



Branding and the Strategic Direction

April 22, 2009

The last edition of "Branding Moments" outlined the benefits of branding in tough economic times. One recommendation was to prioritize building relationships with the top 50 to 100 community leaders, or the "authorizing public." Building these relationships is a critical branding tactic. However, if you plan to reach out to your community, it helps to have something interesting to discuss. "Strategic direction" now comes into play. Increasingly, utilities are producing strategic plans that often look ahead 30 years or more. These plans typically identify important issues and needed investments. The strategic direction is a subset of the strategic plan in that it addresses near-term (5 to 10 years) issues and investments and provides the reason for community leaders to pay attention. The strategic direction approach recognizes that although the issues may be long-term, appropriate investment may need to occur in the near-term, and may include significant rate increases.

Water Reliability 2020 - A good example of a strategic direction is West Basin Municipal Water District's Water Reliability 2020 program. The program's stated goal is to increase water reliability by cutting dependence on imported water supplies in half by the year 2020. The goal will be accomplished through investing in conservation, expanding recycled water programs, and implementing ocean desalination. This strategic direction provides a reason to talk with community leaders and is the foundation for West Basin's outreach efforts. For more information about Water Reliability 2020, please visit West Basin's website at: www.westbasin.com/Default.aspx?tabid=149.

Questions and Comments - *Feel free to ask questions or to comment on this email. Questions and comments will be compiled and responded to with a follow-up call or email. Please reply to this message or email us at news@utilitybranding.net.*

About the Network - *The Utility Branding Network for water and wastewater agencies is committed to helping utilities better understand branding principles and to help them build a strong brand with their communities. A strong brand increases trust, support, and investment.*

If you are not yet a member of the Network, or just want more information, please contact John Ruetten at john@utilitybranding.net or Jeff Mosher at jeff@utilitybranding.net.

The Network is administered by the National Water Research Institute (NWRI).

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