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Communicating Messages in Difficult Times

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www.sedgwickcounty.org



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Today's agenda...

- **First 5 minutes:** you are trying to wake up, get oriented to the day, getting to know me a little...
- **Next 10 minutes:** following the slides, wondering how many I have, engaged, but we're still "above the line"
- **Next 10 minutes:** thinking I've not told you anything you didn't already know, wondering when we're going to get to the good part, and thinking about what you're doing this weekend
- **Next 2 minutes:** now you hate me. You need more coffee, you want to check your email, talk to your colleagues about the game last night, and wondering, "why did she think purple was a good idea to wear?"

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So....our agenda

- Steps to making communications part of your financial message
- Talk about framing our messages
- Coffee...



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The sky is falling...

- Challenging times
- Economic downturn
- Financial crisis
- Company closures
- Budget deficits
- Layoffs and furloughs
- Reduced revenues
- Job loss, huge unemployment
- Citizens are suffering



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Our response...

- Controlling costs
- Focus on “essential” services
- Efficiencies in government
- Doing more with less
- Reduce spending
- Trimming the fat
- Cutting the bone



Gotta “do” something

- Review the economic indicators
- Track our expenditures
- Look at filling vacancies – fill or slow down?
Hiring freeze?
- Delay construction or maintenance
- Travel and training reduced or eliminated
- Reduce compensation increases and benefits
- Make a list of cuts



What usually happens?

- Finance people come up with recommendations
- Manager reviews recommendations
- Manager presents recommendations to elected officials
- Department heads are informed of timing of implementation of recommendations
- Employees learn of recommendations when it affects them



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But, do you consider communications as part of your plan?

- Why?
 - Helps to frame our understanding of expectations and need
 - Helps to define a roadmap
 - Absolutely critical during crisis
- Results:
 - Transparency, honesty, credibility
 - Ease employee anxiety and build organizational trust



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Why is this important?

- 2 of 3 companies have increased communication to employees since the financial crisis began
- 70% are using communication to ease employee fears
- Companies also using communication to manage change
 - *“using the financial crisis to steer a new strategic direction”*



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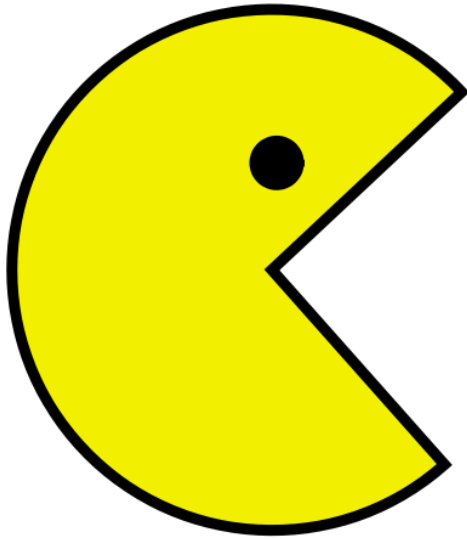
Recent study reported that more than 51% of the senior leaders cited “engaging employees to ensure organizational alignment and commitment” as being the most important leadership practice to achieving business goals in tough times.

(Right Management Associates)

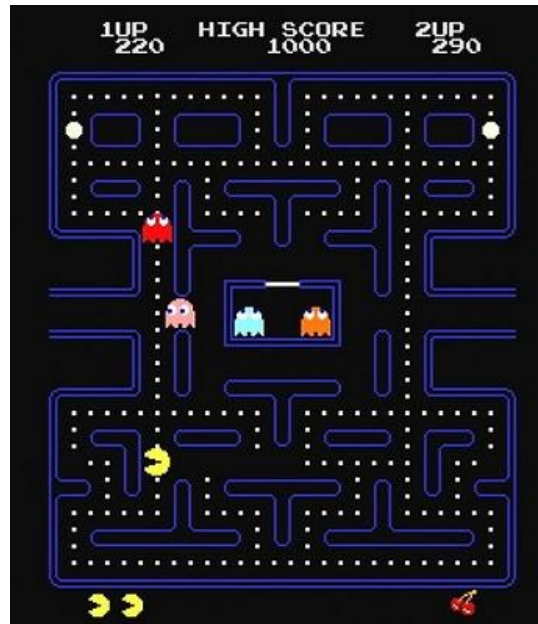


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So how do you start?



Pacman

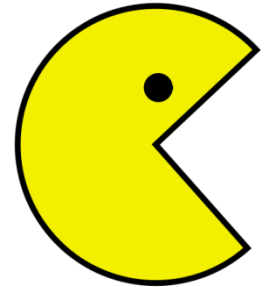


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Develop a Plan

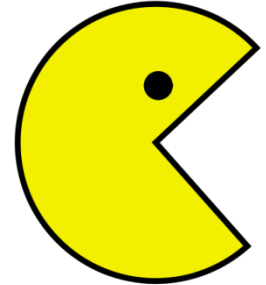


- Understand the timing
- Identify your partners in delivering the news
- Understand the opportunities
- Understand the decisions, impacts and consequences that will occur



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Consider your Audiences

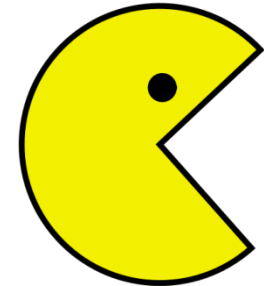


- Who needs to hear the news?
- How often do they need to hear it?
- How are they different?
- How might they react?
- What questions will they have?
- What information do they need?

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Be Consistent



- Consistency in your theme for your financial planning horizon
- “The rule of 7” – how many times it takes for the info to ‘stick’
- Mixed message or simple message?

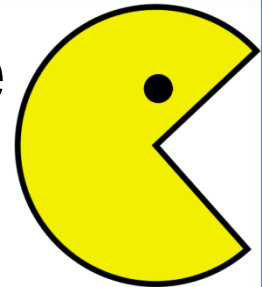
Financial Messaging Timeline — 2010-2011





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Frame the Message



Schedule of Budgetary Accounts
Budget and Actual - Budgetary Basis (Non-GAAP)

General Fund
For the eight months ending August 31, 2010
(with comparative actual for the eight months ending August 31, 2009)

	2010			Fiscal Year		Variance with		2009	
	Annual Budgeted Amounts		YTD	Year	Revised Budget	YTD		Actual	
	Original	Revised	Actual	Estimates	Positive/ (Negative)	Actual	Actual	Amounts	
Revenues & Interfund transfers in									
Property taxes	\$ 98,245,087	\$ 98,245,087	\$ 94,110,076	\$ 97,214,449	\$ (1,030,638)	\$ 87,806,856			
Motor vehicle taxes	12,111,403	12,111,403	4,069,700	12,093,114	(48,289)	4,033,535			
Local retail sales tax	23,204,174	23,204,174	12,666,035	22,123,936	(1,080,238)	15,158,584			
Local retail use tax	2,457,134	2,457,134	1,432,310	2,425,075	(32,059)	1,612,303			
Other taxes	293,648	293,648	136,487	220,284	(73,364)	177,812			
Licenses & permits	479,238	479,238	234,899	446,537	(30,701)	325,219			
Intergovernmental	5,148,256	5,148,256	2,505,567	4,873,497	(272,759)	3,130,841			
Charges for service	15,248,694	15,199,326	8,583,373	12,674,866	(2,524,360)	10,299,907			
Fines & forfeitures	191,186	191,186	68,943	104,200	(86,969)	66,676			
Miscellaneous	836,077	836,077	1,164,387	1,235,577	639,500	892,608			
Reimbursements	4,371,543	4,371,543	5,299,701	6,371,903	1,999,460	2,997,486			
Uses of money & property	7,839,576	7,839,576	4,473,330	6,191,433	(1,648,143)	7,414,746			
Transfers from other funds	400,000	400,000	1,926,061	2,226,051	1,826,051	233,876			
Other proceeds	-	-	-	-	-	5,814,239			
Total revenues & interfund transfers in	170,824,016	170,774,648	136,687,857	168,472,127	(2,302,521)	139,964,289			
Expenditures & Interfund transfers out									
General Government									
County Commissioners									
Personnel	684,212	684,212	478,908	893,869	546	494,976			
Contractual	53,120	53,120	37,582	39,987	33,133	35,044			
Commodities	4,000	4,000	2,048	2,674	1,299	1,612			
Total County Commissioners	741,332	741,332	518,538	936,530	885	531,632			
County Manager									
Personnel	1,418,805	1,418,805	554,482	1,388,548	20,341	815,453			
Contractual	174,533	175,849	110	164,822	12,627	125,138			
Commodities	69,551	142,058	105,182	122,328	18,730	20,843			
Capital improvement	378,263	6,110	(124)	-	6,110	6,110			
Transfers to other funds	-	378,263	378,263	378,263	-	278,350			
Total County Manager	2,041,152	2,121,085	1,038,892	1,963,961	57,208	1,239,784			
County Counselor									
Personnel	1,295,249	1,295,249	849,987	1,229,220	6,024	830,388			
Contractual	305,538	306,538	228,468	306,646	6,492	173,490			
Commodities	5,850	5,850	1,170	5,240	610	2,765			
Total County Counselor	1,606,637	1,607,637	1,079,625	1,621,111	15,528	1,006,681			
County Clerk									
Personnel	936,869	936,869	630,841	938,985	7,894	614,292			
Contractual	12,550	12,550	1,930	9,686	2,869	4,671			
Commodities	21,674	21,674	3,663	15,715	5,699	6,373			
Total County Clerk	970,993	970,993	636,435	954,386	16,462	625,242			
Register of Deeds									
Personnel	922,539	922,539	595,313	860,863	67,225	586,346			
Contractual	20,423	20,523	2,196	8,776	14,747	3,825			
Commodities	39,075	39,375	12,852	26,295	6,550	12,550			
Total Register of Deeds	971,947	971,947	610,361	895,934	88,522	602,691			

- What is the 'take-away' from this?
- What do you want it to be?
- What 3 things are critical?
- Do you want to leave it to chance they will get it?
- What do you want to be prepared to address if asked?



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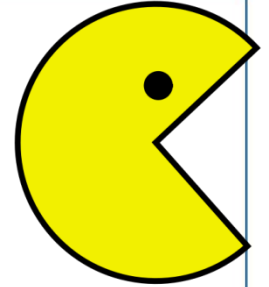
To do and not to do...

- Adopt a direct, honest, caring approach – some short-term pain, but more trust and credibility in the long-term
- Natural inclination to ease the short-term pain – so we sugar coat and speak vaguely (don't do this)



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Plan your Approach

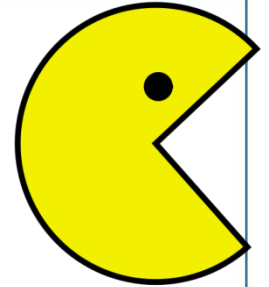


- What is your strategy?
- What are your 3 bullet points?
- How does it reflect what has occurred in the past, the current situation and what you plan for it to be in the future?
- What are the touch-points for your audiences?
- Who will best deliver the message?
- What other issues might be bubbling up at the same time?



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What are the Next Steps

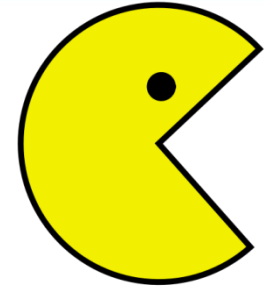


- Use your plan!
- Know your timeline and when you will have audience touch-points
- Listen and communicate with your audiences – do you need “interim” messages to reinforce?
- Is everyone on your team “on message”?
- Has the base information changed? Do you need to adjust your message?
- Who needs reassurance and calming?



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PACMAN – “S”

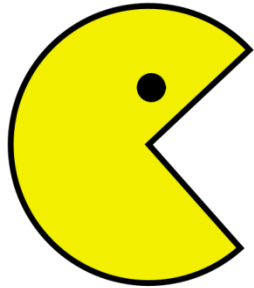


- What's your “STORY”?
- How do you make “the sale”?
- How do you make it relevant to your audience?
- How does it become personal and memorable?



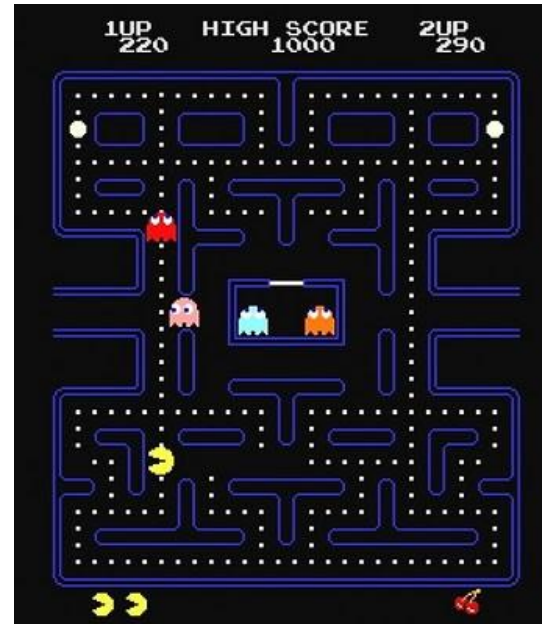
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PACMAN – “S”



- Plan
- Audiences
- Consistency
- Message
- Approach
- Next Steps

- Stories





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Framing who we are...

- Smart people in Kansas
- People who choose public service are extremely innovative – we HAVE to be!!
- Unfortunately, other governments frame public perception of all public sector employees
- Citizens are busy – generally have low expectations of government
- We have to “frame expectations” – in everything we do
 - Tell them how smart we are
 - Tell them how hard we work to help citizens
 - Tell them about efficiencies
 - Make the message simple and relevant
 - Tell the story that makes the impact

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Thank you!



- Thanks for being in public service!
- Thanks for taking on the added role of Communicator!
- Now, get coffee & enjoy your conference!