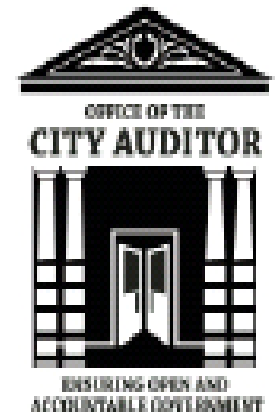


Explaining Results to Decision-Makers, the Public, and the Media

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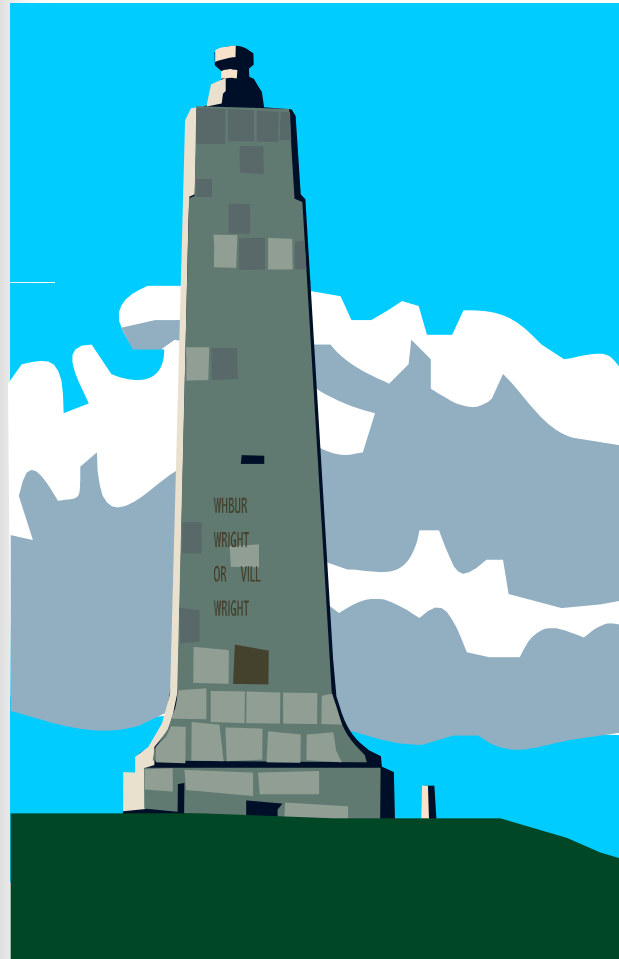




Today's Presentation

- We'll describe and discuss how to report the results of your audit work to decision-makers, the public, and the media.
- First, we need to discuss the **theories** behind communicating results.
- Second, we need to explore **practices** to effectively communicate with managers.

Quick Poll



- How many of you report audit results to the public? How?
 - Press release
 - Internet posting
 - Council testimony
- Are your audit results “public record”?

Who are Decision-Makers?

- We'll define “decision-makers” as your elected Council/ Board, and can include the public – especially if your work is reported.
- An important information source for the public is the media.



Reasons We Audit



- “Auditing is essential to government accountability to the public”
- “The concept of accountability. . . is key to our nation’s governing processes”
(GAGAS, 2007)

Ultimate Client: The Public

- Directly and through their elected representatives, the ultimate audit “client” is the public.
- Informing the public helps enhance accountability.



About the Issues -- Theory

- Communicating results is filled with tricks, traps, and pitfalls, but is also chock full of opportunities to present lasting messages.
- Best skill-set for communicators is to remember the Greek ideals of *ethos*, *logos*, and *pathos*.
- Or to have seen The Wizard of Oz.



Ethos

- To the ancient Greeks, *ethos* was an element of communication that appealed to the ethics or morality of an audience – rights, wrongs, and duties.
- Today, these appeals are based on morality or legality – that it's good to pay a fair share for civic services, for example.
- The “right thing to do”.



Logos

- Reasoning based on logic and prior argument.
- If A is true, then B must be true.
- Uses scientific evidence, logic, past experience, and other city/state successes to frame an argument.
- “Best practices” and emulating successful practices.

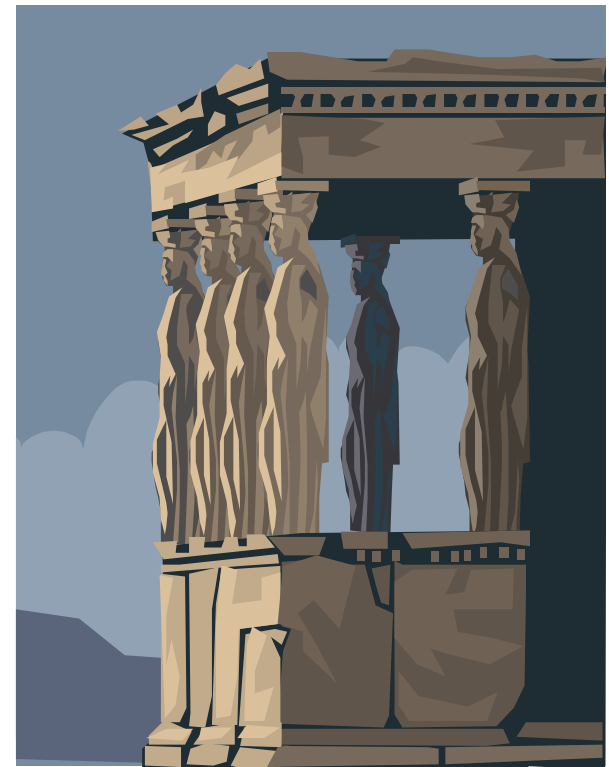


Pathos

- Bases argument on issues likely to elicit fear or other emotions.
- Opposite of logical argument.
- Can use individual examples as well as society-wide impacts.
- Current “crises”, “epidemics” and “scourges” are examples of pathos in use.

Ethos, Logos, Pathos At Work

- The more of the three you use, the better the argument!
- Think it over – a logical appeal, containing emotion and a sense of what's right – that's effective!
- Miss one, and you miss an angle.





Why “The Wizard of Oz”?

- Unlike the original works of ancient Greece, most of us have seen the movie!
- Remember the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Woodsman – they lacked courage, brains, and heart.
- Pathos = Courage
- Logos = Brains
- Ethos = Heart

Communicating with Courage

- Know your material.
- Communicate concisely.
- The “elevator speech” and how to use it.
- Most communication is non-verbal.



Communicating with Brains

- Use analytical information after you've made the main point.
- Deductive reasoning works in mystery novels, inductive works best in speeches.



Communicating with Heart



- Use stories and vivid examples to make your point.
- Recent “State of the Union” speeches did this well.
- Narrative Paradigm – how to use it.

About the Issues -- Practice

- Theories are terrific, but we need to ensure that they work in our specific situation.
- Let's discuss specific details, and then link our practice back to the theory of effective communication.



The Funnel and How to Use It

- 30-page report
- 6-page summary
- 5 questions at City Council or in a media interview
- 5-word headline
- **Remember message!
Titles can help!!**





Media: Things to Remember

- Media members have deadlines.
- Reporters need quotes.
 - Discussion: “Background” vs. “Off the Record”
- Keep your focus in interviews.
- Offer analysis, logic, examples.
- Follow office protocol.
- Equip your media liaison with data and tools to communicate.
- Don't neglect outside reviews or confirmation!

Variety of Methods

- Written reports
 - Summaries
 - Executive Summaries
 - Results in Brief
 - “How low can we go?”
- Presentations
 - PowerPoint and other options
- Video reports



The Embargo and How To Use It



- Early release of reports to trusted media can lead to more thorough coverage.
- Process has advantages and drawbacks.



Theme, Theme, Theme

- Just like the secret to real estate is “location, location, location”, audit results need to be communicated based on the theme of the report.
- Shorter is better!
- Complexity can be bad – by confusing the theme or introducing multiple purposes.

Media Coverage = Audit Message

- Focusing on the theme and the audit message helps ensure that public discussion of the work has the correct information.
- Coverage can attract more readers to audit reports.
- Coverage can attract more attention to the audit function and to other reports.



Coverage “Spreads the Word”

- On one hand, coverage draws attention to one audit report.
- Broadly, coverage increases public information and understanding about the audit function.



Know Thy Audience

- Decision-makers are busy!
- Use summaries to make points clearly.
- Use “fog-count” and other software to shorten word and sentence length for readability.
- Most readers can read the fastest at the 8th grade level.
- (Newsweek vs. The Economist)



Focus on Message

- Repeat message/theme throughout presentation.
- Incorporate message in title and in references to the presentation.
- Come back to main theme.
- Be able to summarize report or presentation in two or three points.
- Spend time on a solid message and theme, including the report title.

Tips and Techniques

- Take a moment during media or manager requests to gather thoughts and think through response.
- Focus on your message in most or all answers.



Tips and Techniques

- Repeat the question if needed.
- Don't hesitate to “get back to you” if the data's not at hand.
- Offer data that **is** at hand. (Don't have 2011 data yet, but here's 2010).





Tips and Techniques

- Focus on message in title and in main points.
- Keep on-point throughout document or presentation.
- Label “other matters” and put them at the end of the discussion.
- Give perspective (cost of prison beds example).



Tips and Techniques

- Theme, Theme, Theme
- The Funnel
- The Media Embargo
- Understand media's needs
- Understand Message, as well as the secondary role of coverage in expanding knowledge and use of an audit function



Tips and Techniques

- Come back to competent outside reviews, stressing the many folks who review the work of your office, and those who rely on your work.
- Use all that you can –
 - Prior Audits
 - Prior Testimony (Congress, Legislature, City Council)
 - Peer Reviews (ALGA)
 - Certificates (AGA, GFOA, etc.)

Different Viewpoints

- How audiences hear about risks, costs, and results varies by audience and is greatly impacted by the presenter.
- Is \$1.5 million a lot of money?



Should Answer All Questions



- Which questions would your office NOT have an answer to?
- Should be able to answer all questions.

Select Appropriate Medium

- Marshall McLuhan wrote that “the medium **is** the message” – evidence shows this is true.
- Briefing to decision-makers for two minutes may be preferable to a 2-hour briefing to senior staff.
- Know thy audience! Know their needs!





Remember Key Ideas

- Just like your communication to decision-makers should have three main points, I'll return to ours – Communicate with:
 - Courage
 - Brains
 - Heart
 - (Ethos, Logos, and Pathos)
- Match **theories** with **practice** to make your point resonate.



Questions?

- Let's discuss any questions or concerns.
- Any examples of tough cases communicating results?
- Any successes?





Thank you!

Call or e-mail if you have questions!

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