


GETTING TO YES

Communication Strategies to Gain Support for Rate Changes

January 30, 2019



FLINT WATER PLAN

Trust in utilities and the public sector is declining



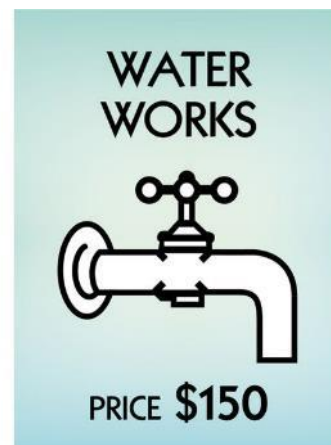
Infrastructure isn't just
something we need to
invest in, it's failing

Image credit: William Croyle, California Department of Water Resources

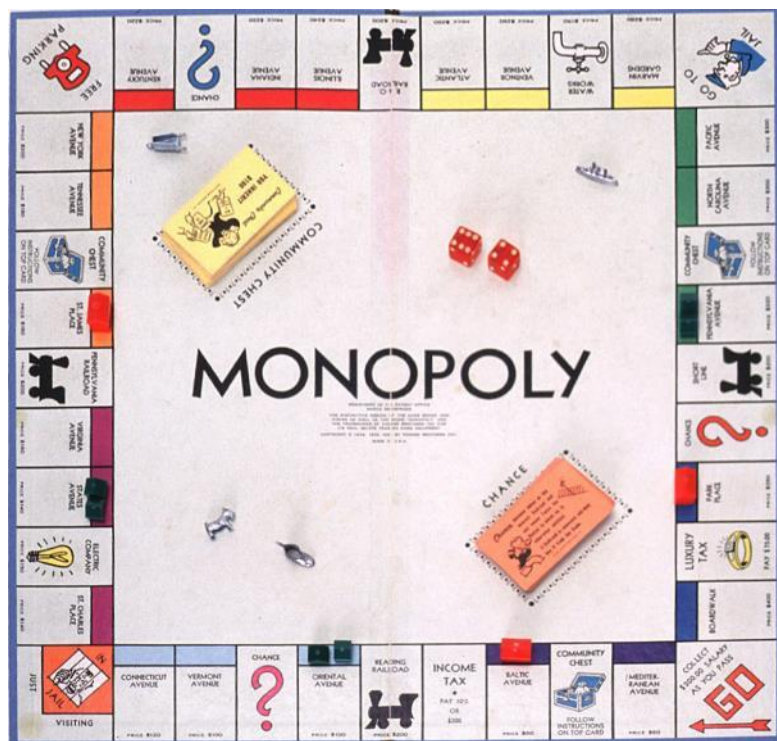




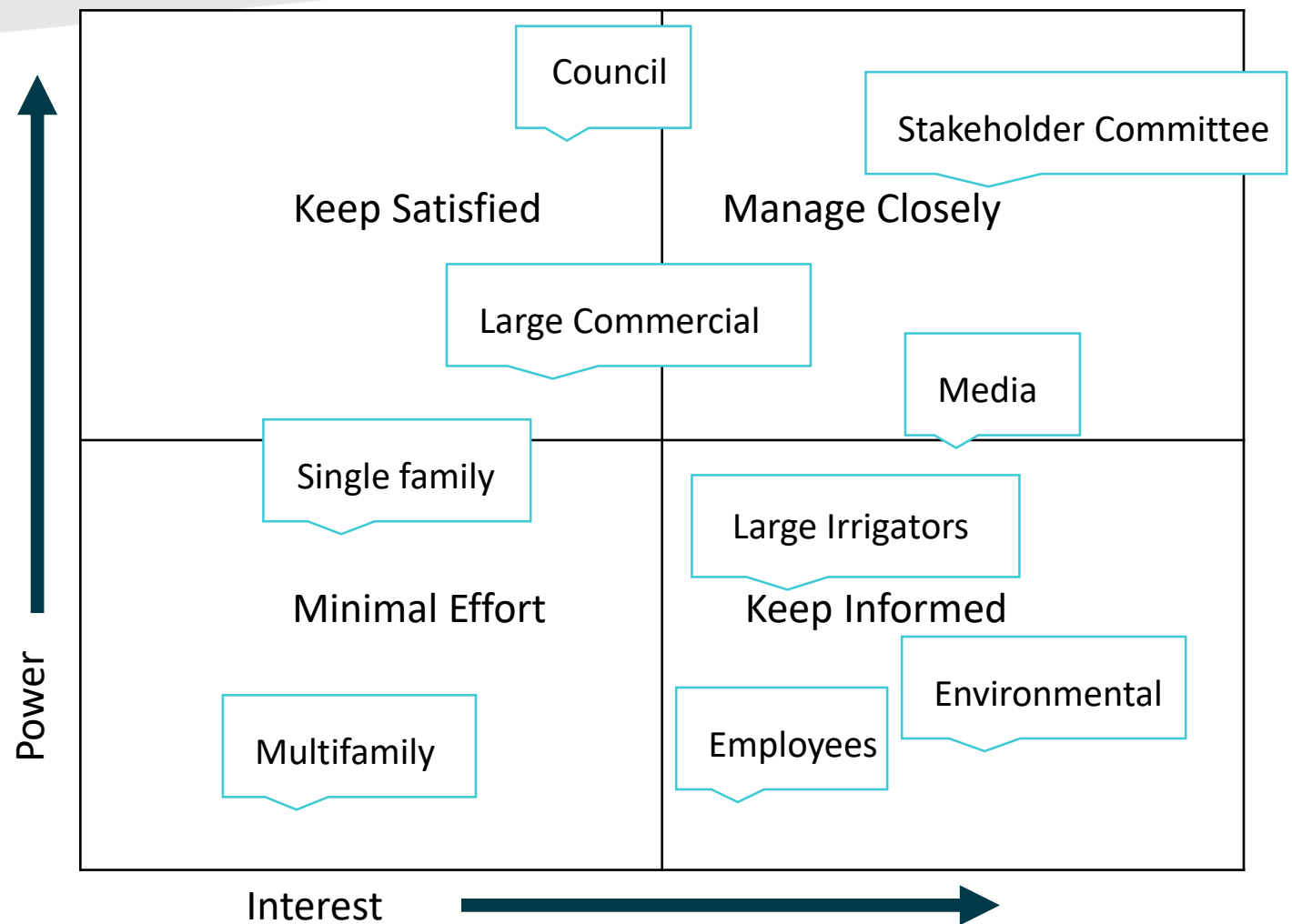
Social media is
exploding, and it
empowers consumers



Would we communicate differently if customers could choose their water service provider?



Stakeholder mapping





Getting the message right

Clear, localized messages that speak specifically to customers

Consistent outreach and communication focused on raising awareness

Diverse methods of communication that match the community



Message Framing

- Green infrastructure is intended to support the District's 2035 Vision for zero basement backups and overflows and improved stormwater quality by capturing stormwater near its source and allowing it to soak into the ground, be filtered by vegetation, or evaporate instead of entering sewers and contributing to sewer overflows, water in basements, or discharging pollutants to waterways.

OR

- Green infrastructure will help our community eliminate basement backups and have cleaner rivers by 2035.



Images speak
louder than
words

WATER RATES



Fund More Than Just the Water...



Water rates have not increased since 2015.

**SWEETWATER AUTHORITY
IS CONDUCTING A
RATE STUDY TO DETERMINE
HOW TO PAY FOR:**

- Replacing aging pipes and delivery systems
- Dam safety
- Water quality improvements



Sweetwater Authority charges less than a penny to deliver a gallon of treated water to your home 24/7/365 (based on average 17,000 gallons/bimonthly)

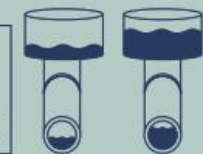
190,000 people in Chula Vista, National City, and Bonita rely on Sweetwater Authority for their water.

COST OF SERVICE

Rate studies determine how to recover costs from customers in proportion to their use of the water system.

Because it must provide water on demand, 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week, Sweetwater Authority must size and maintain a water system that's capable of meeting peak demands that occur primarily during hot summer days.

Transmission main for AVERAGE DAY demand



Some customer classes cause higher peaks in water demand than others. The rate study will identify those customer classes and assign costs based on their demand needs.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR BILL

WHAT HAPPENS BETWEEN THE TIME WSSC READS YOUR METER AND YOU GET A BILL

We're making some changes and we want to explain that process to you.



WSSC reads your meter about every three months. The meter tells us how many thousands of gallons of water you used since the last time we read your meter.

*ADG =
Average
Daily
Gallons

** Based on
the average
per person
consumption
of 55 gallons
per day for
a 3-person
household

We take the amount of water you used and divide that by the number of days since your last meter read - that tells us the average number of gallons you used per day.



A Typical
Residential
Customer**
15,000 GAL



Number of days
in billing cycle
91 Days



Average Daily
Gallons used
164 GAL



Then we take the average gallons of water used per day and match that to the four tiers in the new rate structure.

We charge you \$11.89 for all the water you use up to 81 gallons per day. The remaining gallons per day are charged \$13.30.



91 days

Water used in TIER 2 costs
\$13.30/1,000 gallons.

Water used in TIER 1 costs
\$11.89/1,000 gallons.



If water use is greater than the second tier (81-165 gallons per day) we continue moving up the tiers until we reach the fourth tier.

- Water used in TIER 4 costs \$20.26/1,000 gallons.
- Water used in TIER 3 costs \$16.09/1,000 gallons.
- Water used in TIER 2 costs \$13.30/1,000 gallons.
- Water used in TIER 1 costs \$11.89/1,000 gallons.



Check out our bill calculator at:
wsscwater.com/calculator
301-206-WSSC

March 2019

Do not make
people do
math.

Use \$ not %.



Social media

It's where people seek information

Facebook is the most used social media platform.

Twitter is a primary news source for reporters.

Nextdoor is available in more than 90% of neighborhoods.

Nearly half of Americans believe social media is an effective customer service tool.



Customers/stakeholders must hear from you consistently

- Go where the key influencers are
- Build content on your website and social media that shows how you are improving the water system
- Open your doors to tours
- Consider using customer surveys, focus groups
- Invite the public to help you understand what they want



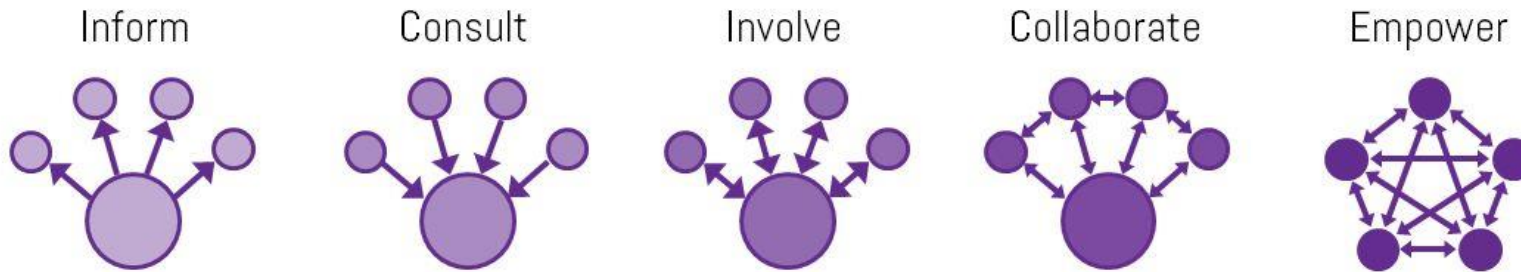
Why involve the public?

There are four reasons a utility might be motivated to involve the public:

1. It is required.
2. You are frustrated or even desperate.
3. You believe there is some value.
4. You will get some advantage from doing so.

There is no one public participation program—instead there are dozens and dozens of techniques that can be used to bring people together.

Public participation spectrum



Goal	To provide balanced and objective information in a timely manner	To obtain feedback on analysis, issues, alternatives and decisions	To work with the public to make sure that concerns and needs are considered and understood	To partner with the public in each aspect of decision-making	To place the final decision-making in the hands of the public
Promise	"We will keep you informed."	"We will listen to and acknowledge your concerns."	"We will work with you to ensure your concerns and needs are directly reflected in the decisions made."	"We will look to you for advice and innovation and incorporate this in decisions as much as possible."	"We will implement what you decide."

Public meetings vs. Public open houses

Painful and Ineffective



Traditional public meetings with a presentation and public comment period frustrate consumers, policymakers and staff.

Efficient and Helpful



Open houses provide an efficient, interactive way for consumers to ask questions about their concerns and provide feedback to policymakers.



Thank you!

Contact: Melissa Elliott, APR

303-305-1187 / melliott@raftelis.com / [LinkedIn.com/in/MelissaEssexElliott](https://www.linkedin.com/in/MelissaEssexElliott)

