

How do you become a general manager (or director) . . .

. . . and what does she do for a living?

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Public Works Director
Salem, Oregon



PNWS-AWWA

What directors do for a living



What this presentation is about

- Defining the position of general manager
- My perspective as a public works director
- Understanding the education and training needed to become a general manager
- Layout of a director's career path
- Describing the general manager's job
- Personal philosophies for success as a director

Who is in the audience?

Raise your hand if you:

- Have less than 10 years of experience
- Have between 10 and 15 years of experience
- Have more than 15 years of experience
- Are a division manager or assistant director
- Are a public works director or general manager
- Are a city manager or elected official

You are in the sweet spot for immediately becoming a director

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Let's make this interactive

Please ask questions throughout the session

If you have a different opinion or experience, share it!



When you see this picture in the presentation,
I'm hoping for dialogue from the audience



Please!

How do you become a general manager (or director)?

INTRODUCTION

What is the job?

Public works directors and general managers oversee essential functions of city government. Services under their purview typically include functions that require construction and maintenance, as well as those that citizens are billed for on a monthly basis such as water, wastewater, electricity and trash collection. These functions are some of the most fundamental activities a city government undertakes.

John Ostrowski

*Everything you need to know to be
a public works director from my perspective*



Director jobs are:

1. More about dealing with people than about engineering
2. About the management of the technical aspects of making society work
3. Political in nature

Overheard:

“I love working at the city, but I hate the politics”

General manager or director?

General Manager

Under general direction of the city, managing Board of Directors, mayor, or Board of Water Commissioners, is responsible for managing, planning, coordinating and administering all activities of the Water Department and/or water company. Responsible for the short and long-range strategy of the organization subject to review by the Board.

(American Water Works Association)

Public Works Director

Plans, directs, manages and oversees the activities, projects and operations of the Public Works Department including street and general maintenance, engineering, traffic engineering, solid waste services and airport maintenance; coordinates activities with other departments and outside agencies; and provides highly responsible and complex administrative support to the City Manager's office.

(International City and County Managers Association)

Director duties at small versus large cities



Administering

Managing

Planning

Coordinating

Politics

More hands on

Broader responsibilities



Why do you want to be a director?

- Money
- Power
- Fame
- Glamour



Make one million dollars!

Why do you want to be a director?



Why do you want to be a director?

- Achieve a professional goal
- Natural next career step
- Think you can do a good job
- Care about the organization
- Have a vision for the organization's future



How do you become a general manager (or director)?

PRESENTER'S PERSPECTIVE

Peter Fernandez, P.E.

- Public Works Director
- 33 years of professional experience
 - 21 years at Salem Public Works
 - 8 years as director
 - 1 year as acting deputy city manager
 - 10 years in private consulting
 - 2 years in county government
- Registered professional engineer in OR, WA & FL
- Master of Urban and Regional Planning
- Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering

Personal perspective

- Relationship person
 - I like interacting with people
 - I was heavily influenced by my parent's jobs in sales
 - I walk around a lot
- Traits of young baby boomer and old Gen Xer
 - I work hard
 - I like to be part of an organization
 - I am a strong believer in job/family balance
 - I like to know why I am asked to do something

Professional perspective

- Traffic engineer/transportation planner
 - Virtually all projects involved the public
 - Handled a lot of politically sensitive issues
- Private-sector experience
 - Committed to getting things done
 - Empathy for applicant issues
- Not a utility expert
 - Everything I knew about the utility when I became director I learned in college

Professional perspective

- 1 year as (acting) deputy city manager
 - I know what motivates the city manager
 - I get where elected officials are coming from
 - I know why it's good to work cooperatively with other departments
 - I know that nobody likes a bully department!
- Worked at only one public works department
 - Larger and smaller organizations may have different outlooks and needs

Department perspective

- Five divisions
- 400+ employees
- Budget
 - \$128M operating
 - \$100M capital
 - 4 operating funds
 - 3 capital funds
- Many lines of businesses and services



Water

Production, storage and distribution



Wastewater

Collection, conveyance and treatment



Stormwater

Conveyance, flood control and
environmental stewardship



Planning and Development

Transportation, utility, parks & environmental planning and development permits



Administration

Budgeting, financial planning, policy analysis and centralized department support



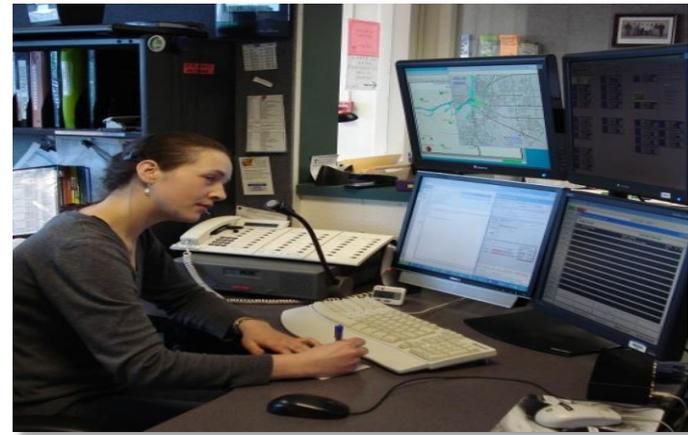
Engineering

Project delivery, engineering, survey and inspection



Customer Service

Meter reading, billing, inquiries and 24-hour dispatch



Laboratory Services

Water and sewer



Public Outreach

Education and information



Streets

Operations, maintenance
and traffic engineering



Parks

Operations and maintenance



Recreation

Center 50+, softball, facility use, event
coordination and youth recreation



What is your organization's
size and complexity?



How do you become a general manager (or director)?

**EDUCATION, TRAINING, SKILLS
AND PERSONAL TRAITS**

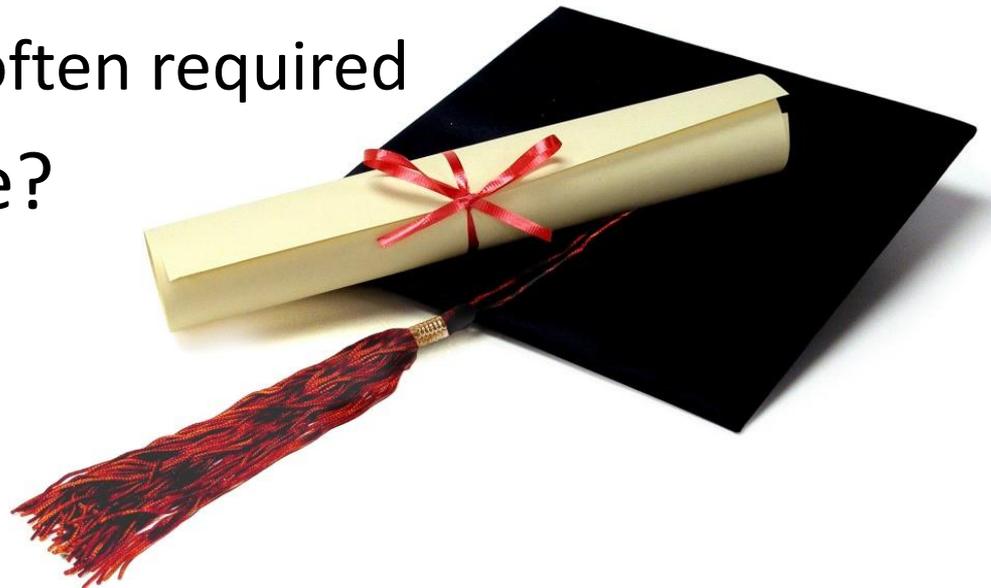
APWA's core competencies of a public works leader

- Plans for the future
- Leads an organization
- Communicates
- Manages staff
- Manages information
- Manages infrastructure
- Manages municipal services
- Manages money and resources
- Builds relationships and partnerships



Required education

- Bachelors degree in science or engineering
 - Public works is still mostly an engineering shop
- Masters degree in public or business administration, planning or other related field
 - Always preferred; often required
- Ph.D. or law degree?
 - Sometimes



Training

- Finance
- Management
- Public policy
- Urban planning
 - Land development
 - Developer exactions
 - Impact fees
- Legal aspects
 - Contracts
 - Tort liability



Skills and personal traits

- Experience
- Communications
 - Speaking and Listening
 - Writing and Presentations
- Judgment and tact
 - Comfort with shades of grey
- Creativity/imagination
- Strategic thinking
- Relationships
 - Internal and External



You don't have to know everything at the start

- No way to be an expert in all business lines
- Expect a learning curve and experience arc
- Things I learned after I became director
 - Purchasing
 - Intricacies of human resources
 - Collective bargaining/labor relations
 - Risk management/liability insurance
 - Financial management/utility rate modeling

How do you become a general manager (or director)?

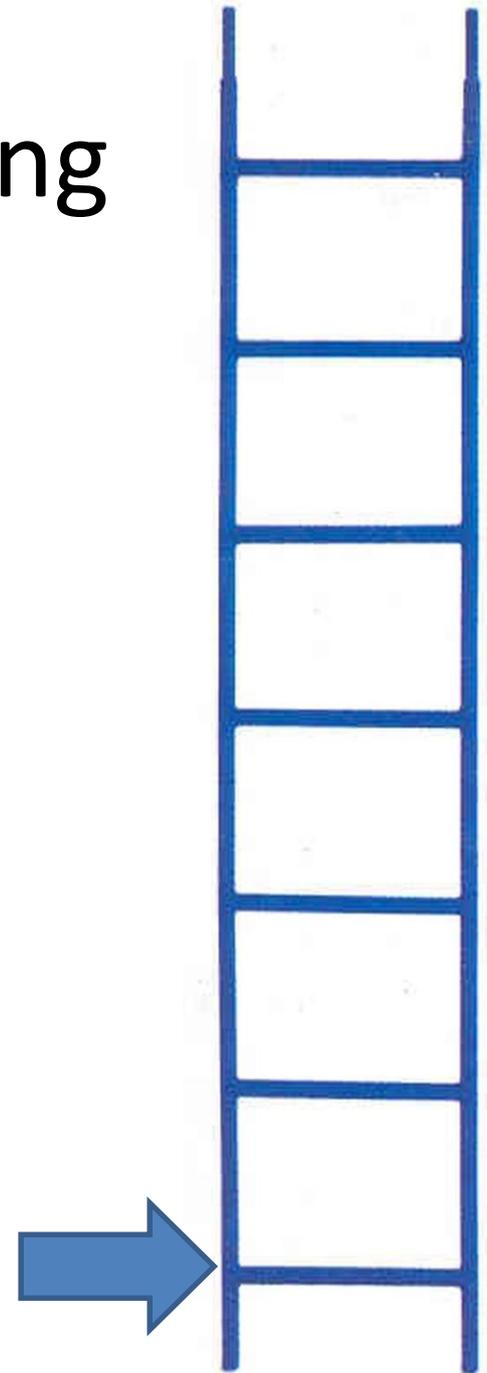
CLIMBING THE LADDER

- Luck and timing
- Come to the attention of important people
- Taking chances
- Visible projects
- Work experience
- Training
- Education



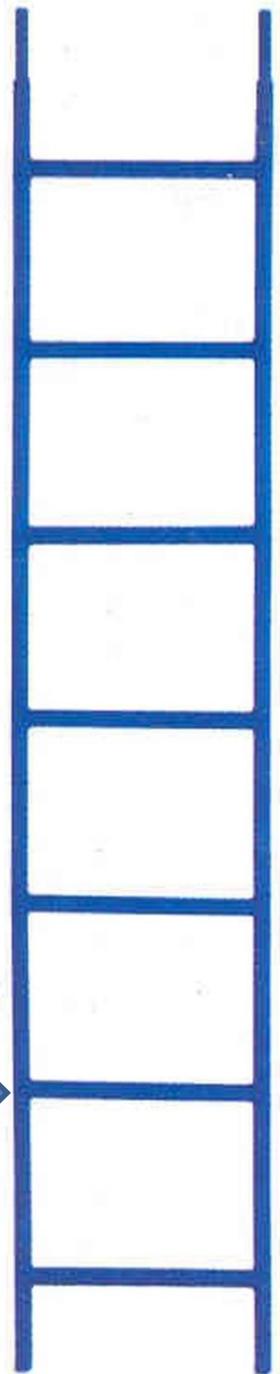
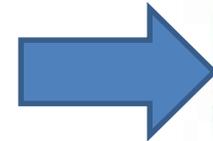
Education and training

- Formal education
 - BS
 - MS, MPA, MBA
 - Ph.D.
- Additional training
 - Finance
 - Management
 - Public policy
 - Urban planning
 - Legal aspects



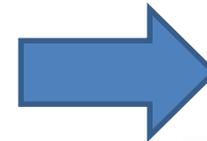
Work experience

- Early years
 - Operations
 - Infrastructure planning
 - Project management
- First promotions
 - Higher complexity assignments
 - Increased responsibility for decision making
 - Presentations
- Supervisory promotions

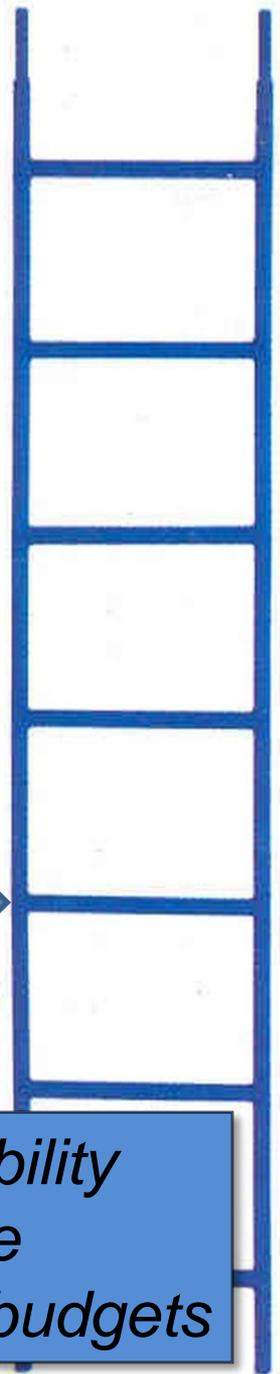


Progressive management experience

- Supervising people
 - Flow and quality of work
 - Hiring
 - Discipline up to and including separations
- Financial responsibility
 - Budget development and oversight
 - Purchasing
- Decision-making

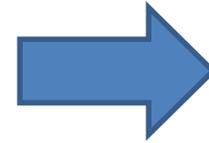


Over time responsibility increases with more people and bigger budgets



Visible projects

- Important to the organization
 - City manager and elected officials care about the outcome
- Controversial
 - A lot of community interest
 - Compromises required
 - Political
- High value/high risk
 - Substantial budget

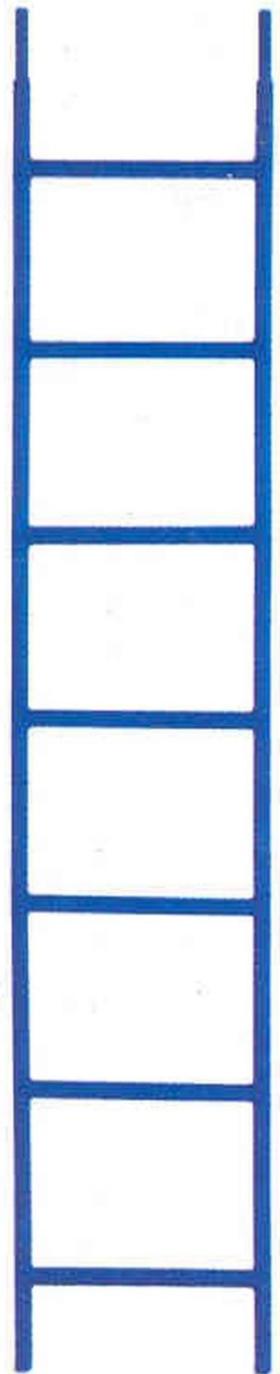
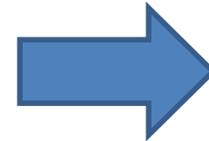




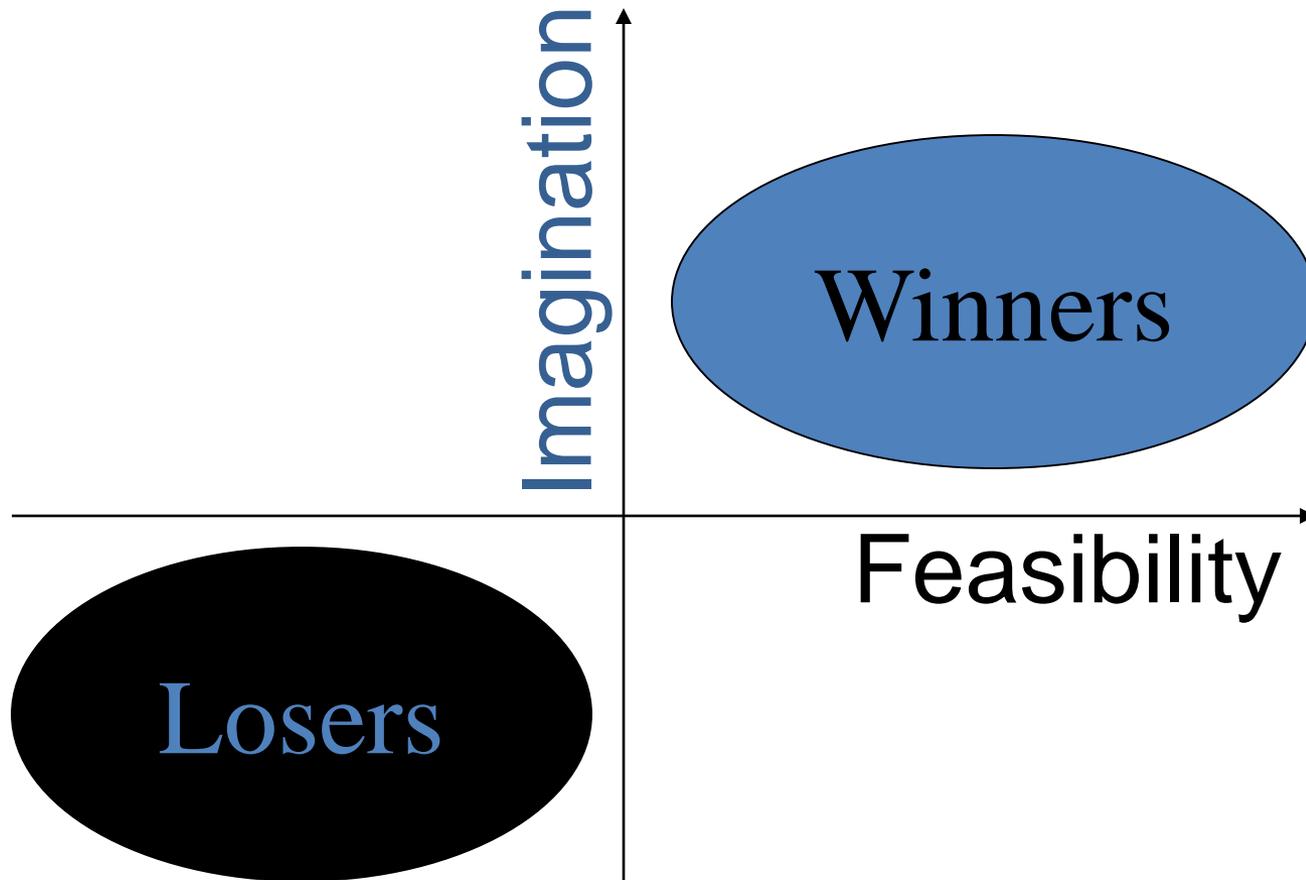
Salem River Crossing

Taking chances

- Volunteer for—or willingly accept—difficult assignments
- Policy initiatives
- Championing projects
- Creativity
 - Proposing solutions to difficult issues



Best ideas are at the upper right quadrant of the intersection of imagination and feasibility





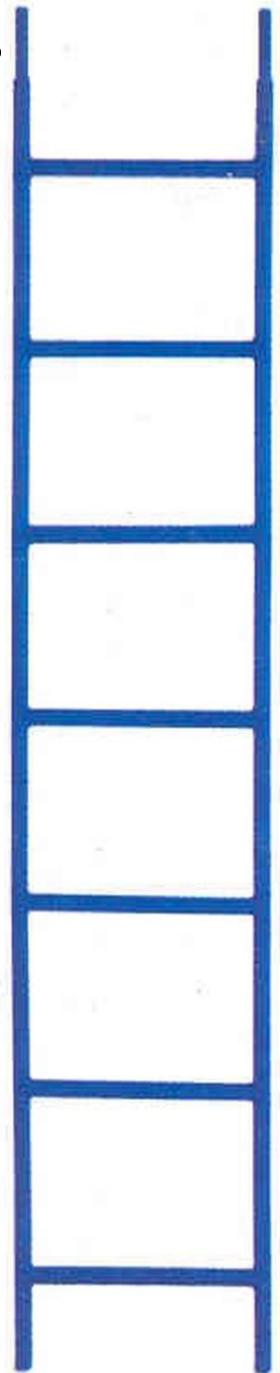
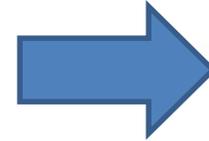
Battle Creek Golf Course



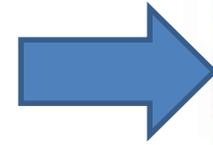
Champion Hill Reservoir and Pump Station

Coming to the attention of important people

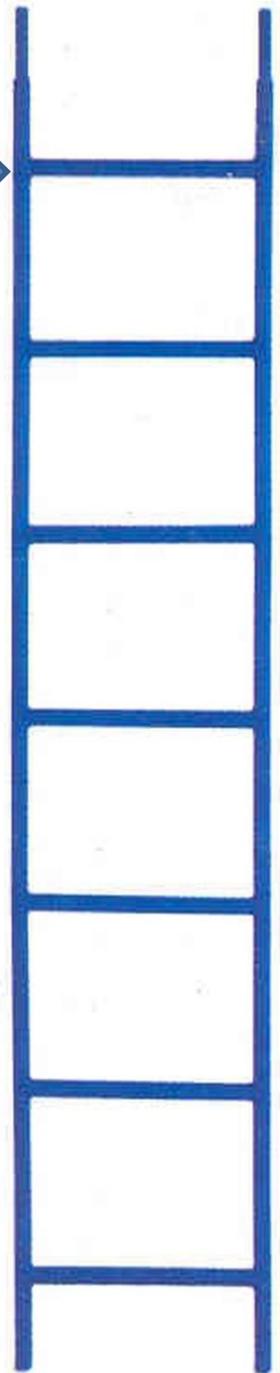
- Riding a superior's coat tails
- Working directly with executives
- Presenting often to the elected body
- Expressing your career goals
- Participating in committees and professional organizations
- Networking



Luck and timing



- Positioning yourself for the future
- Current director's tenure and employment status



Moving

Sometimes you just have got to go!



APWA
WORK ZONE
Your Connection to Public Works Careers

www.apwa.net/jobs

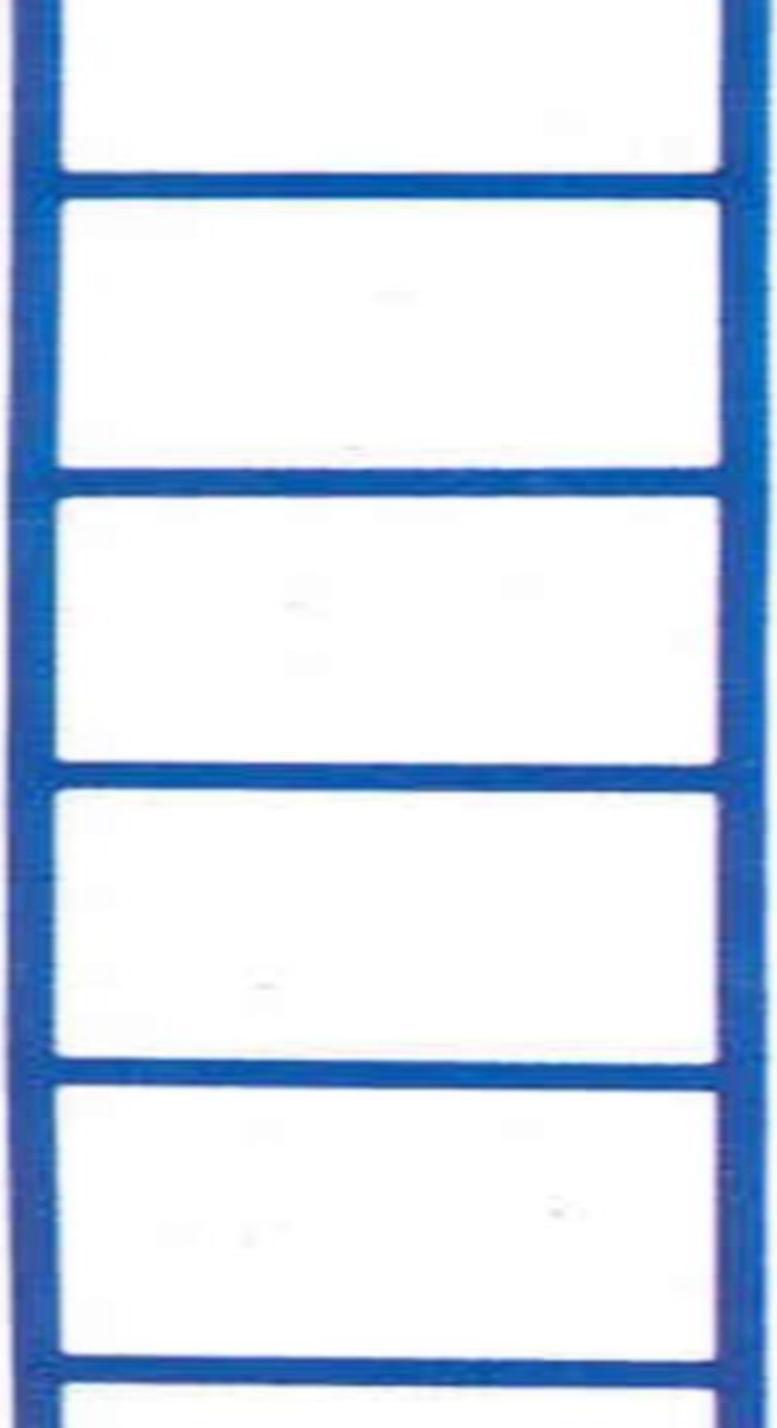
American Water Works Association

CAREER CENTER

JOB FAIR

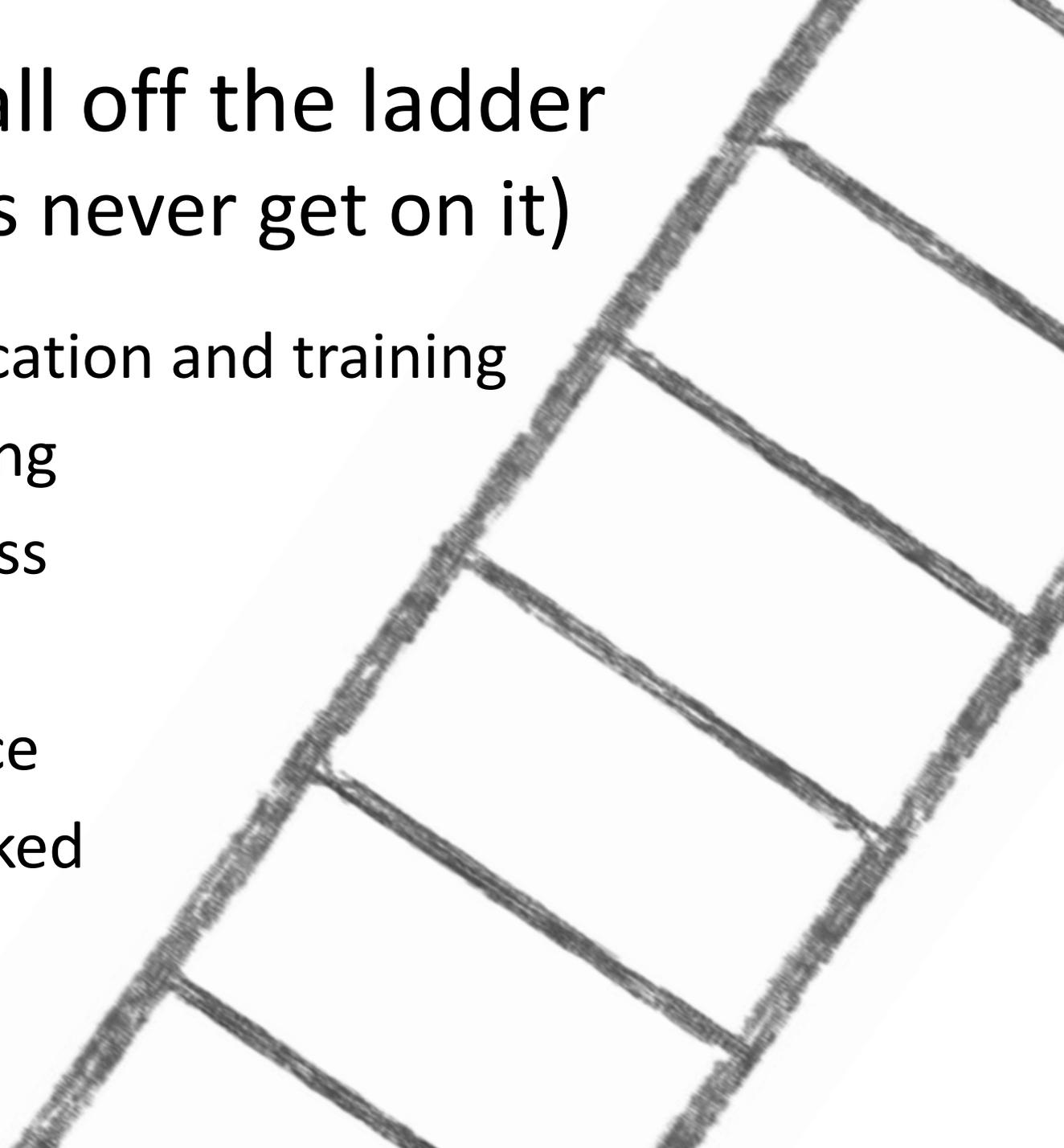
What holds the rungs of the ladder

- Success
- Communications
 - It's lonely at the top
- Reputation
 - Honesty and integrity
- Personality
- Leadership
- Bravery



How you fall off the ladder (or perhaps never get on it)

- Lack of education and training
- Small thinking
- Stubbornness
- Rule bound
- Impertinence
- Not being liked



How do you see yourself advancing?

- Someone from a small department
- From a large department
- A woman
- A minority



How do you become a general manager (or director)?

WHAT DO DIRECTORS DO?

However, the two most important things I do are

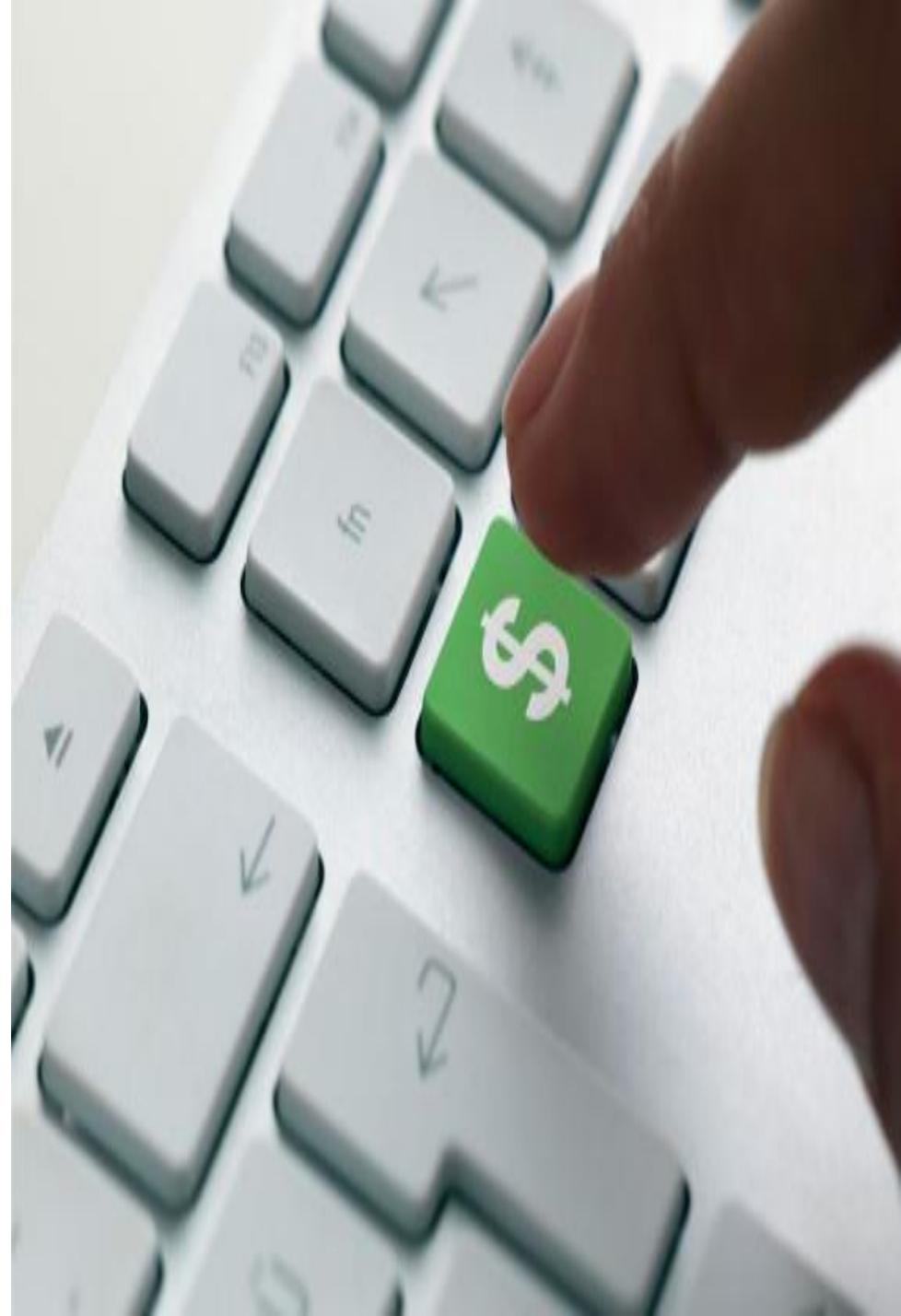
Prepare and present the annual department budget

Prepare and present the biennial utility rate proposal



Financial

- Annual budget
 - Preparation
 - Adoption
 - Monthly review
- Revenues
 - Rates
 - Fees for service
 - Impact fees
- COSA



Politics

- Bureaucracy
 - Peers
 - Executive
- Elected officials
 - Yours and others
 - Follow direction
(even when you disagree)
- Citizens



Personnel

- Recruitment
- Disciplinary issues
- Labor relations
 - (See relationships)
- Communication and team building
- Morale
- Staff development
 - Empower your people



Diversity in the work force

- Age
- Culture
- Education level
- Gender
- Race
- Religion



Issues in managing a diverse labor force

- Motivation
- Training needs
- Work hours
- Salary versus hourly
- Represented versus exempt



Purchasing

- Purchase orders
- Bid awards
- Consultant selection



Legal aspects

- Contracts
- Property acquisition
- Environmental permitting
- Tort liability
- Water rights
- Growth management
- Development exactions



Planning

- Infrastructure master plans
- Developer exactions
- Economic development
- Capital improvement program



Relationships

- Stakeholders
 - Citizens
 - Neighborhood assoc.'s
 - Civic groups
 - Chamber of commerce
 - Home Builders Assoc.
 - Activists
- Department directors
 - City attorney
 - HR
- Elected officials



“The director has to be the
ambassador of the public works
business in the community”

George Haines, former Gillette, WY public works director,
in *American City & County*

How do you become a general manager (or director)?

**WHAT DO DIRECTORS DO?
BEYOND THE DAY-TO-DAY**

Big thinking

- Plan for the future
 - Set mid-term and long-term goals
- Address major issues
 - Don't let rules, standards and funding get in the way of creative solutions
- Beyond your department
 - Read the *WSJ* and other national periodicals
 - Help solve issues in the community and in other departments

Organizational vision and values

- Address issues as they arise
 - Break through roadblocks
 - Identify funding
- Assess staff strengths
 - It's okay to reorganize
- Set work place tone
 - Morale is your responsibility
- Express what you believe in
 - Staff will follow your lead



“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader”

John Quincy Adams, 6th President of the United States

What directors don't do (or should not do)

- Manage every aspect of the department
- Have too many direct reports
- Be expert on everything
- Know everything
- Manage projects
- Make every presentation
- Complain about the greater organization



What does your director do that you think he should not be doing?



How do you become a general manager (or director)?

PHILOSOPHIES

1. The department's responsibility to the rest of the organization

- Typically the largest department
- Understand your department's impact to support departments
 - Human resources
 - Payroll
 - Purchasing
- Providing resources to other departments

2. Dedication to production

- Make decisions promptly
- Everyday:
 - Sign documents
 - Respond to emails
 - Return phone calls
- Delegate
 - It is not your show alone
 - Take pride and pleasure in your staff's successes



3. It's one organization

- The politics of the management team
 - Rowing together
- Playing by the rules pays off in the end
- It all accrues
 - Customer service



4. Show people you care

- The importance of saying good morning
- The hand written thank you card
- Remember how you felt when you were not the director
 - Asking personal questions

Thank You!



5. The Academy Award goes to . . . You!

- Always be positive
- Never berate staff
- (Almost) never lose your temper
- Make time for people
 - An open door policy means the door has to stay open
 - Most work is snuck in early or late



Final questions and comments



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