



Connecting with Community and Government for a Sustainable Future

January 2010



What does the public think about industry?

- They don't like us.
- They don't trust us.
- They think what we do hurts them.
- They think we should be doing a much better job of communicating.

The dilemma

- **Our business is no longer just our business.**
 - **Right-to-know and public participation laws give the public access to our facilities and businesses.**
- **Industry's presence, history and impact dictate that the media will cover us and the public will pay attention.**

The challenge

- **To effectively communicate the nature, uses and hazards of what we do to an often unformed audience that has a negative perception of our industry.**
- **Public opinion is influenced by the media, (particularly television), internet blogs, NGOs/activists and others.**

The opportunity

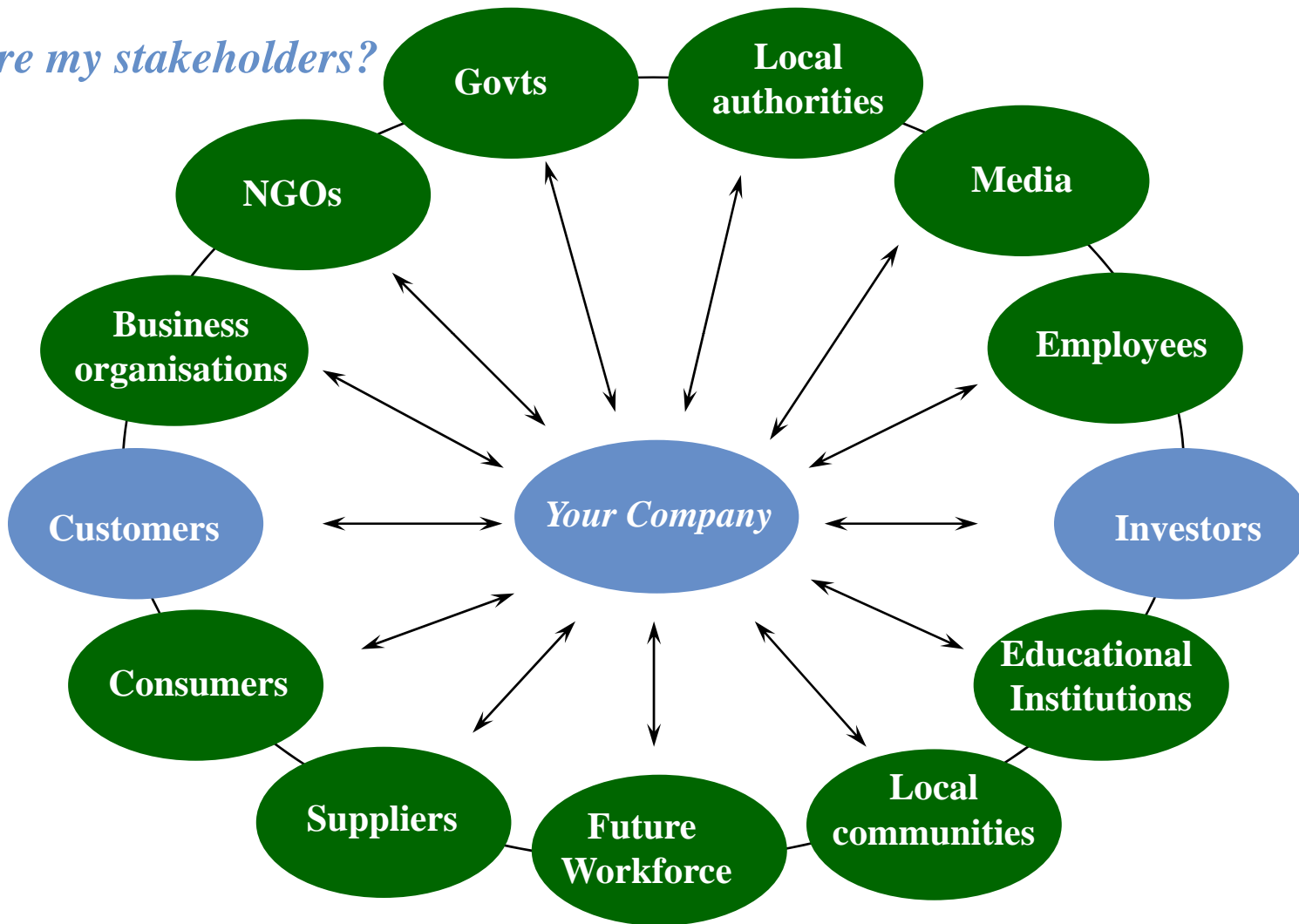
- **Growth or Survival**
 - The public can cost you money.
 - The public can cost you time.
 - The public can shut you down.
 - But...Effective communications and community relations can enhance support for continued operations, future expansions.

Communications, community relations key to company's sustainability

- **Sustainability includes economic, safety, environment, and social performance.**
- **Achieving sustainability aided by good communications and community relations.**
- **Communications and community relations strengthens ability to meet expectations of:**
 - **Employees**
 - **Customers**
 - **Elected officials**
 - **Community**

The Stakeholder Based View

Who are my stakeholders?



Communications, community relations helps to:

- **Maintain trust and credibility during uncertain times.**
- **Protect license to operate.**
- **Ensure officials, community support; inoculate against problems.**
- **Maintain attractiveness as a place of employment.**
- **Reinforce internal culture (employees).**
- **Reinforce external branding (customers, regulators).**
- **Demonstrate social responsibility by supporting community.**

Basic elements of communications and community relations effort

- **Broad-based**
 - Employees, near neighbors, elected officials, community, other key stakeholders.
- **Strategic**
 - Targeted, meets needs, addresses issues, redresses mistakes.
- **Consistent**
 - Actively engaged
- **Message driven**
 - Economic impacts, safety, community involvement.

A few words about messages

- **Central theme of all communications.**
- **Simple, easily repeated.**
- **Few in number.**
- **Factually defensible.**
- **Connect emotionally.**
- **Personally relevant.**

Effective communications

- **Must understand what shapes audience perception.**
 - Literature cites 47 factors; least important is science (data, numbers, facts).
 - Most important thing is trust.
- **And what shapes trust?**
 - Caring and empathy: 50%
 - Competence/Expertise: 15-20%
 - Honesty/openness: 15-20%
 - Dedication/commitment: 15-20%
- **Bottom line is:**
 - Make the effort.
 - Be honest.
 - Not so much what we say, but how we say it.

Effective communications

- Non verbal communication
 - ***“How you act and how you look speaks so loudly...that I can’t hear what you are saying.”*** (anonymous stakeholder)

Effective communications

- **Keys to communicating in any setting**
 - **Keep it personal...face-to-face contact is best.**
 - **Listen...at least as much as you talk.**
 - **Be honest...about what you know and don't know.**
 - **Be courteous...politeness goes a long way.**
 - **Put people first...show you care about individuals, community.**
 - **Speak plainly and in first person...it strengthens credibility.**
 - **Relax, be comfortable...make your audience comfortable.**
 - **Develop and use key messages...in all your communications.**

Other tools of the trade

- **Political action, contributions:**
 - Lobby strategically and professionally; follow the law.
- **Community contributions (dollars, sweat):**
 - Target to meet specific needs; get credit.
- **Opinion surveys/focus groups:**
 - Do one occasionally to gauge opinion, measure performance.
- **Community Advisory Panels:**
 - Formalize process of community input, but no replacement for simply talking routinely with all stakeholders.

Community Advisory Panels

- **How to Make CAPs more effective:**
 - Have them professionally organized and facilitated.
 - Don't go cheap; utilize nice, neutral meeting place, quality audio/visual aids; etc.
 - Participate in multi-company CAPS.
 - Refresh panel members periodically and make sure members reflect demographics and diversity of the community.
 - Periodically evaluate effectiveness and don't be afraid to make changes if indicated.

Communications and community relations

- A final word
 - “Communications and community relations are ‘full contact sport.’ They cannot be done effectively from within an office. It takes time for actions and communications to build strong relationships, so commit for the long haul and work at it, 24/7-365.”

Questions to Explore

- **How does your company acknowledge its societal role?**
 - How does my company acknowledge our role in a sustainable future?
- **In what societal processes are we a stakeholder?**
 - How do we directly or indirectly influence those processes today?
- **Who are the stakeholders in our business?**
 - How do we address their needs?
- **What do our communications say about us?**
 - What are our key messages?

Thank you.