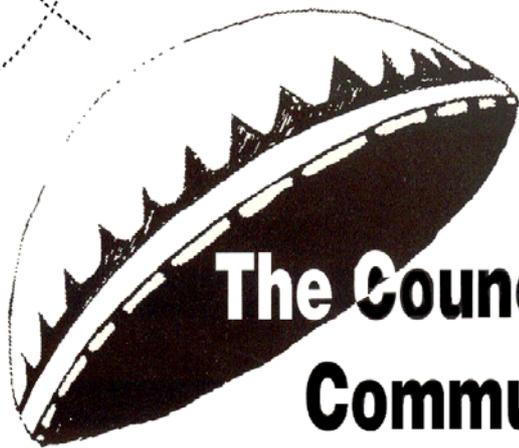
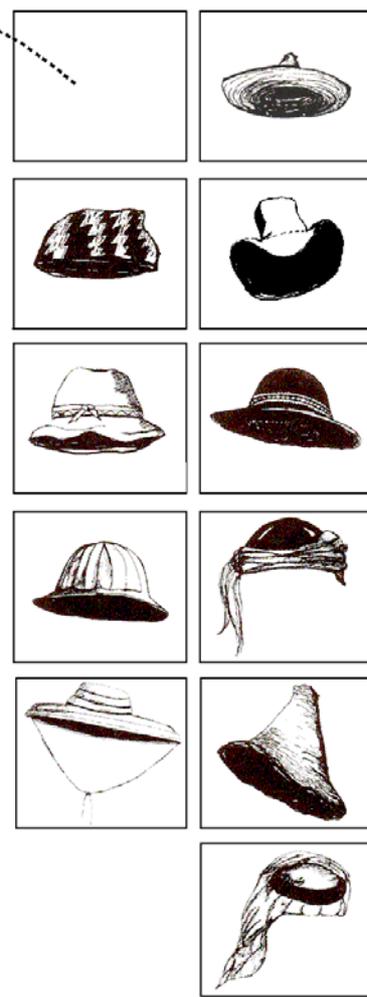




United Nations
Centre for
Human Settlements
(Habitat)

4 The Councillor as Communicator

Training
Materials
Series



The Councillor as Communicator

Handbook 4

Training for Elected Leadership

ISTANBUL, 1996 – "THE CITY SUMMIT"

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



ISBN for complete set of 13 volumes: 92-131242-6
ISBN for this volume: 92-1-131247-7
HS/328/94E

FOREWORD

As shown by results of training needs assessments conducted by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), training needs of local government elected officials (councillors), or of local politicians, appear among the most urgent world-wide and, at the same time, the least attended areas of capacity-building for local development and municipal management.

In the last few years, a number of countries as varied as Nepal and Poland or Uganda and Paraguay have embarked for the first time in several decades, and in some cases for the first time ever, on a process of electing their councillors and mayors. Training needs of local-government elected officials are also at the top of the agenda in established municipal democracies such as Ecuador, India, and the United States of America.

To respond to these needs, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has developed and tested a series of training handbooks to assist councillors to represent the citizens, provide civic leadership and effectively work with central government and with the management, technical, and professional staff in local authorities and other local institutions. The handbooks cover policy and decision making, communication, negotiation and leadership, attending, managing and conducting meetings, councillors' enabling and facilitating activities, financial management and other related needs.

This handbook, *The Councillor as Communicator*, is one of the series of 12 and is intended for use primarily by trainers in national training institutions for local government or training units within local governments themselves. As an additional assistance for trainers using these handbooks, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has published a companion *Trainer's Guide for Training of Elected Officials* containing trainer's notes and information prepared exclusively for the benefit of these trainers in planning workshops for local elected officials based on the handbooks.

It is expected that this training handbook will contribute greatly to strengthening the capacity of local governments through the introduction of good Leadership leadership practices, one of the major objectives of the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II.

I wish to thank Dr. Fred Fisher and Mr. David W. Tees for preparing this and other handbooks in the series in collaboration with the staff of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Training Section within the Centre's training programmes supported by the Government of the Netherlands. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the trainers and local-government officials in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Kenya, Lithuania, Romania and Uganda who assisted in the field testing of these training materials.

Dr. Wally N'Dow
Assistant Secretary-General
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



About the hat

The hat worn by the figure to the right and shown on the pages to come was selected to symbolize the councillor role featured in this handbook.



**Decorative head cover of
Balinese salt harvesters**

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



WHERE TO FIND IT IN THIS HANDBOOK

	<i>Page</i>
How to use this handbook	7
Part I Essay on the councillor as communicator	9
Definition	10
Summary	10
Reflection	10
Concepts and ideas	11
Perception and realities	12
Barriers to effective communication	13
Reflection	13
Climates of change	14
Active listening	15
Reflection	17
Surveys: Another way to communicate with the community	18
Key points	19
References	19
Part II Workshop on the councillor as communicator	20
Overview	21
4.1 Warm-up exercise: how many squares do you see?	23
4.2 Trainer presentation	25
4.3 Exercise: lowering communication barriers	26
4.4 Instrument: a listener's self-assessment	29
4.5 Exercise: communicating with the community	33
4.6 Exercise: consulting with the electorate	35
4.7 Skill transfer exercise	37

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This training handbook on THE COUNCILLOR AS COMMUNICATOR, like other handbooks in the series, can be used in several ways.

Self-study

The essay that opens this handbook is intended for self-instruction. All you need is a quiet place to think, some time, and something to write with. For best results, we encourage you to write down your answers to the questions raised from time to time in the essay. The learning value of the information is multiplied many times for the reader who takes the time to do this.

Workshop training

The trainer's notes and exercise materials in this handbook are intended for use by experienced trainers in a training workshop for councillors from different local governments. We have included various types of learning activities and formats to provide trainers with considerable flexibility in adapting a workshop to the specific needs of participating councillors. It has been our intention in developing this handbook to encourage you to incorporate your own experiences as a trainer to heighten the learning value of these training materials for participating councillors.

As a trainer, you may decide to use the materials in the handbook in the exact order and manner presented. If you prefer, however, you may rearrange or modify the materials as needed to meet the objectives of a particular training situation. You may choose to offer three hours of training by using key exercises and activities included in the handbook. Or you may take advantage of the many material in the handbook supplemented by content of your own to extend the length of the programme to a full day.

This handbook is one of 12 in a series for training in elected leadership. You might decide or be requested to provide a workshop that requires you to use more than one or all of these handbooks over a longer period of time. While each handbook can be used independently of the others, their use in sequence can provide a power unified learning experience for participating councillors.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Team training

These materials also can be used, preferably with the assistance of an experienced trainer/facilitator, to improve the performance of councillors who serve together on the same governing body. When training councillors who serve together, we believe the facilitator must be prepared to organize the training activities in this handbook in different ways. There may be occasions where you, as facilitator, will choose to add new activities depending on the situation and the characteristics of the group. We hope in situations like these you will view this handbook as a “tool kit” containing many optional training ideas to be mixed and matched, modified or abandoned, as suggested by the situation.

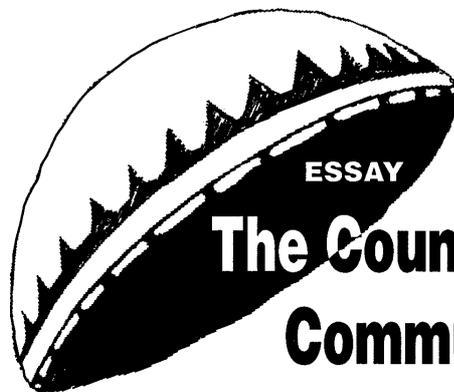
You have many options to choose from with these training handbooks. We hope you take full advantage of them.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



PART I



**The Councillor as
Communicator**

The
Councillor as
Communicator

Training for
Elected
Leadership



Essay

Definition

The councillor, in the role of COMMUNICATOR, gives and receives information, ideas, and feelings with accuracy and understanding.

Summary

This essay will explore only a narrow band of the possibilities available to councillor to communicate. It will not tell you how to make a rousing political speech or write an effective memorandum, or look good on television. Instead, we plan to cover the part of communicating that most people don't do very well, that is, listen. We will also consider ideas about giving and receiving feedback, look at perception a launch pad and sometimes a barrier to effective communications, and provide a or two about carrying out community surveys.

Reflection

When I think of myself as a communicator, the following things come to mind:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Essay

Concepts and Ideas

Being an effective communicator can mean different things to different people. For example:

Juanita is an outstanding speaker. Let's ask her to represent our city at the opening ceremony for the new community centre.

Did you read Muricho's latest article in the newspaper? He writes so clearly. He should be an effective councillor when he takes office next month.

Could we get Sarah to represent the city in the meeting with the hawkers? We need someone who can listen to their complaints and concerns with empathy and objectivity.

The report Abdul wrote on the new housing project was first class - well organized, to the point, and very persuasive.

Alicia, I'm looking for a person to survey mothers in the neighbourhood where the city will be opening a new day care centre. I understand that your assistant, Tung, is an excellent interviewer. Could we borrow him for a few days?

Did you see Councillor Ramos on TV last night? He was terrific!

As these examples indicate, the processes of communication cover many options, which are, in turn, dictated by differing needs, goals, and circumstances. Consequently, we have found it a bit difficult to decide what to include in this handbook in order to meet your own particular communication interests and needs. The focus will be on verbal, or oral, communication - not written communication. This decision was dictated by our perceptions that you spend more time and energy speaking and listening than you do writing. When it comes to the speaking-listening aspects of communicating, we also suspect that any training you might have received on oral communication has concentrated on the role of the speaker, not the role of the listener. Given these highly subjective views of your world, we have decided to put more emphasis on listening skills rather than speaking skills. But first, let's look at some ideas about communication that will serve you well regardless of the communicating form or function.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Perceptions and realities

Perception is a little like communication, one of those terms that is difficult to define in a few chosen words. Someone once described it simply as “the process of making sense out of experience.” Or, to put it more bluntly, our perceptions are our reality. What I interpret as what I see is what I define as reality. It may not be your view of reality, and neither one of our views might be accurate. But it’s where we both start in making sense out of our world.

Remember the story about the blind men and the elephant? Depending on what part of the elephant they touched, they came away with a different interpretation. One felt the leg and likened it to a tree trunk; another felt the tail and described a rope; still another touched the elephant’s side and said it felt like the wall of a building. Each believed he was experiencing a very different thing. Yet, what they were describing so differently was the same animal. So it is with many of the community “realities” we find ourselves working with. Only when we begin to explore our impressions of these many perceptions of reality can we get closer to the “truth” I in fact, it exists.

Two factors are important about perceptions: (a) where they come from (i.e., what influences our perceptions) and (b) what we tend to do when our perceptions are not congruent with those of others. Several things influence our perceptions of reality. First, we often see things in our environment differently. There is a perception experiment where a group of people are shown a square that has been divided into 16 squares. When groups of individuals are asked how many squares they see, the initial answers are usually from 16 to a number in the high twenties. Of course, every answer is the “right” answer depending on how the person answering sees the squares.

Secondly, we often experience events differently and it affects our view, or perception, of reality. For example, two people experience the same cold, snowy winter, but describe the season very differently to a mutual friend who has spent the year in another part of the world. Of the two, one who hates cold weather describes the winter as “quite miserable.” The other who enjoys skiing describes the season as it ‘quite delightful.” Which one should the friend believe?

We all have different “internal states” which are a product of our collective learning. These internal states are influenced by our cultural heritage, our childhood experiences, our formal education, and our efforts to make a living. They are also influenced by things that motivate us - in fact, everything we have done. The greater the difference between my internal state and yours, the more difficult it is for us to communicate “cleanly” with each other. By “cleanly” we mean without all the sheets of dark glass that filter our experiences in different ways.

How we react to these differences of perception in situations that are important to us depends on a lot of the factors we have just mentioned. The range of responses range from “being defensive” (i.e., defending my own point of view while rejecting yours) to “walking a long distance in your sandals” (i.e.,

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Essay

showing great interest and empathy for your point of view and expressing, in one way or another, a willingness to adopt it if I find it acceptable).

Barriers to effective communication

There are many potential barriers to effective communication. Here are just a few of them.

- Those you are communicating with may have different goals, values, and views from yours.
- Your experience may be very different from theirs, and you may fail to recognize these differences when you communicate with them.
- Your status as a councillor may intimidate those you are communicating with or even alienate them if they resent the authority you represent.
- Even the physical set-up where the communication takes place may be a barrier to communicating with understanding (we're thinking about many of the council chambers around the world that create both a physical and psychological barrier between the council and public).

Reflection

Take a moment or two and think about the kind of barriers you believe exist between you and other councillors that may affect your ability to communicate more effectively with them; between you and members of the local government staff; between you and your constituents. Are there things you might do either to remove these barriers or to minimize their impact when you communicate with these different groups or individuals?

The
Councillor as
Communicator

Training for
Elected
Leadership



Essay

Climate of change

There are several ways to increase your ability to perceive the world different (based on perceptions others share with you) and to communicate more congruently with others.

1. When trying to understand another's perceptions about a situation, it helps to withhold judgement, or better yet, be non-judgemental. When we begin to judge the other person's perception of something, question his values, or make moral assessments of his behaviour, we close the door to understanding.
2. Take a problem-solving or opportunity-finding orientation to community situations rather than approaching them with your own solution firmly in hand. When we come to the discussion table with our "minds made up," there is little hope for a shared solution.
3. The ability to be spontaneous, free from deception, and harbour no hidden motives is a valuable tool for communicating across the many boundaries that divide our communities.
4. Empathy. We will look at this behaviour a bit later because it is a valuable listening "tool." For now, let's just say that empathy is the ability to identify with another person's problems, to share feelings and accept emotional responses at face value. It is a trait that opens many doors to effective communication.
5. Conveying a sense of equality will increase your communication success (e.g., conveying mutual respect, trust, and indifference to rank and status).

What we are suggesting is a willingness to be open and receptive to our own experiences and to the experiences of others. Since we all live in a world of reality that is distorted, incomplete, subjective, and unique, we can only hope that our will and spirit will move us toward others who share the same dilemma.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Don't talk unless you can improve the silence.

- Anonymous

Essay

Active listening

Listening is a skill. Active listening is the skill put to practice. When we said the communicator is someone who works twice as hard at listening than talking, it's because it takes twice as much energy to listen. It's very easy to let your mind wander to other things when you are listening to someone else. It's more difficult to daydream when you are talking.

Active listening requires us to listen for what is not being said as well as what is being said. It also requires us to be aware of body language and to read it with both eyes while we're listening with both ears. Both of these requirements can draw us away from what is being said. Confusing, isn't it? Active listening means asking questions like: Do I understand what the other person is saying? Does the other person understand me? (One of the authors had a recent experience in preparing for a workshop in Eastern Europe. He asked a local colleague to buy several hundred seven-by-nine cards to use in the workshop. When the package of cards was opened, it included many tiny pieces of paper. You guessed it. He was talking inches and she was hearing centimetres).

The ear penetrates darkness.

- Maasai proverb

What is the speaker's frame of reference? What are the feelings that accompany the message? What is the context in which the statement is made? Seeking answers to these questions and others can help us be better listeners.

Listening is hard work, if you work at it. Research has shown that listening is characterized by faster heart beat, quicker circulation of the blood, and a small rise in body temperature. There is no evidence, however, that listening can be substituted for your daily jog around the neighbourhood. Listening is hard work because it is also a two-way communication process.

As indicated earlier, we must actively involve ourselves in the discussion taking place. It's not enough to just listen. We must make the effort to check out what others are saying to ensure that distortions and potential misunderstandings are reduced. Here are some techniques we can use to listen with more clarity.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Active Listening Tactics

If you want to:	Say:
Convey interest	“I hear what you’re saying”.
Encourage	“Yes; tell me more”.
Help clarify	“Then, the situation as you see it ...”
Reflect back what you hear	“If I understand you right, you are saying ...”
Pull ideas out of a conversation	“Let me see if I understand your key point...”
Respond to feelings	“You sound angry about ...”
Summarize	“Let’s see if I can sum up what you said.”

All of these listening tactics indicate to the other person that you are:

- In fact, listening;
- Interested in what he or she is saying; and,
- Respectful of who he or she is.

These outcomes of a dialogue with someone in the community are particularly important if those you are talking to feel there is a power gap between you and the In the publication *Listen to the People* (about work and life in a poor neighbourhood I Latin America), the author, Lawrence Salmen, says:

The potential for poor communication between project implementation personnel and community residents is great - often, the poorest residents in an area will be the last to make their voices heard - out of fear or insecurity, or perhaps because of the many times their opinions went unheard even when they had been expressed. It is a mistake to assume, however, that because poor people say less they are more content-For good communication to occur, there must be someone who listens. ⁽¹⁾

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Local elected officials have a unique responsibility to be in touch with all the people of the community. The comments by Salmen emphasise why it is particularly important when working in neighbourhoods that are economically disadvantaged.

Essay

What we have been reviewing are some ways to be more effective in communicating with your constituents through use of the spoken word. Listening is often the last communication skill to be considered in the training of public officials. Yet, we believe it may be the most important. This is why we have highlighted listening in this essay.

*I would walk twenty miles to listen to my worst enemy
if could learn something*

- Leibnitz

Reflection

We want you to spend a few moments reflecting on your own listening skills and experience. How would you rate yourself as a listener? How do you think your colleagues, or those in the community, would rate you as a listener? When was the last time you ventured into the community just to listen to what your constituents were saying about the way their government is working?

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Most local governments do not use citizen surveys as a way of “listening” to those in the community. Yet, surveys can be valuable in providing more in-depth information about: (a) the quality of services the city is providing; (b) reasons why citizens may not like certain services or why they may not be using certain programmes or services; (c) factual information that may be needed to design new projects or alter on-going ones; (d) ways to help citizens become more aware of programmes and services; and (e) assessing demand for new services.

Local governments don’t use citizen surveys often because they seem complicated and expensive. Both concerns are true and not true. Surveys can be very complex, particularly if they adhere to strict academic standards of verifiability. But we would remind you that your city, in carrying out a survey, is not trying to satisfy a doctoral dissertation committee or to demonstrate a high level of research competence. This is not to suggest you should be sloppy in conducting a citizen survey. On the other hand, you can reinsure yourself that any additional data or information, carefully gathered, will be better than no feedback at all from the community and better than random conversations with your close friends.

What about cost? Yes, citizen surveys can be expensive if you use professional research organizations or spend too much time on planning and designing communication tools. There are other ways to “tool up” to do citizen surveys. If there is a university or other institutions of higher learning in your area, they can be an excellent source of expertise and labour. Often, professors who are teaching research methods welcome opportunities for their students to work with a real client. If no such resource is available, you might consider training one or two of your current staff members to conduct periodic citizen surveys.

While there are various types of surveys you can conduct (telephone, mailed questionnaires and interviews), the interview makes the most sense, particularly to reach citizens in economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. (It is these parts of the community that often have the greatest difficulty being heard by those in “city hall.”)

We won’t go into the mechanics of citizen surveying in this essay. Our intention has been to suggest surveying as another tool you can use to “communicate” with your constituents. If you decide to use citizen surveys, here are a few additional things to keep in mind.

1. Be sure you are prepared to hear what those who respond have to say. Sometimes the information isn’t too favourable, or you may hear things you haven’t heard before.
2. Asking questions often implies that something will happen as a result. Contact with citizens can raise expectations. This needs to be factored into the plan and conduct of any survey.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Essay

3. Those who participate in citizen surveys are more likely to use the results. This includes those on both sides of the survey process. If you are surveying mothers about family-planning services and how to increase the effectiveness of community-education programmes, those who are responsible for these programmes should be involved in the design and conducting of the survey. It should heighten their understanding and commitment to the results of the inquiry. The same is generally true of those who are involved in providing new information.
4. The most important questions to be answered about citizen surveys before conducting them are: (a) What do you want to accomplish in surveying the community? and (b) Are the council and staff prepared to use the results of the citizen survey to improve the quality of programmes and services to the community?

Key points

- There are many ways to communicate as a councillor. The most important may be your ability to listen with empathy and understanding.
- Perception is the process of making sense out of our experiences. These perceptions become a major factor in our interpretation of reality.
- Many times our perceptions interfere with our efforts to communicate more effectively.
- Communication, therefore, is often only as effective as our ability to reconcile our perceptions of the world around us with those who share the same space.
- Active listening can be the councillor's best friend when it comes to being in touch with the community.
- While it sounds incongruent, active listening involves a fair amount of two-way communication.
- There are a number of ways you can help the person to whom you are listening to communicate more effectively with you.
- Citizen surveys are another good means of communicating with your constituents.

The Councillor as Communicator

Training for Elected Leadership



References

- (1) Salmen, Lawrence F., Listen to the People (Washington, D.C., The World Bank, 1987), p. 49.

PART II



The
Councillor as
Communicator

Training for
Elected
Leadership



Purpose

Communication is the avenue over which ideas, information, and opinions pass from a point of origin to a destination. The avenue may be a rocky road, full of detours and wrong turns, or it may be smooth and trouble free. The councillor who is the master of communications - who listens well, shares ideas freely, and regularly asks for feedback from constituents, other councillors and staff - is sure to enjoy a more successful journey as an elected leader.

This workshop is intended to expose the pitfalls of poor communication and describe useful methods for giving and receiving information. Participants will gain experience in using effective communications techniques for giving and obtaining accurate information, demonstrating interest in the ideas of others, and lowering communication barriers that can create costly misunderstandings.

Contents

A brief description of each learning activity is shown below with an approximation of the amount of time required. If you wish to change the order, to omit something, or to add training material of your own, feel free to do so.

4.1. Warm-up exercise: how many squares do you see?

Participants observe the number of squares in a geometric figure. Data are shared and differences in perception are discussed. (20 - 30 minutes)

4.2. Trainer presentation

Brief presentation based on information from the essay and the trainer's personal experience with interpersonal communication. Concentrate on the importance of recognizing perception differences, listening actively to others, and various methods for giving and getting information from the community. (30 minutes)

The
Councillor as
Communicator

Training for
Elected
Leadership



Workshop

4.3. **Exercise: lowering communication barriers**

Participants work in small groups to identify barriers to communication with community groups, with the staff, and between councillors and how to recognize and remove these barriers. (60 - 90 minutes)

4.4. **Instrument: a listener's self-assessment**

Participants complete an effective listening questionnaire and profile their results. (30 minutes)

4.5. **Exercise: communicating with the community**

Participants generate ideas on ways to provide and obtain information from community groups. Reporting and discussion of the various options. (60 75 minutes)

4.6. **Exercise: consulting with the electorate**

Participants work in small groups on a process for getting information to the community about an important housing issue and getting community input on ways to deal with the issue. (120 - 150 minutes)

4.7. **Skill transfer exercise**

Participants reflect on what they have learned and make personal commitments to put it to use after the workshop. (30 - 45 minutes)

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Workshop

Trainers Notes

4.1. Warm-up Exercise: HOW MANY SQUARES DO YOU SEE?

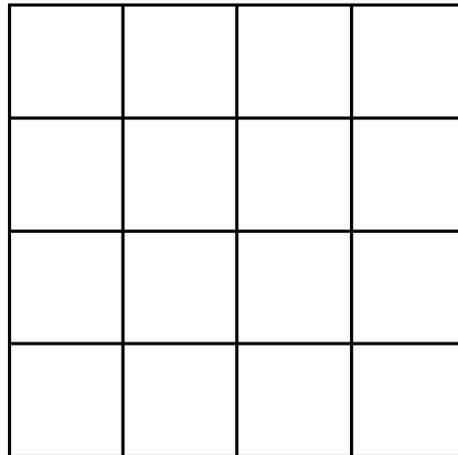
Time required: 20-30 minutes

Objective

This exercise shows how differently individuals in a group can interpret the same experience. The exercise also can be used to demonstrate that learning and growth will occur when people, who see things differently, can share and discuss their different views with open minds.

Process

Draw on a piece of newsprint the figure shown below. Draw the figure large enough so that everyone in the workshop can see it quite clearly. With participants looking at the figure on newsprint, ask them, "How many squares do you see?"



The
Councillor as
Communicator

Training for
Elected
Leadership



Workshop

Trainers Notes

Give participants 30 seconds to answer the question. Ask them to write their answers on a sheet of paper.

When everyone has written an answer, collect the sheets and write the numbers quickly on newsprint. A key showing various combinations of squares can be found in *Trainer's Guide to Training for Elected Leadership*.

When several of the possible combinations have been mentioned, ask participants which answer is the right one. Some will say 30, since this is the largest number identified. Someone may say all the answers are right because the question was, "How many do you see?" That is the response you are looking for since it makes the point that what is correct for each of us is what we see at the time.

Ask participants how they felt when someone claimed to have seen more squares than they saw, (e.g., skeptical, inadequate, manipulated). Ask them what they did when someone found more squares than they did (e.g., took another look to see what they had missed).

Finally, ask participants what they see as the message of this exercise for councillors in working with others who are certain to bring differing perceptions into their work relationships.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Workshop

Trainers Notes

4.2 TRAINER PRESENTATION

Time required: 30 minutes

Objective

This presentation is to provide participants with ideas and perspectives on the communicator role and a conceptual foundation they can use for the individual and group exercises included in this workshop.

Process

Prepare the presentation based on information from the preceding essay on the communicator role. Concentrate on the importance of recognizing perception differences, barriers to communication, listening actively to others, and various methods for giving and getting information from the community.

Outlined information on note cards may help you cover the information systematically and stay on schedule. Ask questions from time to time during the presentation as a check on participant comprehension and to hold their attention. Augment the presentation with visual aids including pre-printed newsprint sheets and overhead transparencies as a further aid to comprehension.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Workshop

Trainers Notes

The Councillor as Communicator

Training for Elected Leadership



4.3 Exercise: LOWERING COMMUNICATIONS BARRIERS

Time required: 60-90 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to identify barriers to communication among councillors, between the council and staff and with community groups, and how to improve communication by removing or lessening these barriers.

Process

Begin the exercise by explaining to participants that differences in people -- what they believe (their values), what they want (their goals), how they like to do things (their preferred methods), or what they have heard about a topic or issue -- will influence what they say, how they say it, and how they choose to interpret what they hear. Point out that these differences, particularly when they are hidden from the parties trying to communicate, can be formidable barriers to understanding. Tell participants that they will be working in small groups to identify barriers to communication with community groups, with the staff, and between councillors and how to recognize and remove these barriers.

Divide the participants into at least three groups and assign each the task of discussing communication barriers in one of the following three relationships:

- (a) communication with individuals and groups in the community;
- (b) communication with members of the local-government staff; and
- (c) communication between or among councillors.

Ask each small group to make list of the barriers that tend to block or distort communication and to answer the following questions about each of the barriers:

1. Why is this a barrier?
2. How can a councillor recognize when such a barrier is present?
3. What can be done to remove or lessen the barrier?

Suggest that each small group record its ideas on newsprint using a format like the one shown on the next page.

After 30 to 45 minutes, reconvene the small groups and ask each for a report. After all of the groups have reported, hold a large group discussion analysing the similarities and differences in ideas produced by the various groups.

Workshop

Exercise

WORKSHEET ON REMOVING COMMUNICATION BARRIERS

Relationships:

- Council with community
- Council with staff
- Councillors with one another

We have identified these barriers to communication:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

These are some ways that such barriers can be recognized:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Strategies for eliminating/alleviating these communication barriers:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Workshop

Exercise

Other observations:

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Workshop

Trainers Notes

4.4 *Instrument: A LISTENER'S SELF-ASSESSMENT*

Time required: 30 minutes

Objective

This instrument provides participants with a reliable source of information on their individual strengths and weaknesses as listeners.

Process

Have participants complete a 12-question instrument on listener skills (see the next two pages). When participants have completed the instrument, suggest that they notice the number of check marks in columns one and two (evidence of weak listening performance) and the number in columns four and five (evidence of strong listening performance). Then ask participants to pick one or two of their lowest scores and think about how they might improve their listening behaviour in these areas. Ask participants to pair up to discuss their thoughts for improving their performance as listeners.

A worksheet has been provided on the page following the instrument for use by participants in making notes on their listening performance and improvement plans.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Workshop

Exercise

A LISTENER'S SELF-ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT

Listed below are 12 statements about your ability to listen to others. Rate your competency in each area by placing an "x" in the appropriate box. Be honest with yourself in answering the questions. Complete the instrument by totaling the number of blocks checked in each column at the bottom of the second page.

Statement	1. Never	2. Seldom	3. Occasionally	4. Frequently	5. Always
1. I listen for feelings, attitudes, perceptions, and values as well as for facts.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. I actually pay attention to who is speaking as opposed to "faking" attention.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. I don't let my feelings about the people involved influence how I listen to them.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. I avoid being distracted by the speaker's style, mannerisms, clothing, voice, etc.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. I make certain that the person's status has no bearing on how well I listen.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. I avoid letting what I want to hear determine or influence my listening behaviour?	<input type="checkbox"/>				

The
Councillor as
Communicator

Training for
Elected
Leadership



Workshop

Exercise

The
Councillor as
Communicator

Training for
Elected
Leadership



Statement	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
	Never	Seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
7. I take into account the speaker's body language like gestures, mood, posture, eye contact.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. I avoid being distracted by noises, movement, outside scenes, and other interference's to listening.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. I avoid being distracted by speakers who are hard to follow - slow in speech, ideas poorly organized, or tend to repeat themselves.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10. I use non-verbal communication (eye contact, smiles, head nods, etc.) when I want to hear more.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11. I restate or rephrase the other person's statements when necessary so that he/she will know I understand.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12. I listen to what is being said instead of concentrating on what I am going to say.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Total	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Workshop

Exercise

WORKSHEET ON IMPROVING MY LISTENING PERFORMANCE

1. One area of listening performance in which I rated low on the instrument is:

A specific action or actions I intend to take to strengthen my performance as a listener in this area is:

2. Another area of listening performance in which I rated low on the instrument is:

A specific action or actions I intend to take to strengthen my performance as a listener in this area is:

3. A third area of listening performance in which I rated low on the instrument is:

A specific action or actions I intend to take to strengthen my performance as a listener in this area is:

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Workshop

Trainers Notes

The Councillor as Communicator

Training for Elected Leadership



4.5 Exercise: COMMUNICATING WITH THE COMMUNITY

Time required: 60-75 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to draw on the experience of participants in identifying creative ways to communicate with the people in a town including both giving and getting information.

Process

Explain that the purpose of the exercise is for participants, working in small groups to generate a list of ideas for getting information out to the community and a similar list of ideas for getting feedback from the community and then to reconvene to report their findings.

Divide participants into small groups of five to seven. You might suggest to each small group the use of a well-known idea-generation technique called “brainstorming” to develop a list of ideas (see the rules for brainstorming in the box below). Suggest that someone in each group serve as leader/recorder. Give each small group two questions to be answered, one at a time, by brainstorming:

1. What are some ways we might use to get information out to the community in a convincing and understandable way?
2. What are some ways we might use to get information back from the community to learn what people want from us?

Rules for Brainstorming

1. Every idea is written down as stated.
2. There is no discussion or evaluation to impede the free flow of ideas.
3. The important thing is idea quantity, not quality.
4. Think of ideas that build on previous ideas or even contradict them.
5. Don't overlook silly and even absurd ideas - there could be something of value in them.
6. Stop after **five** minutes.

Workshop

Trainers Notes

Give each small group two sets of coloured cards. Ask them to record their ideas for answering each of the questions on different coloured cards after the brainstorming session and to return to the large group in 30 - 45 minutes.

When all small groups have completed their tasks, bring them back together and ask small group leaders to read the ideas generated in each category. Collect the cards from the team leaders and post them on a wall of the training room. Encourage a discussion of the various ideas proposed.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



Workshop

Trainers Notes

The Councillor as Communicator

Training for Elected Leadership



4.6 Exercise: CONSULTING WITH THE ELECTORATE

Time required: 120-150 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to give participants experience in deciding what and how to communicate with community constituencies when sensitive public issues are involved.

Process

Distribute copies of Opening, - a Dialogue with the Community (shown below) as participants to read it. Explain that participants will be working in several small groups on a process for getting information to the community about an important housing issue and to get community input on ways to deal with the issue. Ask participants to include answers to each of the following questions in preparing their designs:

1. How can the magnitude of the problem be determined?
2. Who are the constituents with whom the council should consult?
3. What is the best way to reach each of these constituents?
4. What should the council tell these constituents and want the constituents to tell them?

Divide participants into several small groups. Each of these groups is asked to carry out the task as described and to be prepared in one hour to submit a plan for an appropriate form of communication and consultation on newsprint.

After one hour, reconvene the small groups and ask for reports. Finish the exercise by inviting participants to discuss the pros and cons of the various plans for consulting with constituencies about sensitive public issues.

Workshop

Exercise

A neighbouring community has been hit by a major earthquake. The devastating loss of life and property has dominated the news in recent days. In an editorial appearing in the local newspaper, the editor has been critical of city government for what she describes as a “reckless and unconscionable refusal to exercise control over building standards.” The editorial predicts a similar calamity locally and places the responsibility for what might happen squarely on the city council. Needless to say, the editorial has produced a flood of reactions from citizens demanding action before a similar disaster hits their community.

One of the councillors is a structural engineer. He has been insisting for some time that the council do something about the city’s appallingly low standards for new housing construction. The council has been reluctant to address the issue of housing standards. The cost will be enormous, and the council fears a major community backlash. In particular the council is concerned about the reaction of existing building owners to any move by the city to raise standards and require structural improvements despite the fact that these owners have the most to lose should the city experience an earthquake or other natural disaster. It is suspected by several councillors, but not known for sure, that certain slum dwelling owners have been permitted, illegally, to build multi-storey structures on foundations adequate to support only single-storey structures. The council is concerned about what might happen should the public become aware of this, particularly with standards already a potentially explosive issue.

Despite the political risks, the council is convinced it cannot continue to overlook the matter. However, if a considerable sum of money is to be spent on upgrading housing, the council feels it can justify the action only after receiving a mandate from the community. The council feels it must have additional information on the scope of the problem and find a way to create a dialogue with the electorate. One councillor puts into words what is on the minds of all her colleagues, “How are we going to get it?”

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**



4.7 SKILL TRANSFER EXERCISE

Workshop

Time required: 30-45 minutes

Trainers Notes

Objective

This exercise is to help participants transfer the learning experiences of the workshop into their real-world activities as elected officials. The focus of this exercise is on raising expectations, engaging in realistic planning, and making personal commitments. Most of the work is done on a personal basis with some interpersonal sharing.

*Between knowing and doing
there is a wide chasm*

It is generally agreed that the purpose of training is to improve the way people do things by showing them a better way. In fact, the success of a training experience can be measured by the amount of personal growth and change that takes place both during training and after the training is over.

Training rarely has the impact on workshop participants that trainers hope it will have, particularly after an exposure of only a few hours. The exhilaration of the moment fades quickly when the trainee is confronted with old work habits and the resistance of work associates who have not shared the training experience.

On the other hand, commitments to learning and change made at the close of a workshop can help participants overcome learning resistance in themselves and in the work environment. A trainer can help learners make a successful transition from the world of learning to the world of doing through a few simple planning exercises. Think about it this way. The time taken to encourage learning transfer could be the difference between a brief exposure to some interesting ideas and a life-changing experience.

**The
Councillor as
Communicator**

Process

**Training for
Elected
Leadership**

Spend at least half an hour at the end of the workshop to focus the attention of participants on important learning's and encourage them to continue experimenting with these learning's in their council activities. Begin by giving participants about fifteen minutes to work independently on a simple learning transfer questionnaire.



When participants have completed the questionnaire, ask them to share quickly with the group two or three things they intend to do differently in their council roles as communicators to close the workshop.

Workshop

Exercise

A LEARNING TRANSFER QUESTIONNAIRE

Take a few minutes to reflect on the role of the communicator, the new ideas you encountered in this workshop, and how you feel about them. Then, in the space below, write a sentence or two to describe something interesting you have learned about yourself during this workshop.

Based on what you have learned about yourself and the many possibilities for change presented by this workshop, what two or three things do you intend to do differently in your council role as communicator?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Finally, what obstacles in yourself or in your work environment do you expect to experience during your efforts to implement these changes? What will you do to remove or minimize these obstacles?

Obstacle	Action to remove the obstacle
1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____

The
Councillor as
Communicator

Training for
Elected
Leadership



If you can learn it, you can do it.