The Utility Management Conference:

Rate-Approval Process Communication Strategy and Toolkit: Workshop

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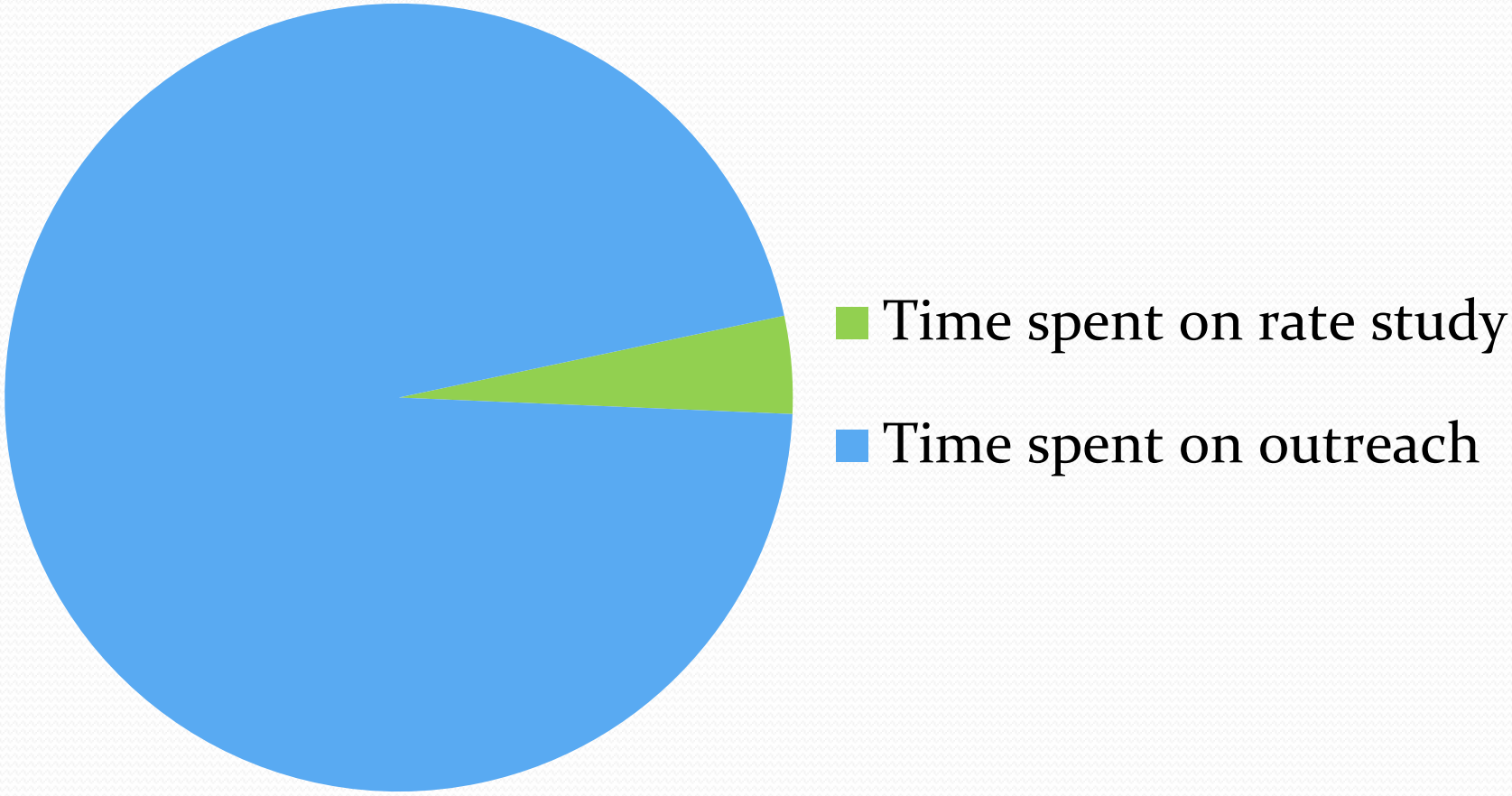
Strategies & Tools

Strategy #1: Reach Out – Often!

Plan → Prioritize → Analyze → Present

Communication Outreach

What it feels like when you're done



We Are Good Decision Makers!

- Basic premise of economic theory
- Basic premise of human nature
  - We all make the best possible decisions, based on the best available scientific knowledge, if not all the time, at least for important decisions

Strategy #2: Connect

Connect the need for a rate increase to reliability

Strategy # 3: Follow the Principles of Authentic Communication

Relevant

Truthful

Fundamental

Comprehensive

Accessible

Responsive

Compassionate

Consistent

Tool #1:

A message map

Project: New Desalination (Desal) Plant Audience: Governing Board members Objective: Obtain go ahead for in-depth analysis of the desal option		
Key Message 1 **Water supplies are projected to be inadequate to meet demands by 2030.**	Key Message 2 Unreliable water supplies have significant impacts on the utility, the local economy, and the community.	Key Message 3 Desalination (desal) has been identified as the potential best option for increasing supplies.
Supporting Info 1-1 **Model outputs indicate water supplies will be 24% below demands by 2030.**	Supporting Info 2-1 An inadequate future water supply portfolio will prevent the utility from achieving its primary mission – reliably providing safe drinking water to meet demands.	Supporting Info Other options reviewed included conservation, water reuse, and importing water.
Supporting Info 1-2 **Even with increased conservation savings of 25% over the next 20 years, our current water supply portfolio is still likely to be inadequate to meet the demand forecasts for 2030.**	Supporting Info 2-2 Reliable water supplies are paramount for economic stability and growth. The impacts of an unreliable water supply on our primary sector – the tourism industry – are projected to be significant.	Supporting Info 3-2 A financial analysis of our utility's future supply options identifies desal as the option with the lowest present value costs and financial bottom line.
Supporting Info 1-3 **Increasing drought severity and magnitude due to climate change further reduces our ability to meet projected demands with the current supply portfolio.**	Supporting Info 2-3 Unreliable water supplies due to climate change threaten the operation of fire departments, hospitals, and schools.	Supporting Info 3-3 Desal provides a climate-independent water supply. As climate change decreases the reliability of our current supply sources – groundwater and surface water – the need for a climate-independent source grows.

Exhibit 8. Sample message map

Project: Rate Increase

Audience: Governing Board Members

Outcome: Approval!

Message Map Example

Defining Statement:

27 words

9 seconds

3 points

Water supply reliability at Karen's Water Agency is at risk due to the need to upgrade the distribution system, new treatment needs and increasing energy costs.

Fact #1: Need to upgrade distribution system	Fact #2: New Treatment Needs	Fact #3: Increasing Energy costs
The distribution system was built in 1545		
Distribution system leakages cost a trillion billion dollars a year.		
Distribution system leaks allow water quality contamination		

Recommended Messages

- ***We are committed to efficiency.***
- ***We are doing our part to cut costs.***
- ***Water utilities are critical to quality of life.***
- ***Failing infrastructure is bad news for the economy***
- ***The value provided in reliable water service justifies costs.***
- ***Inaction costs money, too.***
- ***Conservation has many meanings***