical concerns.

Objective: Daily progress through control which reduces surprises, eliminates duplication, facilitates forward movement, and keeps individual legal efforts on their appropriate tracks.

Strategies:

- Use local counsel for local work.
- Use environmental counsel for environmental work.
- Use corporate counsel for overview, advice, and coordination with public affairs strategy.
- Set goals for each facet of the legal process.
- Encourage creative ideas, but control the focus of each legal team.

Tactics:

- Develop work plan for each team.
- Make daily contact with each team to review work plan and assess programs.
- Require written opinions and comments.
- Only hold meetings when absolutely necessary.
- Build consensus – decide the outcome of meetings before they begin.

Goal 5: Recruit Department Managers to the Fight:

- Exercise positive leadership.
- Help managers look beyond the plant's problems. Victory lies outside the plant.
- Help managers simplify their own priorities, one of which *must* be the landfill process.

Objective: To put your plant management group on a war footing (designate "foxholes" for everyone because war is *not* a participative process).

Strategies:

- Through positive leadership and effective delegation, help department heads assume an appropriate role in this struggle.
- Raise their sights.
- Move beyond the past.
- Help them simplify their own priorities.

Tactics:

- Pick the tough issues and ask for volunteers.
- Assign those who don't volunteer to the issues that are left.
- Participation in "Adopt-A-Politician" should be mandatory.
- Recognize achievement and participation.
- Take the managers into your confidence because they can't come in on their own.
- Ask each manager for one constructive suggestion or alternative per week from his area for conduct in the war.
- Forecast outcomes, i.e., "Yes, we're going to lose this election, but let's do so as narrowly as possible."
- Play the "what if" game constantly.

Goal 6: Manage the Most Urgent Issues First and, Where Possible, One at a Time:

- Continue explanations of why a landfill is needed and how the process is progressing.
- Continue promotion of the Property Value Guarantee Program.
- Continue the search for technical truth by asking the tough questions and not tolerating surprises or resentment because of the way things were done in the past. Win by moving forward. If the technical team won't or can't work, replace it quickly.

Objective: To maintain control and direct the evolution of issues.

Strategies:

- Anticipate the questions and answers early.
- Challenge all proposed technical solutions and alternatives.
- Ask the unaskable.
- Talk in terms of rationally evolving solutions rather than rigid, ultimate answers.

Tactics:

- Continue aggressive communication regularly and directly with key audiences on landfill issues.
- Communicate first with your plant audiences.
- Continue progress on the Property Value Guarantee Program plan.
- Make a deal with the bank.
- Continue advertising for participation.

Goal 7: Continue Building a Community "Relationship":

- Continue to request meetings with the local officials.

- Implement "Adopt-A-Politician."
- Contact major audiences directly and least once a month.
- Use paid advertising to explain, clarify, or set the public debate. Keep the other side honest.

Objective: To continue generating overt and explicit communication and support on our behalf.

Strategies:

- Focus on participation when you ask members of the community to do something.
- Always ask for a response in writing or in person.
- Emphasize simplicity, concern, caring, understanding, feelings, common sense, fairness, and the right things to do.
- Stress the need for the community to talk back to your company. Communicate that you want to hear community needs and concerns.
- Use "please" and "thank you" a lot.

Tactics:

- Use "Dear _____" cards wherever the plant manager goes . . . in speeches, in letters, etc.
- All paid advertising should contain the "Dear _____" coupon.
- Be visible in powerful settings.
- Affect rather than set the agenda of others.
- Begin plant tours to show people what you do.
- Take community leaders and base audience members to similar sites elsewhere to further demonstrate "what's in it for them."

Model Document #1:

SUPERFUND COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

CORPORATE STRATEGY

Five philosophies/strategies form the basis for the specific optional activities suggested in the XYZ Company Plan. The objective is to prepare for, participate with, and respond to EPA-mandated and optional community relations activities:

- I. Give the Public an XYZ Company Community Relations Process
- II. Remember the Record
- III. Forecast the Process
- IV. Test-run the EPA Process
- V. Monitor/Evaluate the EPA's Community Relations Activities

DISCUSSION OF THE FIVE STRATEGIES

I. Give the Public an XYZ Company Community Relations Process

Give the public name(s)/telephone number(s) of XYZ Company contact person(s) and demonstrate through frequent action that the public can contact, talk to, and be comfortable with the process of working with XYZ Company.

II. Remember the Record

An administrative record¹ will be established by the EPA – therefore, we should have both a pro-active and a defensive strategy regarding this record, and we need to monitor the record.

A. Pro-active Actions

XYZ Company on a frequent basis will submit letters, memorandum, reports, etc. to the EPA so that the file shows that XYZ Company initiated actions and responded rapidly and completely to community concerns. Submit letters frequently to outline step-by-step our ideas and suggestions, recommendations, and offers of assistance.

1. Administrative Record: A file that is maintained and contains all information used by the lead agency to make its decision on the selection of a response action under CERCLA. This file is to be available for public review and a copy is to be established at or near the site, usually at one of the informational repositories. Also a duplicate file is to be held in a central location, such as a Regional or State office.

to the EPA and community.

Frequent and systematic letters to the Administrative record can establish a favorable analysis of XYZ Company based solely on documents in the record.

B. Defensive Actions

We need to remember that all correspondence from the EPA and other agencies as well as our response – or lack of response – will also be part of the record. All letters and documents to the EPA and other related agencies should be reviewed with the thought in mind that it will definitely become a public document and will be reviewed by someone in the public realm (i.e., area resident, news media, local official, opposition, etc.).

C. Check Record Frequently

On a frequent and regular basis check the administrative record for new documents, reports, letters, etc. – perhaps a written request for new information should be filed every two weeks.

During a key public notice/public hearing process – the record should be checked daily.

III. Forecast the Process

CERCLA and related laws/regulations require a very visible and highly interactive government-directed public relations program aimed at local residents.

XYZ Company should show its leadership by forecasting to base audiences, residents, and area public officials the required and likely EPA community relations activities.

Forecasting will present XYZ Company as a responsible corporate citizen and will reduce the "shock" or "prominence" of EPA lead activities.

IV. Test-run the EPA Process

XYZ Company will scope out the EPA community relations activities and on a model basis conduct some of the key activities by itself in advance of EPA action (interviews, small meetings, etc.).

This will allow XYZ Company to both forecast the EPA process and collect information, in advance of the EPA process, that will allow XYZ Company to assess its overall community relations plan and determine what kind of community concerns the EPA will likely identify in its community interviews and community relations plan.

V. Monitor/Evaluate the EPA's Community Relations Activities

On a limited basis, XYZ Company will conduct follow-up interviews with public officials and area residents after the EPA has interviewed them. This action allows XYZ Company to closely monitor the actions the EPA is considering, the type of information it is sharing with the public, and the information the public is providing the EPA.



UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES/EVENTS

XYZ Company's objectives throughout this process are to be responsive to community concerns and issues as they affect the company, show concern and understanding of community attitudes beyond simply paying for site remediation, and help keep the entire process in perspective until the site is delisted.

Another purpose for the XYZ Company's community relations program is to prepare for unintended events and consequences that very commonly occur during this process. For example:

- New information from unrelated sources cause unanticipated concerns;
- Anti-company activist actions;
- Significantly greater contamination than anticipated;
- Exceptionally antagonistic or distorted media coverage;
- High-profile law suits; and
- Aggressive political attacks.

The lead agency community relations contractor will have response plans in place for the government components of these unanticipated developments – but so will XYZ Company.

DEALING WITH UNANTICIPATED EVENTS

Developing, practicing, and managing our own responses to unanticipated consequences and events will make the difference between a community relations program that is in the public interest and under control, and one that isn't.

We will:

- Respond quickly;
- Take appropriate responsibility;
- Ask for help and understanding;
- Inform company employees immediately;
- Show concern;
- Be open to suggestions;
- Rehearse all statements and messages;
- Explain to the community as soon as possible;
- Invite in local officials to help with the explanations, where appropriate;
- Talk about prevention of future occurrences;
- Seek out and talk to affected groups;
- Seek out and talk to affected agencies;
- Use simple, direct, positive messages;
- Stick to the facts and company policy; and
- Use common sense.

Model Document #2:

A CHEMICAL PLANT GREENFIELD SITING

PROJECT PREREQUISITES/REALITIES

Siting manufacturing/chemical plants is a multi-year, multi-disciplinary process that is costly at all levels, time consuming in every phase, and subject to many fractious and irritating delays and distractions. There are some important realities and prerequisites that need to be dealt with as these projects move forward.

1. *Long term commitment.* There will be periods of tremendously intense activity and lengthy lulls in the process. There will be times of enormous expense that seem to produce nothing but frustration, anger, and irritation. At a minimum the process will take several years, probably twice the length of time that was optimistically forecast. No one will be grateful for this project once it is formally announced and gets under way until the gates officially open and operations begin.
2. *Community relations budget.* Currently, the cost ratio used in budgeting community relations efforts is a minimum of 15 percent of the gross siting budget.
3. *Flexibility.* It is likely that the initial site chosen will not be the ultimate site that is permitted. In fact, two or three different locations may be considered before siting is accomplished. It is advisable to have a Plan B and Plan C moving forward in parallel with Plan A, just in case.
4. *Focus on the goal.* A lot of unpleasant things will be said about XYZ Company and its employees, mostly from those near the site. Just remember sticks and stones are what need to be feared. Words and attitudes can be overcome and mostly hurt ego and pride. To win, XYZ Company must stay focused on the process of getting permits and permissions.
5. *Communication drives construction.* One crucial reason for siting failure is the lack of commitment to communicating and involving the community. Another is bullheaded, technical management decision making that ignores or attempts to override public concerns. If a decision represents a shortcut, an extraordinary procedure, or an unusual approach, the communication implications on the various sectors of influence must be considered and *will likely drive* final decisions.
6. *Quick reaction.* Often the quickest way to diffuse community concerns, outrage, and negative action is through instant response to the questions and problems that arise. Most companies, even in good times, don't behave this way. In community relations communications involving environmental issues, the ability to respond accurately and quickly, as well as directly to those raising the issue or who are directly affected by something XYZ Company is doing, is a critical control factor in managing unplanned visibility and the unintended consequences of our actions.

XYZ Company must make and put in place ahead of time policy decisions to facilitate instant response.

PROJECT PHASES

Here is a generalized timeline for a model community communications program, again assuming ideal circumstances – without a single glitch, without a single complication, and without a single legal, administrative, or procedural detour. Please remember that the events or tasks outlined here may not necessarily occur in linear order. Many of them may occur at different velocities, but at the same time.

Year One

Phase I – Communication Assessment and Planning

- Community assessment
- Key issues identified
- Key audiences identified
- Company spokesperson training
- Benchmark attitude survey
- Spokespersons selected and trained
- Early messages/themes identified
- Base audience programs created
- Opponents identified
- Timelines for legal, engineering, public policy, and local government developed
- Analyze engineering design assumptions
- Analyze all steps in the process
- Conduct in-depth need for a facility analysis
- Devise hunch reduction process
- Likely local scenarios developed

Phase II – Message Development and Targeting

- Move messages out to key sectors of influence
 - Media
 - Activists
 - Public officials
 - Academicians
 - Business groups
 - Employees
 - Neighbors
 - Children
- Consider doing community needs assessment
- Do models and open houses
- Measure interest, attitudes
- Monitor, re-assess community interest and attitudes

Phase III – Strategic Communication Implementation

- Public communication begins
- Base audience programs implemented
 - Employee meetings/letters
 - Supervisory training

- Coaching other support groups
- Finding sympathizers
- School programs developed
- Government affairs communication process initiated
- Door-to-door strategy implemented
- Public meetings announced
- Quick response mechanisms established
- Support center set up
 - Recruit employees/families to volunteer

Phase IV – Communication Timeline Management

- Focus on working the communications aspects of the:
 - Engineering timeline
 - Public policy timeline
 - Community involvement timeline
 - Environmental/regulatory process timeline
 - Legal timeline

Phase V – Contingency Management

- Develop scenarios to anticipate reaction from and participation by various sectors of influence:
 - Activists
 - Academics
 - Business opponents
 - Children
 - Competitors
 - Corporate campaigns
 - The media
 - Neighbors
 - Public officials
 - Public interest groups
 - Whistle blowers
- Develop scenarios to anticipate other ongoing facets of the plan:
 - Litigation visibility
 - Regulatory disruptions
 - Political intervention
 - Intense local activism
 - The well-meaning acts of our "friends" and family

Model Document #3:

**COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR
SITING A MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE FACILITY**

PROJECT SUMMARY

Our Goal: Create a public communication environment that facilitates the siting of a municipal solid waste facility (MSWF) for a multi-municipality consortium within the next 24 months.

Obtain staff and execute a coordinated public and private communication strategy that coordinates all appropriate elements including technical, legal, environmental, governmental, media, special publics, neighbors, and opponents.

- Anticipate, prepare for; and accommodate organized opposition.
- Contain and control the four critical public issues in landfill siting:
 - Health and safety concerns;
 - Environmental concerns;
 - Personal and real property value concerns; and
 - The "what's in it for me" concern.
- Work through key local political leaders.
- Constantly assess, evaluate, and respond to political environment.
- Win the active and open support of local thought and opinion leaders, including local business people.
- Build support based on political and public realities.
- Thoroughly timeline all aspects of the project that can cause planned and unplanned visibility:
 - Engineering (hydrological testing and other technical procedures);
 - Regulatory procedures;
 - Public communication opportunities;
 - Political communication processes;
 - Fact-gathering and listening to various audiences;
 - Legal tactics; and
 - Litigation.
- Use personal meetings and public events to foster face-to-face discussion and involvement.
- Focus activities and interest within the municipality involved and as close to the site as possible.

Minimize media participation in negotiations and meetings by maximizing positive, yet simple messages communicated directly to affected audiences.

Talk in simple terms of solutions and the future.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Public officials are increasingly reluctant to act and use the powers of condemnation or expropriation if those actions are not well supported by overt public action. The old days of back-

door arrangements are gone forever. Public support must be brought forward to get the desired result.

Public communication programs surrounding landfill sitings can only succeed if they take into account the reality of public perception, rather than assuming that good technical data and rational proposals will win. We must identify and repeatedly address the key questions of those into whose backyard a landfill will go – questions which revolve around four major issue areas: health, safety, property values, and the environment.

We can anticipate some of the questions now:

- How does the surrounding area benefit from the landfill?
- What's in it for me; for the community?
- Since there has already been environmental damage from existing landfills, how do we know that you won't pollute at this site?
- What guarantees can you give that this new landfill will be properly inspected and regulations enforced?
- Isn't it possible for liners and compacted materials to be improperly installed, or accidentally broken, permitting leachate to pollute our ground water?
- Will you do full, ongoing, health monitoring studies of those who live in the vicinity of the site?
- Can you guarantee that there will be no adverse effect on property values or health?
- What happens when the landfill is full?
- What will it look like?
- What's to keep this site from becoming a regional facility at some later date?

Listening to the real concerns of the people in the local communities and the public officials who serve them is the only way a public communications program can begin to anticipate the questions, misinformation, and areas of public ignorance that create opposition to landfill sitings. Anticipating the issues and the emotion enables us to understand, accommodate, and preempt the tactics of organized or unorganized opposition.

PROJECT COMMUNICATION PHASES

Projects of this nature are constrained by the chronologic nature of the public process and distorted by the emotional nature of the argument. They often seem to take on lives of their own. Looking at the process in terms of four major phases allows us to do a certain amount of pre-planning and key issue identification, which in turn allows us to have more control over message flow, and therefore a more realistic and publicly useful communications program. Here is a brief targeted list of the communications tasks and opportunities as the siting process proceeds:

Phase I: Pre-Public Announcement

- Political contact and research about the political environment – who to talk to, what to talk about and when to talk;
- Site selections/obtaining land options;
- Technical studies/need established;
- Legal positioning/alternatives identified;
- Communication planning;
- Limited visibility/focus on local audiences;
- Identify/activate base audience components/feedback channels;
- Vulnerability analysis/ask key questions/anticipate opposition actions;

- Identify/estimate breadth and depth of opposition;
- Clarify competitive impact on sites (if any); competitors' status;
- Assess community perception of XYZ Company;
- Assess community perception of the issue/research;
- Develop initial themes, audience, and message priorities; and
- Complete time lines for:
 - Environmental assessment process,
 - Engineering/technical milestones,
 - Public communication process,
 - Political communication process,
 - Lobbying communication process,
 - Legal/litigation (zoning/siting), and
 - Political.

Phase II: Early Disclosure

- Background contact with political and civic leaders;
- Disclosure to local employees;
- Public disclosure of intentions and plans;
- Listening/feedback procedures implemented;
- Filing of appropriate permits, technical documents and required information;
- Initiation of public communication program to key audiences;
- Framing of issues and themes for coming public debate;
- Technical information and data translated into usable public messages; and
- Readyng of technical and environmental communication tools for the intense public discussion phase.

Phase III: Public Discussion/Debate

- Management of media-related involvement in the debate;
- Intense face-to-face citizen discussion through public and private meetings;
- Intense local public government contact;
- Intense county government contact; and
- Some provincial political contact and discussion.

Phase IV: Resolution

- Environmental information/messages conveyed intensively/conflict resolution;
- Major community issues (health/safety, environment, property values, "what's in it for me") resolved;
- Media support mobilized; and
- Community acceptance/rejection acknowledged.

Model Document #4:

**COMMUNICATION PLAN FOR SITING A
MEDICAL WASTE INCINERATOR**
(in the face of growing public opposition)

Gaining court decisions and public policy decisions take time. That knowledge, combined with an analysis of the current situation and our messages, leads to three very critical questions.

1. Can an incinerator be successfully sited given the current state of affairs and how this set of circumstances plays against the pattern we have come to recognize in the siting process?
2. Does XYZ Company have a secondary or fall-back position in the event it becomes clear that an incinerator cannot be sited as proposed?
3. What pollution control, engineering, and operational alterations is XYZ Company prepared to offer to help the community accept and endorse a decision to site the incinerator?

This proposed communication plan is designed to create a turn-around in public attitudes by the end of eight or nine weeks. If attitudes cannot be neutralized or shifted in a comfortably recognizable way, XYZ Company should consider an alternative to course of action.

ANALYSIS OF CURRENT SITUATION AND OUR MESSAGES

Based on review of the public meetings and the flow of news and information from the area, here is our current analysis:

1. The public does not perceive or accept that there is a local need for such a facility. (Questions 4, 7, 38 from the public meeting.)
2. Even if there will be a future local need for such a facility, the public feels that need should be met at existing incinerators – or at other locations or using other processes. (Questions 17, 30, 32, 36 from the public meeting.)
3. The public does not accept the premise that they should support a new facility in the area even if other areas of the State have a critical need for such a facility. (Questions 5, 16 from the public meeting.)
4. The public does not accept the premise that the proposed site is a logical one simply because of existing compatible use.
5. The public resents the proposed site because it appears to primarily serve the needs/goals of XYZ Company.
6. The public feels that incineration, generally, and at XYZ Company's medical waste incinerators, specifically, will present grave threats and risks to their most basic and

cherished values – those being:

- The health of their families;
- The property value (and major life savings);
- The environment – air and ground water (therefore a threat to health and property value); and
- Their quality of life including peace of mind, pride in community, and absence of conflict.

Because the public does not accept the need, it challenges the credibility of both XYZ Company and the process for obtaining the incinerator itself.

- The public does not trust the permitting process.
- The public does not trust XYZ Company.

USE A DIRECT APPROACH

We must deal directly with the opposing groups now because:

- They represent the true feelings of the public – 45-to-49 percent of the public oppose incineration.
- Only 15-to-20 percent of the public support incineration of any waste.
- The vocal opposition is truly reflecting the majority viewpoint.
- The State will most likely go with majority public opinion when it comes to permitting.
- The number of residents who support incineration of any kind is a definite minority.
- The area municipal waste incinerator was successful because it had a significant constituency that wanted it, needed it, and supported it . . . , i.e., locally elected officials. We will not have these same allies.

If this analysis is sound for future action, our communication goals then become relatively clear:

1. To reduce, contain, and moderate the extent of the opposition;
2. To persuade undecided, moderate residents to support the project; and
3. To provide a winning strategy so that allied groups will openly support the project.

THE PLAN

Based on these goals, here are the elements of the communication plan.

Strategies:

1. Directly address hard core opposition.
2. Directly address soft opposition.
3. Build base audiences.
4. Address the visible issues.
5. Develop support for the political process at the State level.

Assumptions About Permitting

1. Although the State has ultimate permit authority, officials will not issue a permit if extensive and vocal public opposition exists, or if local township and county officials vigorously oppose the project.
2. XYZ Company needs to win the hearts and minds of the public as if we were seeking the permit directly from area residents or the township board.

Communication Philosophy

1. This facility is needed, worthwhile, and will be safe.
2. XYZ Company will respond to the gut questions as well as the technical issues.
3. The neighbors have every right to be concerned. XYZ Company has the obligation to answer all their questions.
4. To succeed, XYZ Company must focus on the real concerns of those affected by the incinerator.

Important Message Goals

1. The credibility of XYZ Company and the process are perhaps more important to gaining public support than the engineering facts.
2. It is unlikely that a local need can be proven or demonstrated for this facility.
3. XYZ Company needs to establish credibility and reduce the threat this project poses to the core values of area property owners.
4. XYZ Company needs to treat the public as a "host community" and go through the process of securing public acceptance of this project.

By viewing the public as a "host community" we:

- Accept the premise that local support is essential to obtaining a State permit.
- Find ways to eliminate, reduce, and contain any threat – real or imagined – to the public's core values.
- Find a process the public accepts as credible.
- Find trade-offs the public views as beneficial, although this is of lesser importance than reducing the perceived threat to health, property, etc.

FOUR SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Strategy #1: Directly address "Hard Core Opposition"

1. Identify area residents who are openly opposed and critical and, where possible, their objections to the project.

2. Meet with these residents in small groups (through coffee parties or focus groups) of six-to-ten people to:
 - Identify specific concerns, attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and values they have about the project, their neighborhood, and the community.
 - On a "soft sell" basis, test our best arguments, information, and data.
3. Take the opposition to a model site to:
 - Get their specific reactions to all phases of an existing site, including visits with local officials, neighbors, and others affected by the existing site.
 - Continue "soft sells" of our best messages by showing the complete operation – all the time we are monitoring and seeking feedback.
 - Identify area/phases of the actual site that generated negative or positive reaction, or which tend to raise new questions.
 - Evaluate if an on-site visit changed pre-existing attitudes and opinions, and why and how.
4. Conduct a follow-up meeting with these opponents within a week of visiting the model site to:
 - Monitor any swing in position and evaluate, if any, positive images from the site visit which remain.
5. Join the predominant activist group, or at least find out when meetings are held and attend . . . then offer to answer the questions that are raised.

Strategy #2: Directly Address "Soft Opposition"

1. Identify groups of area residents who are neutral, undecided, or express willingness to be convinced.
 - Repeat the process followed with hard core opponents.
 - "Soft" opponents can be identified and initial meetings carried out concurrently near the end of the process of meeting with hard core opponents.
2. Directly plug these residents into the ongoing direct and indirect communication programs.

Strategy #3: Build Our Base Audiences (to run currently with meeting the opposition)

1. Invite and involve key components of our base audiences in the same ways we are dealing with opponents. Hold "smaller" group meetings and get base audience groups to an operational site. Listen to what they share about what is being said in the community.
2. Identify where the community really is –philosophically and emotionally – at the present time through a benchmark public attitudes survey.
3. Develop updated letter, Q&A attachment, and site drawing for those base audiences identified as neutral, if not somewhat supportive. They include:
 - Our own employees;

- Vendor company employees;
 - Physicians;
 - Dentists;
 - Clinics;
 - Hospitals;
 - Veterinarians;
 - Morticians;
 - Nursing homes; and
 - Larger industries with medical facilities.
4. Complete an incinerator video to be used during small group and one-on-one meetings with members of base audience groups for the purpose of discussing the process and building support, or eliminating reasons for opposition.
 5. Install the call-in telephone number for messages from the site manager or other noted authorities.
 6. Address visibility issues:
 - Through letters to the editor or controlled space essays; and
 - Through a Q&A document prepared for public distribution by request using newspaper coupons.

Strategy #4: Develop Support for the Political Process

1. Get elected officials to once again agree to visit both the proposed site and the model site.
2. Offer to have the key opponents travel with elected officials so both can hear our story again.
3. Attempt to identify individuals and organizations that can lend rational voices to the discussion – whether or not they can publicly support our project or any specific incinerator.
4. Identify ways meaningful to public policy makers through which community members can comfortably show their support.
5. Develop some level of open and active public support.

THE TIMELINE

This nine-week timeline utilizes a definite sequencing process. Sequencing, as opposed to running everything at once, keeps the process relatively low key. In addition, should XYZ Company decide to change course or should some unalterably adverse situation or event occur, sequencing allows the project to be shut down without much cost. But the most important reasons for sequencing actions, besides manageability, are the cumulative effect of chipping away at the opposition and the absence, at least initially, of large-scale, company-sponsored efforts which cause emotionally-charged responses by the opposition

Phase I:

- | | | |
|---------------|----|--|
| 01/19 - 02/02 | 1. | Hard Opposition |
| | | A. Identify area residents openly opposed. |
| | | B. Schedule small group meetings. |
| | | C. Transcribe meeting audiotape. |
| | 2. | Soft Opposition |
| | | A. Identify soft opposition from meeting audiotape and news reports. |
| | | B. Set timetable for meetings with them. |
| 01/23 - 02/09 | 3. | Base Audiences |
| | | A. Conduct survey of public opinion in the area. |
| | | B. Re-initiate contact with base audiences by letter. |
| | | C. Arrange for "800" number and equipment. |
| | | D. Establish mailing list development process. |
| | | E. Develop newsletter format. |
| | | F. Draft "editorial" ad concepts. |
| | | G. Complete video program. |
| | 4. | General Communication Programs |
| | | A. Limited to requested interviews. |
| | | B. Perhaps draft a letter to the editor. |
| | | C. Keep very low key. |
| | | D. Prepare to react to developments in the legal strategy. |

Phase II:

- | | | |
|---------------|----|--|
| 02/02 - 02/16 | 1. | Hard Opposition |
| | | A. Arrange for guided visits to model site. |
| | | B. Follow-up in one-to-two weeks face-to-face. |
| | | C. Attend opposition group meetings to answer questions. |
| 02/09 - 02/23 | 2. | Base Audience/Soft Opposition |
| | | A. Arrange for guided visits to model site. |
| | | B. Do follow-up calls seven-to-ten days after the visit. |
| | | C. Refine Q&A communications process. |
| 02/16 - 03/09 | 3. | Undecideds (neighbors/nearbys who could be convinced) |
| | | A. Conduct small group meetings. |
| | | B. Arrange for guided visits to model site. |
| | | C. Follow-up to gauge and adjust attitudes. |

4. General Communication Programs
 - A. "800" phone line in operation.
 - B. First advertorial essay appears.
 - C. Videotapes made available to community – individuals and audiences.
 - D. Prepare to react to developments in the legal strategy.
 - E. Link "supporters" with public policy process in state Capitol.

Phase III:

03/09 forward

1. Hard Opposition
 - A. Continue face-to-face visits as appropriate.
 - B. Continue visits to model site as appropriate.
2. Soft Opponents
 - A. Continue face-to-face visits as appropriate.
3. Base Audiences
 - A. Gauge their "temperament" through telephone contact.
 - B. Arrange small group meetings where appropriate.
 - C. Continue prodding information as needed.
4. Undecideds
 - A. Treat the same as "soft opposition."
5. General Communications Programs
 - A. Prepare to react to developments in the legal strategy.
 - B. Link "supporters" with public policy process in the state Capitol.

03/30

6. Evaluation
 - A. Conduct follow-up survey research project to measure changes in attitudes.
 - B. Full evaluation of the viability of the project based on our achieving a turn-around in public opinion.

Model Document #5:

SAMPLE FORMAT FOR A SUPERFUND COMMUNITY RELATIONS PLAN
(including sample tables of contents for a
Communications Control Book and a Contacts List Data Base)

*Note: The format that follows reflects both good practice and parallels that advocated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. For other models, we recommend *Community Relations in Superfund: A Handbook*, published by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Emergency and Remedial Response, Document Number EPA/540/R/92/009, January 1992 (PB92-963341).*

I. Overview of Community Relations Plan

Purpose: Provide a general introduction by briefly stating the purpose of the Community Relations Plan and the distinctive or central features of the community relations program planned for this specific site. Note any special circumstances that the plan has been designed to address. Do not repeat general program goals (e.g., "Keep the community informed.").

Length: One paragraph to several pages.

II. Capsule Site/Situation Description

Purpose: Provide the historical, geographical, and technical details necessary to show why the site was put on the National Priority List (NPL).

Suggested topics:

- Site location and proximity to other landmarks;
- History of site use and ownership;
- Date and type of release;
- Nature of threat to public health and environment; and
- Responsibility for site (e.g., State- or Federal-lead).

Length: One page.

III. Community Background

Purpose: Describe the community and its involvement with the site. Cover three topics:

- A. Community Profile: The economic and political structure of the community, and key community issues and interests.
- B. Chronology of Community Involvement: How the community has reacted to the site in the past, actions taken by citizens, and attitudes toward government roles and

responsibilities. Discuss actions taken by any government agencies or government officials, such as public meetings or news releases.

- C. **Key Community Concerns:** How the community regards the risks posed by the site or the remedial process used to address those risks. One approach: break down the analysis by community group or segment (e.g., public environmental interest groups; nearby residents; and elected officials).

In all three sections, but particularly in the last, focus on the community's perceptions of the events and problems at the site rather than the technical history of the site.

Length: From three to seven pages, depending on the history and level of community involvement in the site.

IV. *Highlights of Program*

Purpose: Provide concrete details on community relations approaches to be taken. This should follow directly and logically from the discussion in Section C of the community and its perceptions of the problems posed by the site. Do not restate the goals or objectives of conducting community relations at Superfund sites. Instead, develop a strategy for communicating with a specific community.

Suggested topics:

- Resources to be used in the community relations program (e.g., local organizations, meeting places);
- Key individuals or organizations that will play a role in community relations activities;
- Areas of sensitivity that must be considered in conducting community relations.

Length: One page.

V. *Techniques and Timing*

Purpose: State what community relations activities will be conducted at the site and specify when they will occur. Suggest additional techniques that might be used at the site as the response action proceeds, as well as when these techniques are likely to be most effective.

Length: Two to three pages. Matrix format may be suitable.

Attachments:

- List of Contacts and Interested Parties
- Locations for Information Repository and Meetings

(Names and addresses of individuals should not be included in the Community Relations Plan made available in the information repository for public review. Names and addresses should, however, be compiled for a mailing list as part of the Community Relations Coordinator's files.)

**SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS
COMMUNICATIONS CONTROL BOOK**

<u>TAB</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>TAB</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
1	Current Project Directory	12	Q&A: Siting Process
2	Project Goal/Philosophy	13	Q&A: Political Process
3	Project Components/Tasks	14	Q&A: Environmental Issues
4	Communication Timelines		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Health and Safety • Natural Environment • Social/Cultural Environment • Technical Considerations • Economic Considerations • Reprint: Areas of Public Interest and Inquiry
5	Message/Theme Development		
6	Community Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporters/Friendlies • Opposition • Options for Contacting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Door-to-door – Mailing – Community Meetings – Phone Bank – Special Events • Community Environment Chart • Influencing Public Attitudes Chart 	15	Relevant Clips/Editorials/ Commentary/Transcripts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section Index
		16	Reports: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Index to Existing Reports (with brief summary) • Index to Upcoming Reports (with due dates)
7	Project Checklists	17	Public Opinion Research
8	Worst Case Scenarios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "What-If" Scenarios • Misconceptions to Correct/Guard Against • Vulnerabilities • Key Issues 	18	Response Statements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key General Messages • Health Study Response • Landfill Issue Response
	Resource Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dealing with Confrontation • Rules for Radicals • Managing Bad News 	19	Direct Contact Letters
		20	Public Official Contact Reports
		21	Letters to Public Officials
9	Historic Event File <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Key Event Chronology 	22	Innovative Technologies
		23	Media Relations Program
10	Q&A: Site	24	Meeting Notes
11	Q&A: Chemicals/Hazardous Substances		

**SAMPLE TABLE OF CONTENTS
CONTACTS LIST DATA BASE**

<u>TAB</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>
1	Media Contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specialist Reporters
2	Political Contacts
3	Business Contacts
4	Federal Government Contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EPA• Elected Officials• Other Federal Agencies
5	State Government Officials <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State Agencies• Elected Officials
6	County Government Contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• County Agencies• Elected Officials
7	City Government Contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• City Agencies• Elected Officials
8	Township Government Contacts <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Township Agencies• Elected Officials
9	Activist Group Contacts
10	Interested Party Contacts
11	Abutter Contacts
12	One-mile Radius Contacts



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