



# HANDLING THE HEAT:

## Communication tools & techniques to handle tough questions

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CONSULTING · TRAINING

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1

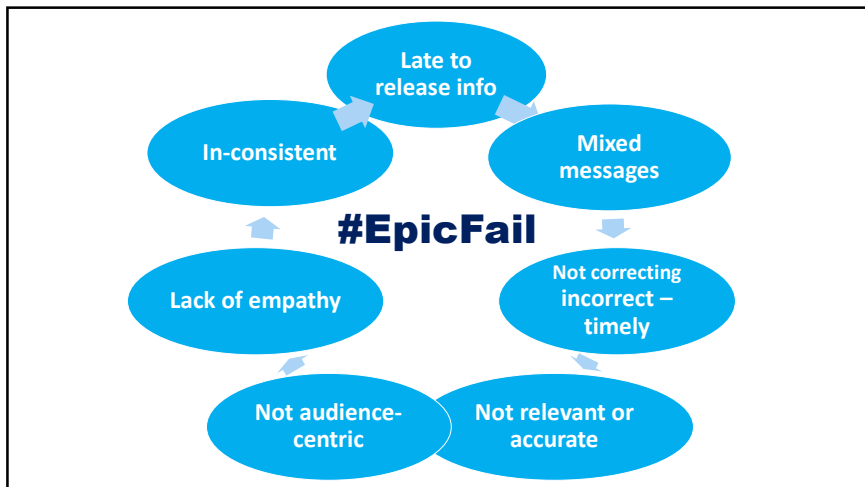
## WHAT WE'LL COVER



**BE PROACTIVE**

- Why this matters
- Frame your message quickly with 4 must-answer questions
- Be response ready with practical techniques
- Keep on communicating!

2

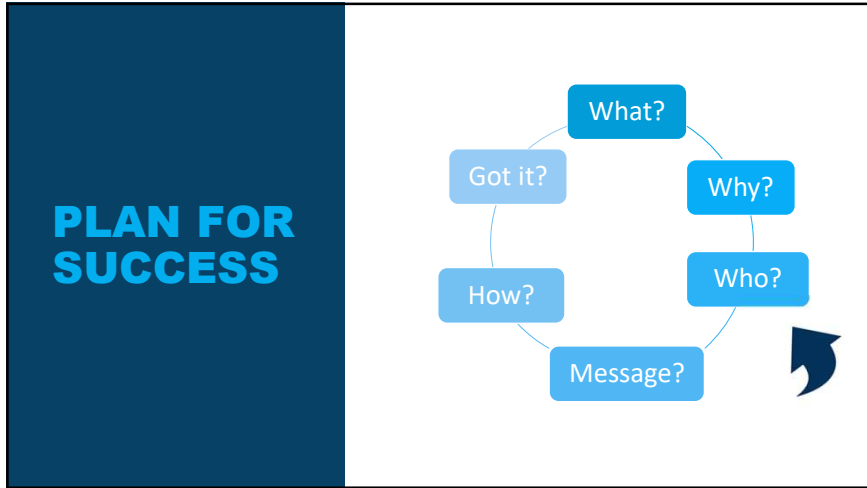


5

“Next to doing the right thing, the most important thing is to let people **know** you’re doing the right thing.”

- John D. Rockefeller

6



7

**Daily News**  
**Ripped from the Headlines**

**TABLE TALK SCENARIO**

10

**Daily News**  
**Ripped from the Headlines**

**New Tax Levy**

11

**FOUR MUST-ANSWER STRATEGIC QUESTIONS**

1. What are you doing – or what has happened?
2. Why is it a priority now?
3. How does this benefit the community (now and in the future)?
4. What is the call to action for the public and staff?

13

**FOUR  
MUST-  
ANSWER  
STRATEGIC  
QUESTIONS**

**1. What are you doing?**

- What's the primary purpose?

"Ensure continued and sustainable delivery of services through proactive management of our infrastructure and assets like our parks, roads, water, wastewater and the like."

14

**FOUR  
MUST-  
ANSWER  
STRATEGIC  
QUESTIONS**

**2. Why is it a priority now?**

- Explain the urgency or context driving the decision

"Delaying action will result in costly emergency repairs."

15

**FOUR  
MUST-  
ANSWER  
STRATEGIC  
QUESTIONS**

**3. How does this benefit the community (now and in the future)?**

- Describe the positive impact on the public or services

"Reliable infrastructure ensures uninterrupted services and public safety."

16

**FOUR  
MUST-  
ANSWER  
STRATEGIC  
QUESTIONS**

**4. What is the call to action for the public and staff?**

- State the specific action needed from your audience

"Come to our open house to learn more about the new levy to secure long-term infrastructure improvements."

17

## TIPS FOR CLARITY

- Focus on what matters to the audience
- Keep it short and simple
- Explain the why! Be specific about benefits or consequences
- Support with facts, stats, stories and public opinion
- Speak like a person, not a policy

18

**TALKING ASSET MANAGEMENT**  
**#OurAssetsMatter**

19

## TALKING ASSET MANAGEMENT

### #OurAssetsMatter

20

## TECHNIQUES TO TRY: BRIDGING

Bridge the gap to a new topic or point

- “While I don’t have that information, what I can tell you is...”
- “While I don’t know the answer to that particular question, I can put you in touch with...”

21

## TECHNIQUES TO TRY: FLAGGING

Draw attention to a specific point you want to be sure to get across (your key message!)

- “What’s important to point out is...”
- “We are working to focus on...”
- “Let me first just say...”

22

## TECHNIQUES TO TRY: EAR STATEMENT

EAR Statement: Empathize, Acknowledge, Reassure

- “We recognize that while any increase raises questions, this investment ensures we avoid higher costs down the road and maintain reliable services for everyone.”

23

## TECHNIQUES TO TRY: ASK, DON'T ARGUE

Ask, Don't Argue: Invite residents into the conversation

- “What would you suggest as a way to address these infrastructure needs? We want to explore all possible options and hear your thoughts on how we can manage this together.”

24

## TECHNIQUES TO TRY: PRE-EMPTIVE

Pre-emptive Messaging: Address known concerns early

- “We know cost is a concern – which is exactly why this levy matters now more than ever. It helps prevent costly emergencies by investing steadily and wisely now.”

25

## TECHNIQUES TO TRY: HOLDING STATEMENTS

- Have ready to go – for media and social media
- Empathy message
- Safety top priority
- And when ready add facts about:
  - Who What Where When Why and What's Next

26

## TECHNIQUES: HOLDING STATEMENTS

- “This is a developing story, and we’ll keep you informed as soon as we learn more.”
- The ideas and suggestions we get from our community will be used to help us develop a more effective and responsive program that better meets local needs.”

27

## TECHNIQUES: EMPATHY

 Empathy is your Superpower



28

*Daily News*  
Ripped from the Headlines

**PRACTICE YOUR TECHNIQUES**



29

## TRY IT! Answer with a technique!

- Why are you introducing a new tax levy now, when we're already struggling with high taxes?
- Why should we pay more just because the plant wasn't maintained properly?
- Why should we save now when we could just deal with problems if and when they happen?

30

## Be Ready

- What are my top 1 to 3 messages?
- How will I acknowledge concerns and show empathy?
- What bridging techniques will I use to come back to my main message?
- What's my 'no go zone'?

**AM** INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS:  
COMMUNICATING WITH CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE  
PRACTICAL TOOLS TO HELP YOU TACKLE TOUGH QUESTIONS

4 MUST-ANSWER STRATEGIC QUESTIONS

1. What are you doing, or has happened?

2. Why is it a priority now?

3. How does this benefit the community?

4. What is the call to action for the public and staff?

**PLAN FOR SUCCESS**

What?  
Got it?  
Why?  
How?  
Who?  
Message?

**BE READY...**

- What are my top 1 to 3 messages I want to keep coming back to?
- How will I acknowledge concerns and show empathy?
- What bridging techniques will I use to come back to my main message?
- What's my "no go zone"?

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31

Thank you!  
#YouGotThis

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33