

----- Original Message -----

Subject:Not a good PR strategy for the MWU

Date:Fri, 14 Jun 2013 14:03:21 -0500

From:Maria Powell (MEJO) <mariapowell@mejo.us>

To:Heikkinen, Tom <THeikkinen@madisonwater.org>

CC:Mayor <Mayor@cityofmadison.com>, ALL ALDERS <allalders@cityofmadison.com>, Madeline Gotkowitz <mbgotkow@wisc.edu>, "Mike DePue (pdepue@yahoo.com)" <pdepue@yahoo.com>, Larry Nelson <ldnelson@chorus.net>, Bruce Mayer <bruce.mayer@wegnercpas.com>, "Voegeli, Doug" <DVoegeli@publichealthmdc.com>

Mr. Heikkinen:

It has come to our attention that in a recent presentation at a professional seminar, you referred to citizens with PhDs who raised questions about smart meter risks as lacking common sense. To support this, you showed slides with totally misleading--and some blatantly incorrect--statistics from the smart meter industry. Worst of all, **you showed a slide depicting citizens who raised questions about smart meters as "wingnuts" (see your slide below).** Do you also think the growing number of research scientists, professors and medical professionals who agree that smart meters pose health risks are "wingnuts"? What about the 1250 Water Utility customers who have opted out so far? Are they "wingnuts"? **Do the Mayor and the Common Council share your belief that these taxpaying citizens are "wingnuts"?**

Sadly, your public depiction of us as crazies with no common sense is no surprise. We and a growing number of citizens who regularly attend Water Utility and related city meetings to express questions about water issues and Water Utility projects have come to expect thinly-veiled contempt and at times even ridicule from water utility leaders as well as some staff and board members. We expect not to be listened to and at times to be outright ignored. We expect disingenuous communications and incorrect information from you, and sometimes lies.

Treating citizens who raise questions about Water Utility projects and decisions with contempt and ridicule is not only unprofessional, but antidemocratic. It also violates the Water Utility's "Customer Bill of Rights," which includes "Courteous and respectful treatment at all times by MWU staff." Further, this approach is a really counterproductive PR strategy. Your actions have already done a lot of damage as far as Madison citizens' trust for the utility.

The recent hiring of two new PR people at the Water Utility will not fix this growing problem. Hiring ten more PR people will not solve this problem, nor will hiring more and more outside consultants for public engagement. As long as Water Utility leaders and board members continue to treat citizens who ask questions about Water Utility decisions with disdain, even the most talented public relations professionals in the world will not be able to improve community relations. In fact, at this point, putting PR people between you and citizens (to protect you from having to interact with citizens directly and address their questions?) will make things worse.

We propose that the Water Utility leaders, staff, and board could save a large amount of taxpayer money not by hiring more PR professionals and consultants, but by **treating the citizens you are paid to serve as intelligent people with knowledge, skills, and expertise to contribute--and by engaging openly and honestly with their questions and concerns.** Unfortunately, we are not hopeful that you are capable of doing this, since it is clear you think we are crazy idiots.

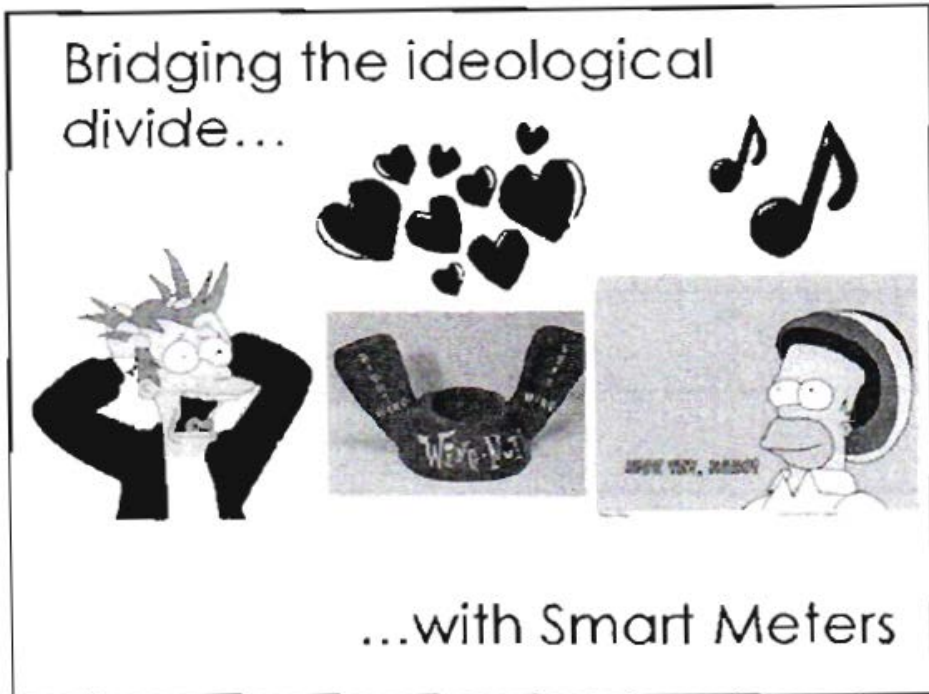
As the head of a business monopoly, you fall into the common pattern of treating your customers with disdain, while happily taking their money. If we could choose to get our water from an entity other than the Madison Water Utility, we would do so. Unfortunately, we have no other option.

So, we are not going away. See you at upcoming Water Utility and other city meetings,

Undersigned "Wingnuts" of Madison,

- Maria Powell, PhD (no common sense)
- Sue Pastor, MS, MA (medium level of common sense?)
- Pacia Harper, MS (left graduate school before losing all common sense)
- Kristine Mattis, MS, ABD (some common sense, but it's slipping away...)
- Carl Mumm, BA (senseless sensibilities)
- Kate Edwards, B.A. & Ordained Buddhist Chaplain (must REALLY be a wingnut!)
- Betty Thompson, BA (1/2 credits towards an MBA, and able to think)
- Lauren Baxter, BS (Borderline Common Sense?)
- Mark Baxter, AS (A lot of common Sense?)
- Lynette Jandl, PCT (Promoter of Civility and Tolerance)
- Kirsten Johnson (Masters of Education, fair to middling common sense)
- Rachel Durfee (BFA Cornell University, MFA University of Wisconsin-Madison)
- Dot Kroeber (BS, MS)
- Anneliese Emerson (BS, UW-Madison 1972)
- Morgan Sharpe, (B.A., Harvard, 1967)
- Jim Powell, BA (no PhD, therefore lots of common sense?)
- Dorothy Borchardt (no PhD - lots of common sense)

PowerPoint slides from Tom Heikkinen's May 1 presentation "Lessons Learned; Madison Water Utility's Smart Meter Installation Project" at the Water Supply Regulatory Affairs Seminar



Outline

Project Overview

4 Lessons

- You don't "sell" the project just once
- We are wary of regional approaches
- The more Ph.D.s, the less common sense
- Choose your battles wisely

Current Status

Wrap Up