Communicating the Value of Water with the Resources You Have

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Alliance for Water Efficiency
Our mission is to promote an efficient and sustainable water future

Nearly 500 member organizations in 200 watersheds delivering water to 50 million water users
## Our 2030 Sustainable Water Vision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Efficiency First</th>
<th>Homeowners and businesses are smart water users, empowered by awareness of the value of water, real-time information, and technologies that help them save indoors and outdoors.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Water-Smart Federal, State/Provincial, and Local Policies</strong></td>
<td>Governments adopt and implement policies to use limited water supplies more sustainably.</td>
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<td><strong>Sustainable Water Rates and Fiscally Healthy Utilities</strong></td>
<td>Price signals inform customers of the value of water, and financially resilient utilities can provide reliable, safe, and affordable water service today and into the future.</td>
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<td><strong>Right-sized, Water-tight, and Intelligent Systems</strong></td>
<td>Utility systems are built to the right capacity, proactively managed to reduce water loss, and equipped with the latest technologies to ensure safe water quality and to leverage data for efficiency.</td>
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<td><strong>Integrated, Systems-based Approach</strong></td>
<td>Water efficiency is addressed in the context of a broader, systems-based perspective.</td>
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Why Proactively Engage the Public?

• Change awareness and public perception
• Build a sense of shared responsibility for a communal resource
• Build customer trust in utility decisions
• Create an educated and involved customer base

✓ Rate increases or revisions
✓ Behavior changes
✓ Repair and replacement of aging infrastructure
✓ Investment in modern technology
✓ Innovative approaches

“Only by communicating to our customers about what it takes to deliver our essential service, the value of our people and the need for infrastructure modernization can we generate the support that’s required to raise the revenue needed.”

- George Hawkins, Former GM of DC Water
OF COURSE I KNOW WHERE WATER COMES FROM. IT COMES FROM THE TAP. WE HAVE SOME WORK TO DO.
Since 2013, the number of Tweets each minute has increased 58% to **more than 455,000 tweets per minute in 2017**

The average attention span has dropped to **8 seconds** - one second less than that of a goldfish.

People need to hear something **three to five times** for it to drive a behavior change.
A Changing Stakeholder Universe

- Utility universe is changing and expanding
- Rise of peer-to-peer communications
- It's a more connected world
- Trust and reputation harder to build and control as information flows at a new speed
So What Does Public Engagement Mean?

- Embrace the complexity
- Own your story
- Create and curate content
- Activate your experts
- Participate in the conversation
- Engage with multi-channel outreach
- Evaluate and evolve
What’s YOUR community’s water story?

The key is to craft a strong, concise narrative and communicate it consistently through all channels and news streams.
Start With Key Messages

- Prioritize points, focus the speaker and ensure consistency
- AWE - Jargon-free messages on:
  - The value of water
  - Benefits of water conservation
  - The need for a rate revision
  - Relationship between conservation and rates
  - Impact of drivers such as water quality and sustainability
- Customizable to tell your story!
- Comes with Guidance document
- www.financingsustainablewater.org

AWE Water Rates Message Plan

The Alliance for Water Efficiency has developed a set of key messages for utilities implementing conservation and efficiency-oriented rate structures or rate revisions. These messages have been developed to help utilities communicate to ratepayers, the social, fiscal and regulatory challenges that all utilities face, without jargon. As more regions become concerned with drought, crumbling infrastructure and population growth, these messages highlight the benefits and value of promoting water conservation and the significance of investing and planning for long-term water use efficiency solutions. Finally, these key messages may be helpful to support outreach to drive change in public perception, as utilities implement new rate structures (or a rate revision), garner support for new water resources, cultivate local support to repair aging infrastructure, and seek to grow support to add modern, more reliable technology to sustainably resolve our water supply issues.

Messages are the “elevator pitch” for communicating with the public. Messages summarize issues and must be backed up by facts. Key messages help prioritize key points; focus the speaker on what is most important; and help ensure consistency across written and verbal communications.

Utilities change their rate structures or increase rates under these broad scenarios, including:
- Drought or shortages of local water supplies (e.g. lake pressures on groundwater);
- Operating and maintaining a reliable water system 24/7/365, including replacing aging infrastructure, responding to regulatory requirements, and addressing increasing costs (e.g. energy, safety);
- Population growth, including stretching existing supplies while building new capacity;
- Crumbling infrastructure and the significance of how a reliable water supply contributes to the growth and livelihood of the local economy;
- Regulatory mandates from local or state levels to ensure a safe and high-quality supply of affordable and reliable drinking water; and
- Meeting sustainability objectives (e.g. long-term planning for the region and economy, including preparing an infrastructure to withstand extreme weather conditions, among many other disasters).

The messages have been developed to accommodate each utility’s unique rate-setting scenario, and should be customized or adapted as needed to address specific challenges and/or objectives. For additional guidance on how to use these messages, please refer to the AWE Message Protocol and Q&A document on www.financingsustainablewater.org.
[Utility name] has been delivering reliable water service to you since [year], thanks to hundreds of miles of pipe, thousands of watts of electricity and hundreds of dedicated people working around the clock.

Water is essential to human life and a shared resource for our community. It gives us sprinklers, pools and lakes to play in, keeps us clean, fuels our power grid, and keeps our economy healthy.

Using water efficiently is the most inexpensive way to make our supplies more sustainable, and it keeps your rates lower over time.
You Have Messages, Now What?

- Web content
- Fact sheets
- FAQs
- Press releases
- Talking points for media interviews
- Speakers Bureau
- Infographics/Data Visualizations
Don’t tell, **show** how pipes, plants and people keep water flowing with pictures, videos and graphics.

- Your smartphone
- Canva
- Fiverr
- 99designs
- Venngage
Create or curate content.

Frame the issue the way you want it to be seen and you own it. Sharing content positions you as an authority and trusted resource. Customize wherever possible.
Share and Embed: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dq9Yg_jlsUc&t=1s
Elevate and activate a group of subject matter experts who can cultivate new ideas and engage in meaningful conversations. Make digital engagement 1% of everyone’s job:

- Consumer Q&As
- Blog posts
- Tweet Chats
Participate in the conversation.

Think service first, but human always. People want to engage with other people, not brands. Try humor, humility, fun, and transparency.
Evaluate and evolve. Measure results against program objectives and desired outcomes. Refine and reshape content and engagement.
If You Have…

1 Hour
- Craft 5 key messages and FAQ on a specific issue (and send them to every department with instructions on how to use!)

5 Hours
- Video an engineer in the field (use a smartphone!) and incorporate into a newsletter or email. Consider a series!

10 Hours
- Plan an internal training on your key messages. Invite staff from every department.
Planning Resources

- FinancingSustainableWater.org
  - Tools → Communications
- Regional & state organizations
- Your fellow water providers
- Nonprofits and think tanks
- Communications firms
AWE Can Help With:
- Conservation Program Planning
- Communications Resources and Multimedia
- Education and Leadership Opps for Staff
- Technical Assistance
Any Questions?

Thank You!

Join Us: Email 
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