

How long has it been since you  
didn't know anything about  
your area of expertise?

Do you like feeling dumb?

APWA MPAC

Translating from Techno-Geek to  
People Speak

*What language was that again?*

Huh? What was that again?



As Public Works folks, who are we trying to  
communicate with?

General public

Ratepayers

Elected officials

Media

Planners

Special interest groups

What happens without clear communication?

# City of Ecotopia – Briefing Template



- SWMP update required to comply with NPDES MS4 permit
- Problem
  - Volume and velocity of creek runoff during 25 year storm events
- Potential solutions
  - LID
  - GSI
  - Street sweeping
  - TESC measures for construction
- Issues
  - TMDLs
  - GIS database and mapping
  - Community acceptance of SWMP
  - Rate analysis
- Questions?



A rose is a rose is a rose?

Terminology

People

How are you similar/dissimilar with your  
neighbors (Cities? County? Ecology?  
Utilities?)

# How do we change the outcome?

Know your audience

Target key messages

What do they need to know?

What do you need from them?

What will they care about?



# Telling the story

Focus the messaging

Target your audience

Clarify your points

Rethink your language





# Telling the story

Is not

...dumbing it down

...technically inaccurate or incomplete

...twisting or spinning

It is

...adaptation with consistent language,  
definitions and translation



## Retell the story



### – Stormwater Management Plan Update

- Problem
- Potential solutions
- Questions

# Graphics and figures

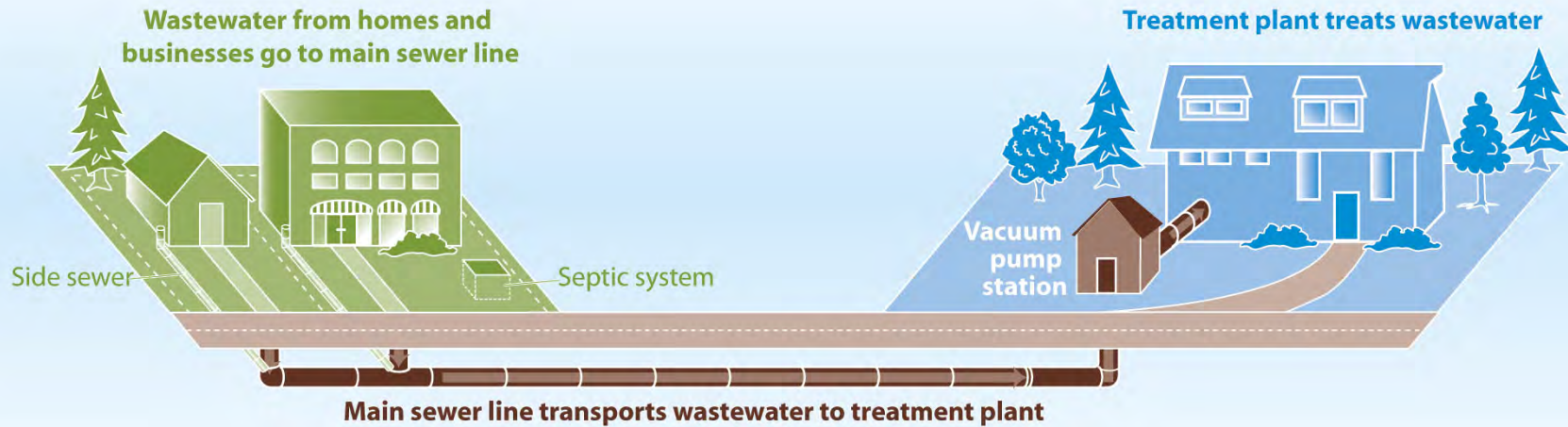




# Map with simple and clear legend



# Informational graphics



# City of Ecotopia – Briefing Template



- ❑ SWMP update required to comply with NPDES MS4 permit
- ❑ Problem
  - Volume and velocity of creek runoff during 25 year storm events
- ❑ Potential solutions
  - LID
  - GSI
  - Street sweeping
  - TESC measures for construction
- ❑ Issues
  - TMDLs
  - GIS database and mapping
  - Community acceptance of SWMP
  - Rate analysis
- ❑ Questions?

# PowerPoint

– 5/5

- Five words per line
- Five lines

– 10/20/30

- 10 slides
- 20 minutes
- 30 pt font or larger

– Graphics support message



## Three key points

WHO? Consider your audience

WHAT? Consider your message and language

NEED? What do they need and what do you need?

By the way, what he meant to say was....



American Public Works Association  
Management and Public Administration  
Committee (APWA – MPAC)

<http://www.apwa-wa.org/committee>