Building Support for Management Practices

Public Relations Advantages

By: Gina Tedesco, Manager, Public Relations
Edith Makra, arborist and Community Trees Advocate
The Morton Arboretum
September 29, 2009
We’ll Cover…

• What is PR?
• Importance of communicating about invasives
• Desired outcomes
• Managing fear
• Communication Plan
• Getting the message out
• Resources
What Is PR?

• A story in the newspaper?

• Two way flows of communication to achieve mutually-beneficial relationships

  Municipalities/others should be proactive in reaching their audiences
Closed System

City or Company/Processes  Feedback
+ or - about conditions
Internal
Changing/maintaining favored conditions
Favored Conditions

Variations in Community
Open System

Feedback
+ or - about conditions

Internal
Changing/maintaining favored conditions

City or Company/Processes

Favored Conditions

Output

Input

Variations in Community
Open System: 2-Way Communication

City or Company/Processes

Feedback
+ or - about conditions

Internal

Changing/maintaining favored conditions

Favored Conditions

Variations in Community

2-Way Communication
Why Communicate about Invasives?

- Clear up misconceptions that could thwart public support
- Create public confidence in your leadership
- Make the case for funding and cooperation
- Solicit cooperation
Outcomes Desired

- Create value for urban forests
  - Highlights need for support resources; staff
- Behavior modification. Examples:
  - Don’t move firewood
  - Enhance tree health
- Image management
- Convey competence, confidence, control
Manage Fear: Proactivity

• Example: Chinese wasps: Citizen misconceptions
  • “They’ll sting me”
  • “They’ll be obnoxious, buzzing nuisances”
  • “They’ll be out of control, attacking everything”

• Antidote
  – Lean on the experts; report their research
  – Explain it to public

• Result: Managers will look effective
Communication Plan

• Who will speak, what will they say?
• Objective
  – Call to action?
  – Educate?
• Key messages: boiled down to 2 sentences
• Repeat messages
• **ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED!**
Getting The Message Out

- Your website (2-way)
- Your Facebook page, Twitter (2-way)
- News conference
- Local cable access
- Signage at municipal buildings
- Inserts with municipal bills
You’re Not Alone

• Resources
  – The Morton Arboretum Website:
    • Downloadable PowerPoint to educate managers
    • Educational brochures, pamphlets, posters
    • Lists of trees for reforestation
    • Pesticide information sheet
Lean On Experts – Best Practices

- Efficiency for you – no “reinventing the wheel”
- **Bolsters credibility for your efforts**
Bottom Line…

- Embrace opportunities to inform the public
- Press: valued partner
- Be proactive
- Lean on the experts
- Collaborate
Collaboration

- Successes in Illinois stem from team work
- Consensus plan
- Communications network
- Defined key goals, issues, message
- Groom spokespersons and use your best talent
Get in Front of the News

- Practice with small news items
- Know what you want to say before an interview
- Monitor invasive news and anticipate media interest
- Initiate press conferences
- Stage photo ops to underscore messages
An Educated Constituency Supports Good Decisions

Repeat key messages i.e.
- know how to identify an ash tree
- monitor for health
- seek advice from certified arborists
- plant a diverse landscape
- consider value of tree in treatment decisions

Identify credible resource for more information
Summary

Successful Public Relations and Two Way Communication Informs and Builds Support for Management of Invasives