Utility Branding Network Case Study Bill Inserts: Butler County Department of Environmental Services



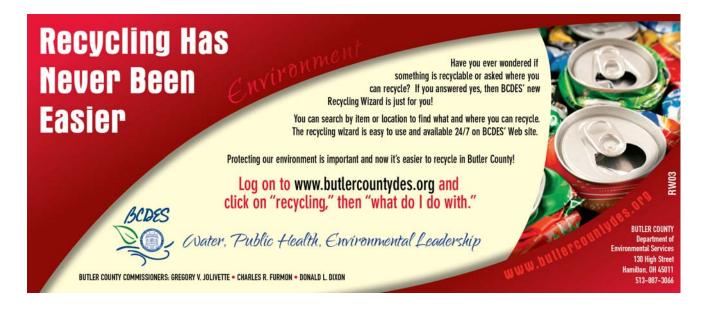
Branding Background

The Butler County Department of Environmental Services (BCDES) desired to improve the effectiveness of their communications and clarify their identity. One challenge that BCDES encountered was that its name and slogan did not clearly identify its roles, which included providing water, sanitation services, and recycling services. Butler County executives felt that defining the organization's brand was the starting point for addressing these issues. Given this, the management team collaborated to develop a series of branding statements intended to characterize what customers could <u>count on</u> from BCDES. These branding statements covered a range of ideas, including making it easier to deal with the department, commitments to water reliability and quality, and appropriate investment in water and the environment. The following bill inserts are one of the ways that BCDES is integrating branding statements into its communications.

The Bill Insert Program

The bill insert format provides an opportunity to communicate several branding points in a brief and meaningful communication piece. Employing *a series* of bill inserts allows BCDES to send consistent messages over time. Using multiple, but simple, communication pieces is a proven brand development strategy.

• Recycling Bill Insert— The primary message in the bill insert below is that BCDES "makes it easy" for people to recycle. Making things easier for the customer is a simple, yet powerful practice that should be a part of any customer service effort. BCDES' webbased recycling wizard makes it easy for people to find where they can recycle specific items. Different types of materials are recycled at different locations and people use the wizard to find the recycling location closest to where they live or work. The other important message relates to BCDES' commitment to the environment. Just providing information on recycling begins to demonstrate this commitment, which can be reinforced in future inserts and other communication pieces. In addition, BCDES developed the slogan, "Water, Public Health, and Environmental Leadership," to make sure the department's roles are very clear in all of its communication materials.



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• Liberty Pump Station Bill Insert— The first message in the bill insert below relates to the importance of planning. A critical responsibility of water and wastewater utilities is planning for the future and making sure that the community appropriately invests in water and the environment. Without sound planning and investment, the community is at risk for water shortages, water service reliability problems, or public health issues due to failed infrastructure. Another key message is that BCDES is "proactively" maintaining and improving the distribution system, which is critical to maintaining high-reliability and protecting public health. BCDES also highlights the reliability message in the watermark. Replacement of the aging pump station directly reminds customers that when we invest, we get value in return. Finally, making sure the pump station's design fits in well with the local community demonstrates Butler County's commitment to meeting local needs and encourages customers to become involved in future investment decisions.

Being proactive, collaborative, sensitive to the needs of the local environment, and being committed to planning, investment, and high reliability are all values defined in BCDES' branding statements. The billing insert program helps BCDES build its brand by increasing the clarity, consistency, and effectiveness of its communications.

