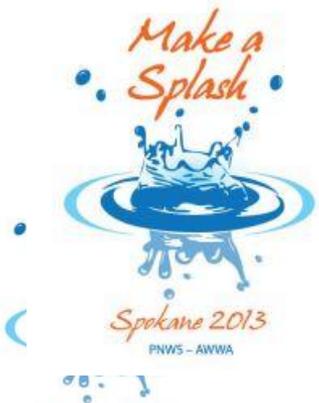


Tip\$ for Talking About Money

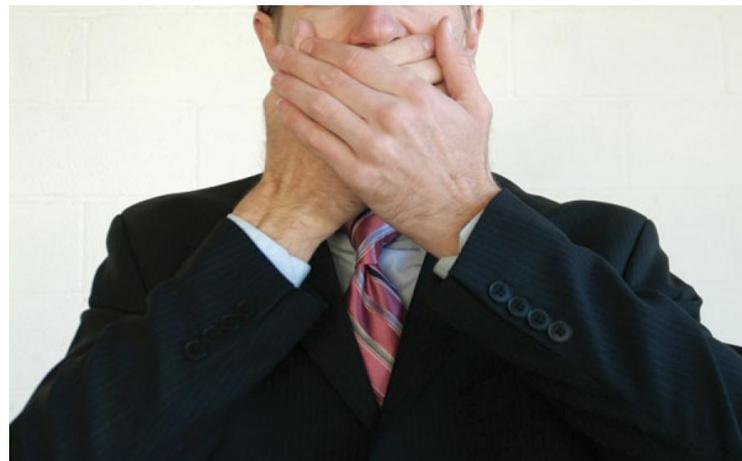
2013 PNWS-AWWA Annual Conference, Spokane

Clark Worth



Talking about money can be uncomfortable...

- Most utilities don't have enough money to sustain critical services and make needed infrastructure improvements.
- Times are tough for ratepayers, too.
- Asking for more money can lead to criticism.
- Remember what happened last time...?!
- Utilities end up not talking.



There are ways to talk about money.

Six Tips for Talking About Money

1. Policymakers first.
2. Tell your story—in a few words
3. Talk dollars, not percentages.
4. Know where you stand.
5. Include the media.
6. Say it again (and again).



Policymakers first.

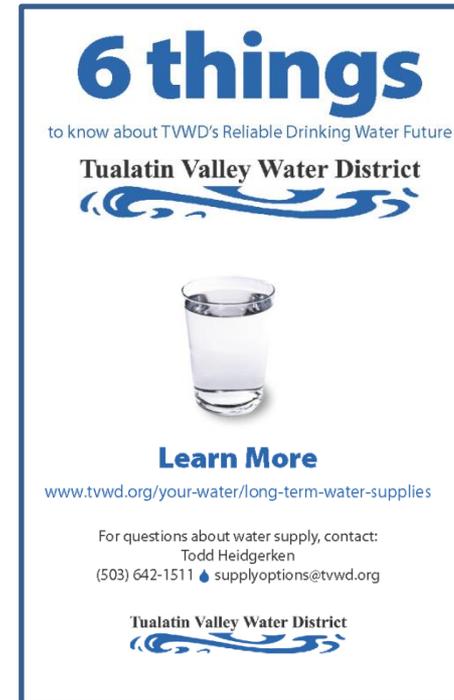
- Policymakers—elected leaders, top managers—must be effective and credible frontline “explainers” and “champions”.
- They are a vital part of the communications team.

Policymakers need to fully understand, and be ready to convey, their utility’s current and long-term financial picture.



Tell your story—but keep it brief.

- Forget the “elevator speech” — the new standard is the “elevator door talk”
- You have no longer than a few seconds!
- New communications tools:
 - “Six Things You Need to Know”
 - 60-second survey
 - “One-minute Message”



6 things
to know about TVWD's Reliable Drinking Water Future
Tualatin Valley Water District



Learn More
www.tvwd.org/your-water/long-term-water-supplies

For questions about water supply, contact:
Todd Heidgerken
(503) 642-1511 • supplyoptions@tvwd.org

Tualatin Valley Water District

What do policymakers / ratepayers / citizens need to know, at just this moment?



Talk dollars—not percentages.

Which sounds better: a 10% increase in your water bill, or \$1.85 per month?



That's less than a latte!

Remember: water is affordable.



Know where you stand.

- How does your city compare with peer communities? (No one knows!)
- Are your rates lower – higher – about the same? Why?
- What about your infrastructure condition and service levels?

COMPARABLE
MONTHLY WATER RATES*

Community	Average Residential Rate
West Linn	\$21.89
Salem	\$24.60
Hillsboro	\$26.84
Oregon City	\$31.45
Beaverton	\$33.94
Portland	\$36.61
Lake Oswego	\$36.91
Sherwood	\$53.69

Tell your story: policymakers and citizens want to know!



Include the media.



- Take time now to educate local media.
- Enlist them to convey messages to their audience—your customers.
- Don't wait until you have steep rate increases.

Dispelling financial myths in your community starts with educated media.



Say it again (and again).

Let's be honest: utility finances aren't on the radar for most citizens.

- ✓ Don't assume ratepayers—or even policymakers—have “received” your communications.
- ✓ Use multiple communications channels.
- ✓ Start communications early, so there's time to repeat the messages.



Say it again (and again).

Target communications for the parties most affected, and experiment with non-traditional communications methods.

- Targeted letters / one-on-one
- Website: use online bill paying page
- Utility bills / envelopes
- Social media to reach younger customers
- Customer buy-in requires more than public meetings



Start talking about money today to the folks who pay the bills!



**Water utilities can't afford to be timid
about starting a public conversation.**

