

# Utility Management

Managing through Shifting Currents

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## What is Utility Management?

- Utility Management, a broad term.
- Leadership vs. Management
- Art vs. Science
- “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”---  
*Margaret Mead*

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## What qualifies an individual or a group to manage a utility?

- Experience – Education – measurable skills?
- What would the ideal educational background be?
- How many years and what type of experience would be ideal?

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### Would qualifications be more subtle?

- What are the attributes of a Utility manager?
- Ability, communication skills, team building skill, trustworthiness, adaptability, character, coolness in a crisis, "people" skills?
- What about courage, determination, self-control?

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### Hard Science- the fundamental skill set

- Technical and non-technical skill sets
- CMOMS?
- Decision making Skills
- Financial management
- Asset management
- Sustainability/Affordability

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### The Softer Side

- "Being Powerful is Like Being a Lady. If you have to tell people you are...you aren't"---  
*Margaret Thatcher*
- Harder to quantify and less measurable.
- Involves human characteristics such as emotional strength (emotional intelligence), maturity, the ability to adapt and change
- Comfort with life-long learning and constantly evolving environments
- Comfort and ability to handle conflict

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## Managing One's Self

- Most important (difficult) management task
- Attitude, self control, integrity, communication, and personality set the tone for the people you manage.
- Given some time organizations adopt the personality of their leadership...for better or worse.
- Management's behavior must be consistent with the desired "personality" of the organization.
- You are "always on stage"
- FIRST responsibility as a leader.
- Only then do you have the Moral Authority to ask subordinates to do the right thing.

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## Three fundamental skills for successful utility management

- Human Relations
- Leadership
- Managing Change

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## 1. Human Relations

- Customer Relations
- Employee Relations
- Board Relations
- Public Relations
- Governmental Affairs

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### Customer Relations

- “Brought to You By Our Customers”
- The changing Customer...we don't get to pick them.
- What Customers Want
- The Value Equation or do they get more than they pay for?
- At the end of the day, no matter what else they may be, they are still the customer!

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### Employee Relations

- The value of trust... “They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.”
- The “Internal Customer” concept.
- Employment Law and today's utility
- The Silver Rule:  
“Don't say or do anything you wouldn't do in front of your mother!”
- “Communicate, communicate, communicate”

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### Board Relations

- Communicate and educate. Use conferences to your advantage.
- Don't wait until the crisis comes. Deliver Bad News Quickly.
- Show your work.  
A picture is worth a thousand words. A tour is worth a million.
- Do the footwork.  
Talk to your Board members. Share the good , the bad and the ugly.
- Understand What Board members need.

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## Public Relations

- The “Silent Service” past.
- The public has forever changed from a trusting benevolent housewife to a distrustful, angry activist.
- Shape the perceptions or someone will do it for you!
- Make community service a “value add” in your organization.
- Communicate!

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## Managing the Media

- Uncomfortable? Get over it.
- Seek fairness but don't expect it.
- Know what their needs are.
- “Relationships” are key. Build them before you need them.
- Build a reservoir of Goodwill.
- When the blood and guts story comes...be honest but don't be stupid.
- Control the Ah-ha! Moment. Plan for it. Anticipate and get good intelligence if you can.
- Use your CCR to advantage. (Use good judgment. Beware 4 color printing!)

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## Governmental Affairs

- Communicate before you need them.
- Know your politicians. Know their staffs.
- Build a relationship before you need them.
- Know your local leaders, be a chamber member, be active in your community and show up!
- Utilities are facing many challenges. You do yourself and the industry a disservice if you are not a political activist!

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## 2. LEADERSHIP

- Management may be a science but *leadership* is an art.
- Nature must be nurtured.
- It is a skill that can be developed - or not.
- You are not leading if no one is following.
- Defining and pursuing a “higher purpose.”

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### Work - Life Balance; A few tips for keeping it all in perspective

- Ethical:
- Live your own Life: Do not allow others to determine your principles or priorities.
- Define your vision. Identify what you want your life to have been when you look back on it.
- Laugh at your self.

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### Personal and Family

- Lead a balanced life. Work some, play some and laugh some everyday.
- Celebrate your family and friends. Remember and show up for those important moments like birthdays, anniversaries and baptisms.
- Love your family and friends unconditionally. Establish high expectations of honesty and achievement but forgive disappointments, mistakes and failures.

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### Social

- Be honorable and discreet with the life and reputation of others.
- Listen to what people don't say.
- Forgive people for being stupid...its part of being human.

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### Mental

- Tell yourself the truth. Maintain intellectual integrity...know what you don't know.
- Admit when you are wrong...quickly.
- Listen more than you speak.

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### Physical

- Protect your most valuable asset...your ability to work.
- Rest and begin again.
- Play often.
- Be quiet and still...the world has its own agenda...only you can protect your vision.

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## Professional

- Professional success is never a single event. Keep your eye on your destination.
- Know your strengths and weaknesses.
- Don't burn bridges...disagree without being disagreeable.
- Invest in the success of others.

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## 3. Managing (for) Change

- The only thing that never changes is that everything changes.
- You have to be comfortable with it...in fact you have to be willing to drive it.
- You have to make your organization comfortable with it...even look forward to it.

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## The Cheese Always Gets Moved

- Change Happens – they keep moving the cheese.
- Anticipate Changes – Get ready for the cheese to move.
- Monitor Change – Smell the cheese often so you know when its getting old.
- Adapt to Change Quickly- The sooner you let go of old cheese the sooner you get new cheese.
- Change – Move the cheese!
- Enjoy Change! Savor the adventure in the taste of new cheese!

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**References and Suggested Readings:**

- Miller on Management (AWWA)  
By Kenneth Miller, Denver Water
  
- The Leader's Code by: Dr. Ken Chapman, PhD.
  
- Who Moved My Cheese? By: Dr. Spencer Johnson, M.D.
- Blink By: Malcolm Gladwell

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