

How to Work With an “Outlier” Council Member

Why This Topic?

- Cal-ICMA “Survival Skills Project”/Challenges and Opportunities Report
- “Outlier” Council Members Was a Significant Concern
- A Need to Define the Issue and Suggest Strategies

Goals for Session

- Define the Types of “Outlier” Council Members
- Review the Impacts They Can Have
- Discuss Your Role vs. The Council’s Role
- Provide Strategies to Deal With These Situations:
 - What Can/Should You Do
 - How Can You Assist Your Council in Addressing the Issue

Outline For The Session

- Introducing the Topic/Creating Context
- Small Group Discussion/Reporting Out
- Some Suggested Strategies
- Questions/Discussion

What is An Outlier?

- Different Types/Different Impacts
- Simply a New Member?
- A Council Member Who Represents Different Policy Positions/A Different Perspective?
- A Council Member With a Different Personality/Work Style?
- A Council Member With a Negative and Confrontational Approach?

The Most Challenging “Outliers”:

- Every Staff Presentation is an Inquisition
- Routinely Disclose Confidential Information
- Spend All Their Time on Minutia/Miss Big Picture
- Never Prepared for Meetings/Ask for Information Already Provided
- Never Willing to Bring Closure to An Issue
- Refuse to Abide by Meeting Rules of Order
- Goes Around Manager to Staff
- Always Trying to Make the Manager/Staff Look Bad

Impacts on the Organization

- How the “Outlier” Can Impact Staff
- The Significance of Your Reaction:
 - If You Do Nothing
 - If You Overreact
 - The Attitude You Demonstrate

Question #1:

- What Type of “Outlier” Have You Experienced?
- What Did You Think Your Role Was as the Manager in Regard to Getting Involved?
- What Did You Think Your Council’s Role Was?

Question #2:

- What Strategies Did You Enlist?
- How Effective Were They?
- Did You Consider Enlisting Allies?
- How Did It Work Out?
- What Would You Do Differently Next Time?

Question #3:

- What Do You Do If There is No Hope for Change?
- Any Suggested Coping Mechanisms?
- Can Anything Positive Come From Having to Work With an Outlier Council Member?

When Is Intervention Appropriate?

- When the Work of the Council is Being Disrupted/Negative Interpersonal Relations
- When the Manager/Staff are Being Negatively Impacted
- When Public Confidence is Suffering

When Should the Manager Get Involved?

- The “Outlier” is Significantly Impacting Staff/the Internal Organization
- When You Think You Can Offer Welcomed Assistance and Advice
- The Pitfalls of Being a “Marriage Counselor”

Steps in the Process

- Diagnose the Type of “Outlier”
- Carefully Discern Your Role (or lack thereof)
- Thoughtfully Consider Strategy
- Implement Strategy (if action is appropriate)

What Is the Manager's Role?

- To Offer Suggestions/Strategies?
- To Directly Intervene With the Councilmember(s)?
- To Stay Far Away From the Issue?

3 Levels of Strategy

- Personal Intervention
- Soliciting Help From Others/Facilitation
- Formal/Outside Intervention:
 - Censure
 - Investigation
 - Formal Complaint

What Allies Can You Enlist?

- Mayor?
- Other Councilmembers?
- Community Leaders?
- Supporters?

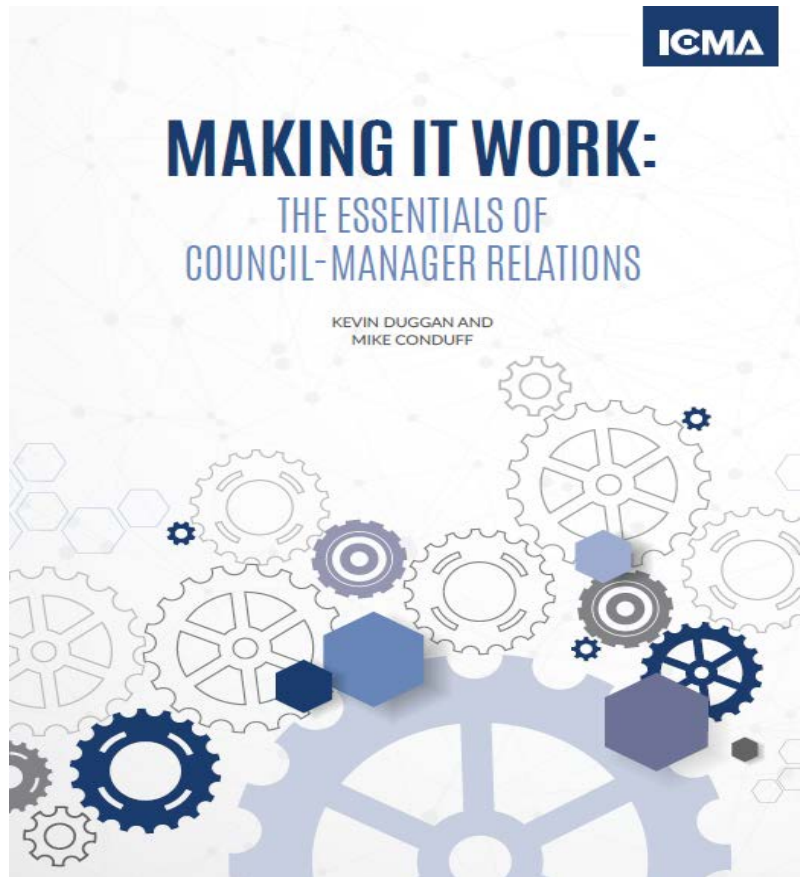
What If Nothing Changes?

- Exercise Emotional Maturity/Intelligence
- Keep Communication Open/Don't "Shut Down"
- Keep It in Perspective
- Do Your Best to Insulate Staff
- Help the Council/Staff Stay Focused
- Know "The Boundaries" and Your Responsibilities
- If All Else Fails.....

Cal-ICMA Survival Skills Project:

Challenges and Strategies: Maximizing Success for City and County Managers in California

icma.org/challenges+strategies



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