

Communicating ... *when strangling isn't an option*

By Lynne Bereza, AMM Communications Coordinator

May 6, 2005 saw over 100 municipal officials come together to learn how to communicate better, in order to get the results, respect and recognition they deserve. World-class motivational speaker **Sue Hershkowitz-Coore** presented a lively, dynamic, full-day session on the topic of communication, and was very well received by the entire audience. Sue's combination of personal stories, group exercises, and tried-and-true communication techniques engaged her audience from start to finish.

The primary message in Sue's presentation is how to communicate SMART – which includes:

- Search for the 2nd right answer
- Make your message clear
- Accentuate the positive
- Resist the urge to tell everyone, everything
- Target your purpose.

Sue explained the concept of searching for the 2nd right answer as simply changing the way we look at things. We must learn to abandon the black and white view of things, and be willing to be open to a second solution. The way to do this is to be present and attend to only one thing at a time. By being totally present and engaged, you are more able to pay attention to details, something Sue says we don't do enough of. As she noted, "Whoever said 'don't sweat the small stuff' lied. You have to pay attention to the small stuff – it's important!"

She also stressed being open to another's way of doing things, by asking, "How else can we do this?" and "What else might work?"

Sue described how to make your message clear in a very clear way herself – 'Say what you mean, and mean what you say'. She explained that successful leaders lead with clarity, they inspire others to see, understand and grasp their vision, and they provide – and expect in return – accountable communication (taking responsibility for the impact of our words and the results they get). Some of Sue's suggestions for saying what we mean included:

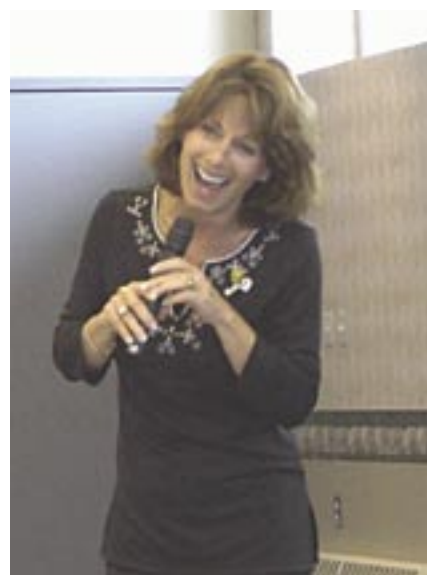
1. Eliminating 'hint' communication (asking a question when there isn't really a choice).

2. Avoiding 'weasel' words (i.e., as far as I know, to my knowledge, etc.).
3. Always give reasons – this honours and respects people and increases the likelihood they will accommodate you.
4. Always listen for points of agreement in what someone else is saying.
5. Say 'thank-you' often.
6. Don't lie about what you are going to do. Always under-promise and over-deliver.

Sue also stressed the importance of accentuating the positive. She said that it is important to stay focused on solution, say what *can* happen, rather than what *can't*; use truthful empathy; refuse to answer negative questions; and avoid using the word 'no.' Sue then also described the various personality types and some of their characteristics, and explained why it is important to resist the urge to tell everyone, everything. Depending on the personality type, a person may need more or less detail, attention, space, reasons, etc. – and you may not be giving them what they need.

The last point in communicating SMART is 'target your purpose.' Sue said it is very important to know what our motive or goal is, by asking ourselves what we really want to accomplish. One of the most important things to remember is to model the respect *you* expect. Reward good behaviour and expect the best work from everyone. It is so important to require people to treat others with respect all of the time. She used the acronym NSGB – Never Stop Getting Better.

At the end of the seminar, Sue quoted British economist **John Maynard Keynes**, who said "The difficulty lies, not in the new ideas, but in escaping from the old ones." She then told her audience to look over the many lists we had made throughout the day, as part of group exercises and discussions, and decide which two points we were going to remember and use. This was beneficial as it is often overwhelming to attend a seminar and then try to implement everything you learned, while facing the realities of your daily responsibilities. By suggesting we focus on only two main ideas we wanted to use in our everyday lives, Sue made the process seem much more manageable and realistic.



If you missed Sue's session, her PowerPoint presentation is available for viewing on www.amm.mb.ca/education.htm.

Here's what people had to say about Sue Hershkowitz-Coore's education session, "Communicating When Strangling Isn't an Option":

"The message of the seminar was made personal with her experiences."

"Fantastic!"

"I am so glad I made the time to come."

"Where did you find her?"

"I really enjoyed the day."

Who's guarding the municipal chequebook?

You often enter life as a local elected official with a pocket full of wonderful ideas to improve your municipality. However, a lack of understanding the government's budget and finances is sometimes all that it takes to put a dent in the plan. Overseeing finances is not an easy job in personal life, let alone political life. Budgets, capital plans and financial reports can be intimidating, but they don't need to be. A simple and clearly laid out plan can be the first step to your community success.

Solve the mystery of local government accounting, learn the why's what's and how's of the annual financial report and understand its key elements. This workshop will help you to:

- Find hidden money in the budget
- Decide on the right fund balance level
- Avoid common fiscal sins and omissions
- Make rational budget cuts
- Ask penetrating budget questions
- Identify disastrous fiscal practices

About the workshop leader:



Len Wood, MPA, is a seminar presenter and author of five popular how-to books. Since 1988 he has been President of the Training Shoppe, a management development and training firm for local governments.

Before starting his company, he spent 23 years as a municipal government executive, including a 15-year stint as city manager in the cities of Claremont and Rancho Palos Verdes, CA. Len has taught graduate and undergraduate courses in public policy, management and budgeting at the Graduate Center for Public Policy and Administration at California State University, Long Beach.

Who should attend?

Any locally elected officials (city council members and school board trustees) who are faced with perplexing public financial and budget decisions.

When and where:

DATE: Friday, October 7, 2005 (Full-day session)

LOCATION: Clarion Inn & Suites, 1445 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg
8:30 am – Registration • 9:00 am to 4:00 pm Workshop (Includes lunch)

You can find the registration form for this session at www.amm.mb.ca/education.htm

The AMM is committed to offering municipal officials top quality education sessions with the industry's leading facilitators. For more information or to comment on any of this year's or future sessions, please contact Donna Belbin, AMM Events Coordinator, 204-856-2374 or email dbelbin@amm.mb.ca.

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