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5 Steps to Building a Positive Image in Your Community

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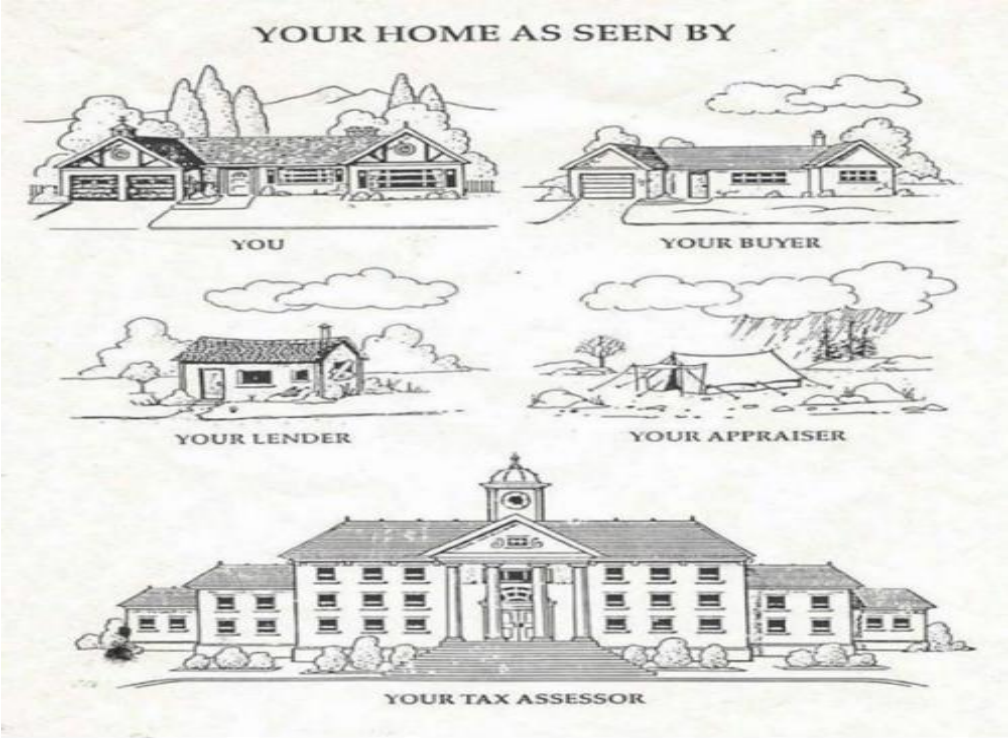
No effort is needed to develop poor public relations. . ..



Pretty much sums it up

5 Steps to Avoid Public Complaints, Gain Support, and Thereby Build a Positive Image in Your Community

- Education
- Social Media & Website
- Performance
- Impartiality
- Team Support

Education

Educate the taxpayer regarding your duties

- One on one interactions with taxpayers in office: put your best face forward.
- Brochures
- Conduct community information/education sessions open to public
- Identify groups and present:
  - Chamber and Civic Clubs
  - Elderly
  - Veterans
  - Other ideas??

Education cont.

What topics?

- Explain difference in county commission, tax commissioner and tax assessor and the respective roles of each
- Overview of how to value property
- Qpublic
- Exemptions
- Timelines

Education cont.

- If not adjusting assessments, some taxpayers would end up paying more than their fair share.
- Longer you go between re-valuations, the more variability between similarly situated properties. If re-valuing frequently:
  - don’t have uniformity issues
  - see less shock and awe through major increases.

Social Media

Why Social Media?

- It's where your audience is
  - Facebook-214 million US users
  - Twitter- 67 million US users
  - LinkedIn- 128 million US users
- Easy and relatively inexpensive way to reach goal of public relations and education
- Do more with less - with a post you can reach hundreds of people in seconds

Social Media cont.

Develop Social Media Strategy

- Define your audience
- Develop a social media calendar to organize your information dissemination to the community
- Allocate resources

Social Media cont.

Facebook

- Engage with your community.
- Beef up your information section.
  - The “About” text entered in the info screen appears on the left of the page. Make sure to:
  - Mention it’s the official page.
  - Include admin names.
  - Include contact info.
- Links- repost often used or requested link.
- Be active- don't post only a couple times a year.
- Quality vs. Quantity.
- Have a consistent brand.
- If it’s posted, it’s public.
- Connect virtually. Bond locally.

Social Media cont.

Twitter

- Easiest way to see what's going on in the world in real time, which is one of the platform's major differentiators from the other networks.
- Each post limited to 140 characters or less.
- Twitter and 'tweeting' is about broadcasting daily short burst messages.
- Follow industry influencers and companies/groups of interest.
- Post tax reminders or important dates.
- Address frequently asked questions.

twitter

Social Media cont.

LinkedIn

- Used for professional purposes to show your experience, skills and involvement.
- Fill your profile out completely and keep it current, include your business contact information.
- Shows creditability to the community- the more background experience, organizations you're involved in and skills you list, the more competent you look.
- Connect with those in your community.

LinkedIn

Website

- Information regarding staff/board members
- Contact information
- Answers to frequently asked questions
- Deadlines
- Forms
- Directions to the office
- Appeal information

Performance

Performance as a Manager

- Like all government, our ability to reward excellent employees has limitations.
- Simple thank you / in house rewards program
- Whale Done Program
- Clearly communicating expectations and negative consequences of poor decisions and behaviors up front is integral to an effective management style
- Lead by example
- Learn from your own folks (what's one thing we should….. Stop doing? Start doing? Change?)

Performance cont.

Performance as Appraiser – Dogged Adherence to Process (Sam's presentation)

- Do. Your. Job.
- Get educated and then apply those concepts to each property uniformly
- Do not be afraid of litigation. Do not be afraid of outcome. If you have established accurate process, then do not change it just to avoid litigation. Of course be pragmatic – attorneys fees statute. But . . .
- Have confidence in the process. Have confidence in yourself. Have confidence in your attorney.

Impartiality

Treat everyone the same, **NO MATTER WHO THEIR MAMA IS OR THEIR POLITICAL POWER.**

- People Demand Equal Treatment ("my station in life may not have been be reduced, but if theirs is made better, I have been wronged").
- Must Personify Impartiality (if a difference in treatment, must be justified and explained).
- Once you make one exception, you will always be doing so….

Impartiality cont.

The Taxpayer is not the Enemy
(although it may feel like it sometimes!)

Henry Clayton “Cap” Dorminey

Impartiality cont.

Training: how to deal with a hostile person

- Take the emphasis off their grievance and put it on how market values are determined. Help the public understand and experience how you arrived at their assessment, rather than simply how to complain about it.
- "gotta make a livin'" (redirect/diffuse/humor)
- No matter the situation, respond to "buzzards" and all others in a professional manner – don't let them get under your skin and cause you to be unprofessional.
- On the hard days, remind yourself (and your employees and BOC) that although they may be loud, it's the minority that isn't supporting your efforts. The majority of property owners want their taxes to be based on fair assessments.
- 80/20 rule (train your folks on standard responses for the 20% of matters you encounter 80% of the time).

Team Support

- Protect the process and get others to do so. (3 entities that have to be singing from the same sheet of music for the public to be informed, educated, and confident in process – tax commissioner, tax assessor, and BOC.)
- If your BOC, Tax Commissioner and other local officials support your efforts, that will go a long way to increase taxpayer confidence in you.
- Employees must be on the team also.
- As part of team spirit, educate your local government officials before doing public outreach.

Team Support cont.

Board of Commissioners

How to get the BOC to have your back (Tony's presentation on your rights/authority)

<u>Communication is key!</u>

- keep them informed – let them hear about the problem from you
- Report successes
- Be a team player and communicate that you understand their limitations (budget, etc.)

Remember, a taxpayer that understands your efforts will support your efforts (or at least you have a better chance of it!)

- Plan ahead
- Be intentional
- Be smart with time and resources
- Don’t separate public relations from taxpayer education; the two complement each other

Questions?

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