

You Want to Do What? With What?

**Biosolids Recycling:
Issues, Audiences and Approaches Involved in
Promoting a Contentious Practice**



Strategic Communications

What strategic communications does

- Deliver clear, effective, timely **messages**
- Target key **audiences** and **stakeholders**
- Build **support** and address **concerns**
- Define measurable **objectives**
- Develop **strategy** and **tactics**
- Anchor plan in strong **research** and evaluation
- Identify **issues, opportunities** and **risks**
- Identify **resources** and **partners**

Strategic Communications

It all starts with research

- Anchor your plan using solid research
 - Opinion surveys
 - Focus groups
 - Influencer interviews
 - Media analysis
 - Soft soundings
 - Environmental scan
 - Existing studies
- Use research to develop and test your strategy

Issues

- The ICK! Factor
- The NIMBY Factor
- The 100% Factor
- The DISCONNECT Factor

The ICK! Factor . . .

Reframe the issue

- Asked about a problem? Talk about a solution.
- Don't just tell them "the facts"
- Put the issue into a large perspective
- Communicate to gather input

The ICK! Factor . . .

Go the extra mile

- Don't just meet a standard, exceed it
- Demonstrate your strong commitment to:
 - Public health and safety
 - Environmental protection
 - Community relations
 - Consulting and listening
 - Openness, transparency
- Do what you said you would do

The NIMBY Factor . . .

Be a neighbor, not a stranger

- Be visible and active in the community
- Don't be seen only when there's an issue
- Communicate openly and regularly
- Hire a community relations officer
 - Build your company's reputation
 - Establish community goodwill
 - Make sure people know you have one

The NIMBY Factor . . .

Go door-to-door . . .

- Meet people face-to-face, on their doorstep
- Introduce yourself
 - Tell people what you will be doing
 - Keep it simple, friendly, low-key
- Ask questions and listen
 - What are your issues and concerns?
 - What can we do about it?
 - How can we keep you informed?

The 100%! Factor . . .

“Can you give me a 100% guarantee that what’s in there is safe?”

- WRONG: “In science, nothing is 100%...”
- RIGHT: “Here’s what we are doing to make it as safe as we possibly can...”

The 100%! Factor . . .

Public Education

- Your industry must lead this effort
- Communicate, communicate, communicate
- Partner with credible sources in community
- Government's role
 - Educate the public about what government is doing
 - Assure public you are doing what you're supposed to
 - **Not** their role to educate public about your industry

The DISCONNECT Factor

Know your audiences

- Farmers
- Local residents
- Community and business leaders
- Influencers
- Elected officials
- Employees
- Suppliers/investors
- Media

The DISCONNECT Factor

Your employees are ambassadors

- They deliver a powerful message
 - Actions speak louder than words
 - Pride in the company and what you do
 - Demonstrate care and commitment
 - Respect for people and the community
 - Know the right thing to say

The DISCONNECT Factor

Do an audit

- Through a third party, talk with community leaders, influencers, customers, opponents
- Ask them:
 - What they really think about your industry
 - What they really think about how you communicate
- You will get:
 - A “real” view of people’s attitudes and concerns
 - A benchmark to measure progress
 - Credit for asking

The DISCONNECT Factor . . .

Know the media's agenda

- Controversy
- Change
- People
- Novelty
- Public interest
 - Who broke the rules
 - Who stood to gain
 - Who should have known better
 - What's being done about it

Media Relations

Gain control of the media agenda

- Media are a conduit and a filter
- Decide whether you want to be in the story
- Anticipate opponents' tactics
- Have a strong, informed point of view
- Demonstrate concern, care, sensitivity
- Remember all your audiences
- Use third-parties to bolster credibility

Media Relations

Media spokespersons

- Use people who can communicate well
 - Sincere, credible, experienced
 - Passionate, active, informed
 - Won't take it personally
 - Won't get into an argument
 - Won't go "off-the-record"
 - A good story teller
 - A scientist, but doesn't talk like one

Media Relations

Integrate the web

- Blogs/online as important as traditional media
- Reporters read them, write them and use content
- Public sees them as credible
- Word of mouth is powerful in a community
- Use your website to inform and engage
- Monitor the space, but don't react to everything

Reputation

Your company's reputation has value

- Know what can damage your firm's reputation
- Know how to protect your firm's reputation
 - **Do the right thing — and do it quickly**
- Be prepared, so you can take charge
 - Anticipate, plan, test, monitor, refine
- People will judge you on how you respond

*"A lie can go halfway around the world
while the truth is still putting its shoes on."*

— Mark Twain

Reputation

During a crisis . . .

- Rumours will be rampant
- Internet will be a primary resource
- Competing “experts” will confuse the facts
- You will need to think and act quickly
- Can’t wait till you have all the information
- Focus on safety, not the business
- Words and deeds must align

Reputation

“Solutions” that are not the answer

- Advertising blitzes
- Blaming your opponents
- Ignoring or hiding “inconvenient” information
- Being aggressive or defensive
- Trying to de-ICK! using humour

Strategic Communications

| | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Facts INFORM | Reasons EXPLAIN |
| Arguments PERSUADE | Actions CONVINCE |