

Building Relationships with Public Officials

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Transportation Conference by Ginny Blair, Ph.D.

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How to make a lasting connection

- ❖ Know your elected official
- ❖ Find the intersection of issues where your organization's services or needs meet issues that are important to them
- ❖ Collect stories and use them to communicate with public officials
- ❖ Refine an elevator speech

Know your public official

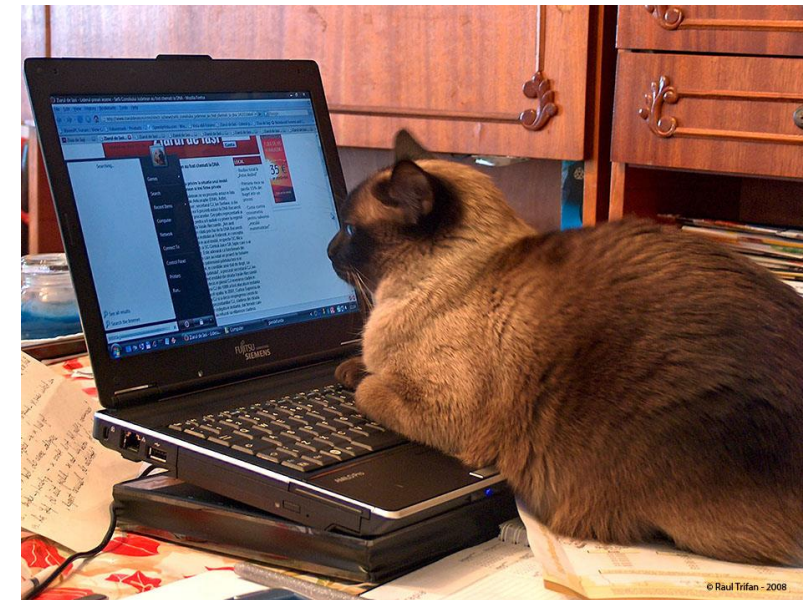
Determine which officials are important to you

Do your research

Keep a notebook that includes:

- his or her background, public biography,
- policy statements,
- committee membership,
- point of view on transportation issues related to you, pro or con

Read his or her press, stay current



Know your public official

Meet with public officials in informal situations when possible

Recognize that when they are in a public session they are to be addressed and treated formally and respectfully

Invite them to any public event for your organization

Be ready with a story

What is a story?

Stories are actual experiences of your organization's services

They are nearly always positive

They highlight something you are doing very well



Where do you find stories?

#1 source is your operators

All of your employees

Follow up on compliment calls from riders to hear the full story

Solicit stories and take time to listen

Write them down

Share the good exemplars with supportive public officials



Be prepared with an elevator speech

Basics

Takes no longer than 20 to 30 seconds

Is both informative and direct

Opens the possibility of a longer conversation or scheduling a time to talk in more depth



What is in an elevator speech?

Your organization and your position in it

A positive personal connection to the public official

An impactful fact about your organization
that you feel will interest the official

Follow-up on a recent action of the legislature or Council or
Board and the effect it had on your organization



Elevator Speech Do's . . .

Do

Tell them what your organization does if you know they are not familiar with it

Write it out and rehearse it; sound confident and natural

Create variations that tailor it for different listeners

Do ensure the official knows what is in it for him or her

And Don'ts

Do Not

Exceed 20 – 30 seconds, wait for a response

Use acronyms or industry jargon

Assume the official knows you or knows your organization; be explicit

Practice, Practice, Practice

Think of a public official you would like to open a dialogue with

Create a 20 – 30 second speech

Include your name, title and organization

State what it is that you do, emphasizing what is important to the official and how it will help them

Try it now!





Questions, Comments, Stories to tell?