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September 5, 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Council Members

FROM: Leann Bleakney, Oregon office

SUBJECT: Presentation by Jeff Nelson, General Manager, Springfield Utility Board

BACKGROUND:

Presenter: Jeff Nelson, General Manager, Springfield Utility Board, Springfield, Oregon

Summary: Mr. Nelson will be joined by all five of the utility's board members:
David Willis, Board Chair
John DeWenter, Board Vice Chair
Mike Eyster, Board Member
Virginia Lauritsen, Board Member
Pat Riggs-Henson, Board Member

Relevance: Springfield Utility Board is a BPA full-requirements customer.

Background: Springfield Utility Board began in 1949 as Springfield Municipal Power, having been supported in that summer's election to create a municipal utility from the IOU territory of Mountain States Power (which became Pacific Power and Light). The first customers to begin receiving Springfield Municipal Power in 1950 were customers who had spearheaded the campaign to become a locally controlled utility.

Today, Springfield Utility Board provides power to more than 31,000 customers. It operates 92 miles of overhead distribution line, 140 miles of underground transmission line and 24 miles of overhead transmission line.

Springfield Utility Board is also a water service utility, with 20,000 customers serving three billion gallons of water annually.

More Info: www.Subutil.com



I am From the Government and Here to Help

Lessons Learned from a Consumer Owned
(Government) Utility Working with Customers and
Policy Makers

Jeff Nelson

Springfield Utility Board

September 11, 2018



Preface

- ▶ All interactions are assumed to come from a space of good intent.
- ▶ It is the utility's responsibility to educate and inform customers
- ▶ It is the customer's responsibility to engage in discourse and the public process to address public policy (utility policies decided by elected officials)
- ▶ Human behavior flows from three main sources: desire, emotion, and knowledge.
 - ▶ Emotions aim at reflecting reality
 - ▶ Desires aim at altering reality
 - ▶ Knowledge is the understanding of reality and potential reality.
 - ▶ Desires can be born out of emotion and emotion can be born out of desire.
 - ▶ Knowledge is based partly on experience which may not match current reality (I was treated this way by my last utility so I will be treated the same way by my new utility)
- ▶ Every government/utility interaction impacts a customer's perception and knowledge of a customer's own local government/utility. (Reflection/Boomerang effect). This influences emotions, desire, and, ultimately, behavior.



Springfield Utility Board Google Reviews

"They have always been fair"

"Racist, they target low-income and minorities with excessive deposits and will not even work a deferred payment plan that suits the person. Greedy Jeff Nelson and the board members only see one way and that is the Republican White way. I am leaving Springfield because of SUB I refuse to give this community my hard-earned money."

"The best service I've ever had!"

"Just wanted to let you guys know that you have some really great drivers! This morning, after the wind storm last night, I went out to leave for work and found that both my garbage and recycling bins had been blown over into my yard. I headed out to pick everything up, just as the recycling truck pulled up. Rob, the driver, got out and started picking everything up before I could get to it! I tried to help, but he had it already done by the time I picked up three little things that had blown over to our fence. He even picked up the garbage and set the cans back in place. As I was pulling out of the driveway to head to work, I saw that he was doing the same for the neighbors down the street! Thank you for your great service Rob!!"




What is important?

- ▶ Offering access from the customer to the elected officials. Offer a way to eliminate the General Manager/CEO from being a gatekeeper.
- ▶ Transparency
- ▶ Including customers in the process (written comments, comments in person)
- ▶ Continued outreach, even though someone may repeatedly not show up.
- ▶ Responsiveness to inquiries for information.
- ▶ An open mind
- ▶ Treating your customer-owners with grace and gratitude. There is something positive out of every experience.
- ▶ Listen and understand what is important to customers and make sure your solutions align with the interests/problems they are trying to solve.
- ▶ If you mess up – admit it and apologize
- ▶ Know that sometimes no matter how hard you try, you might fail.



Thank you for Volunteering

- ▶ I need a volunteer.
- 



I am one of the most ignorant people I know.

- ▶ If I am ignorant, I should be understanding of other's ignorance.
- ▶ Much of time spent with policymakers is:
 - ▶ Discussing solutions that don't have a problem
 - ▶ Discussing problems that already have a solution
 - ▶ Addressing solutions that cause more problems
 - ▶ Discussing problems that don't exist
- ▶ In other words, we are patiently educating well intentioned, eager, but not fully informed, policymakers.
- ▶ You might be surprised about what someone is saying about your company.



As A Leader of A Government Agency How Do I Help?

- ▶ Focus on what is important (previous slide)
- ▶ Look For Diversity of Opinion
- ▶ Celebrate the good, immediately acknowledge and fix the not so good
- ▶ Understand that people bring past experiences to the table that may have nothing to do with you.
 - ▶ You may not be responsible for a person's past experience, but you are responsible for their experience today.
- ▶ Don't just post an opportunity to comment
 - ▶ Get out there and talk to people
 - ▶ Ask customers what the best way for them is to participate
 - ▶ Lack of participation is a can be a function of negative past experiences with government agencies. Every opportunity burned today is a hundred opportunities lost tomorrow.
- ▶ Advocate for the customers I serve – even in the face of adversity