



City of Independence

Review of External Communications

City of Independence, Missouri

**Report to the Mayor and City Council
By: City Management Analyst
July 10, 2017
Report No. 16-03**

City of Independence

City Council Office



July 10, 2017

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

This report was assigned to me by the Audit and Finance Committee in June of 2016 and was initiated pursuant to Chapter 1, Article 43 of the City Code of Ordinances. The findings in this report outline the City's current external communications practices and make several recommendations for improvement.

The city's current external communications tactics and philosophies meet basic citizen expectations and legal requirements; but more should be done to fulfill the City Council's goal of being a customer-focused organization in the Independence for All, strategic plan. The city employs numerous channels of external communications but they are disseminated without an overarching communications strategy that ties together information from various departments, directs it toward target audiences in the most effective manner, or reinforces stated priorities. This longstanding lack of comprehensive communications strategy has led departments to create and use their own logos and brands that in no way relate to the other departments or the city as a whole. Finally, a detailed review of the customer service function of the city revealed that while individual staff members may be providing decent customer service, citizens encounter major problems navigating the organization through the website and phone systems. This leads to frustration on the part of both customers and staff.

The Public Information Officer reviewed this report, to provide detailed feedback related to the findings. The draft report was also reviewed by the City Manager and City Counselor, and responses from both are appended. Finally, members of the Audit and Finance Committee have approved the final report with the addition of a formal response, which is also attached. The cooperation of all those who provided assistance is greatly appreciated.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jordan Ellena".

Jordan Ellena
City Management Analyst

Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Objectives	3
Scope & Methodology	3
Background	4
Listen, Learn, and Let Citizens Know	4
Communications Strategies	5
Communications Plan	5
Findings	5
Summary	5
Findings	6
City Lacks Overall Communications Strategies Including Public Relations	6
Proliferation of Different Logos & Collateral Designs Lead to Confusion	8
Customer Service Technology Lead to Frustrated Customers	11
Consolidated Customer Service (311 Call Center)	12
Recommendations	13
Appendix A: Examples of Collateral Materials	15
Appendix B: City Counselor’s Response	18
Appendix C: City Manager’s Response	19

Introduction

Objectives

This review of the city's external communications was conducted under the authority of Section 2.11 of the Charter of Independence, Missouri, which establishes the position of City Management Analyst and Article 43 of Chapter 1 of the City Code outlining the primary duties.

This audit provides findings based on an evaluation of the city's current external communications practices against stated goals, in documents like the strategic plan and best practices in the field of public sector communications. Performance audits, like this, are intended to provide the City Council and staff with an objective analysis of programs, policies, and procedures. Policymakers and managers rely on this information to inform decision making, ensure the organization is publicly accountable, improve performance, and reduce costs.

This report is designed to answer the following questions:

- How effectively are existing communications tools being used?
- What role does customer service play in external communications?
- How can external communications be improved?

Scope & Methodology

This audit looks at the city's current external communications practices including: the use of logos and collateral materials, the city website, social media accounts, City7 broadcasts, and other publications at the departmental and citywide levels. The findings have been compared to stated goals outlined in the strategic plan and recommended best practices of public sector communications field. Audit methods include:

- Collecting and reviewing departmental and citywide external publications.
- Interviewing staff members tasked with developing and disseminating external communications.
- Reviewing various customer service activities across the city.
- Reviewing public sector communications best practices and strategies.

This performance audit was conducted in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards (GAGAS). Those standards require that each audit is planned and performed to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on the audit objectives. The evidence uncovered during this audit provides a reasonable basis for the findings and conclusions based on the objectives. No information was omitted from this report because it was deemed privileged or confidential.

Background

Good external communication is no longer optional extra for municipalities and other public sector organizations. It is an essential part of any successful organizational strategy and a fundamental component of how citizens and customers judge the effectiveness of service delivery. Gini Dietrich says in her book, *Spin Sucks* that “All it takes is for one person to have a bad experience doing business with you, and you’re finished – both online and off”¹. Because of that reality customer service has become an integral part of external communications and building positive public sentiment. All employees, from administrative assistants to the Public Information Officer, are valuable communications conduits for the organization.

The demand for transparency and accountability in the public sector has never been greater and an increase in consumer voice and choice means that open, honest, two-way communication is the only viable option for governments and other organizations wishing to build their reputation and strengthen relationships with their citizens.

Public sector communication should no longer be thought of and practiced as a linear activity. Communication should not start with crafting a message and end with its delivery. Effective communication is a circular process; listen, learn, let citizens know. And when that is done, do it again.

Listen, Learn, and Let Citizens Know

Public sector organizations must learn to listen and connect with their citizens and customers. What are their needs? How do they want those needs met? However, it’s not just about listening. Public sector organizations must also learn to learn from their customers, their experiences. Did we meet their needs? How could services be improved in the future to better meet those needs? Finally, public sector organizations need to share the outcomes of their learning; and show their customers how they are responding to their needs and improving service. In other words, the feedback loop must be closed. Not just to claim credit but to build trust through responsiveness. As the pressures and priorities of public sector organizations constantly shift, so too do the expectations and demands of its customers – which is why it is essential for governments and public sector organizations to continue listening, learning and letting people know what changes were made in response to feedback.

This dynamic to communications is far more effective than a linear approach because it engenders trust between an organization and its communities. When an organization evolves its responsiveness to its customers, those customers respond with increased trust in that organization. Linear communications get the objectives checked off a list but do not close the feedback loop with customers. This built trust is important because it contributes to longer-lasting credibility if maintained overtime. If credibility and trust are important to the organization, circular communications should be too. The key is to channel significant effort and resources into improving the intake of information from the public, implementing changes, and then letting citizens know that you changed.

¹ Dini Dietrich, *Spin Sucks*, Que Publishing, 2014

Communications Strategies

Important to this review are the concepts of a communications strategy and communications plans. Below is a brief discussion of the differences and how they work together to achieve the communications goals of an organization. In the simplest of terms, a communications strategy says where you want to go, whereas a communications plan says how you are going to get there. A plan concentrates on how and when - the how being message, tools, channels and timing. A strategy addresses why, what, and who in order to identify the best approach to take. Important considerations include: Why do you want to do this? What are the objectives? Who do you want to reach with this?

Why

The “why” in a communications strategy is rooted in how to define the problem. The first step should be to prepare a problem statement. This is the most important part of your strategy development; because the problem will shape everything in strategy. A key question to ask is whether this problem needs solving or is there a way to prevent it from arising in the first place? A clear understanding of the source of the problem avoids resource and time wastage. It also avoids getting distracted by measurable solutions rather than those that truly address the problem.

What

The “what” in a communications strategy concerns the achievements you hope to produce. Developing SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) objectives is helpful for creating clear and measurable goals. Checking your objectives against these criteria helps to lend focus and aid in data collect regarding the impact of the strategies undertaken.

Who

The “who” in a communications strategy should be developed from the core purpose of the organization. Think about what you do and the problems you solve. Do research into whom similar organizations are targeting. Depending on your resources this could mean anything from online analytics to focus groups to surveys. After this focus on building your audience profile – synthesize the demographic, behavioral, and medium usage information collected. This information is important for deciding how to contact them and what to say.

Communications Plan

In the end, the goals of a communications strategy are accomplished through a communications plan. The plan is about what tactics and communications channels will be used and the timing of the messages. The information in the plan should be actionable in order to compliment the strategy which contains data, research, and goals. A communications plan necessarily flows from the overarching strategy and can be implemented by any number of employees.

Findings

Summary

The city’s current external communications tactics and philosophies meet basic citizen expectations and legal requirements; but more should be done to fulfill the City Council’s goal of being a customer-

focused organization in the *Independence for All*, strategic plan. The city employs numerous channels of external communications including but not limited to: press releases, media advisories, City7, newsletters, city website, and social media accounts. These channels are used to push out favorable stories, disseminate information like road closures and construction advisories, advertise events sponsored by the city, and provide legally required public notices. All of these communications are disseminated without an overarching communications strategy that ties together information from various departments, directs it toward target audiences in the most effective manner, or reinforces stated priorities.

This longstanding lack of comprehensive communications strategy has led to a situation where departments have their logos and brands that in no way relate to the other departments or the city as a whole. This is compounded because the collateral materials put out by each department, like brochures and newsletters, all look different from one another. This proliferation of logos and designs creates confusion for citizens and detracts from the feeling that the city departments are pulling in the same direction or are even on the same page message-wise. Additionally, there is a potential safety issue associated with the multitude of official logos. Citizens are at a much higher risk of being scammed by something or someone that looks to be from the city because they could employ fake letter head or uniform patches that citizens are not familiar with.

Finally, customer service is an important part of external communications. A detailed review of the customer service function of the city revealed that while individual staff members are providing decent customer service, citizens encounter major problems navigating the organization through the website and phone systems. This leads to frustration on the part of both customers and staff. Dealing with some employee training, technological, and process issues would go a long way to improving the customer service provided by the city. In order to meet the goal of being a more customer-focused proper attention and resources will need to be applied to situation going forward.

Findings

City Lacks Overall Communications Strategies Including Public Relations

This review began with a serious look at the external communications produced, any existing communications plans that guide those communications, and other communications functions of the city. In many ways the organization succeeds in delivering on a basic and statutorily required external communications function by executing basic communications techniques. On the other hand, there are no overall strategies or plans in place that identify specific communications priorities, provide guidelines for the look and feel of brochures and newsletter, and/or identify any measurable goals and outcomes so that these tactics can be evaluated.

The most basic part of external communication is disseminating information from the city and its various departments to the public. The city strives to make that information available in a variety of ways by employing different avenues of communication. The current external communications tactics employed are basic in nature but do serve an important purpose. Currently the city is engaged in pushing out as much information as possible through print (newspapers and newsletters), television (City7 and Local

News), social media, and other avenues. The focus is often on informing the public about future events and activities, road closures and maintenance, highlighting programs, and disseminating data required by one regulatory agency or another. Over the last few years, especially with the hiring of a Public Information Officer, the city has also begun to cultivate relations with the media which helps the organization highlight more positive stories and is developing a new line of communication between the media and the city. In many ways, the city's external communications is still very reactive to news stories both good and bad. While we cannot hope to influence the way the media will portray the city, by developing a comprehensive communications strategy we can draw a more complete image of the city as an organization and as a community competing with others economically.

While the city has cultivated relations with the media and done a satisfactory job reporting to the public as required, it has not done as good a job at developing a context for our external communications. That context is created by a consistency of message, strategic delivery, and overall planning of the communications. This context is easier to achieve by putting in place a comprehensive communications strategy, something we currently do not have on an organization-wide level. Some departments or divisions, such as the Tourism Division, do have strategic communication plans that outline the target audience, measurable goals, and specify the overall design aesthetic for collateral materials.

The city's lack of strategy has led to a perceived disconnect between the amount of information the city puts out and citizen perceptions about the availability and accessibility of that information. The city and departments are blasting out information weekly if not daily but have not taken the time to first identify a target audience for their particular message, in what medium would that audience be most easily reached, or even tried to align external communications with any goals listed in the new *Independence For All* strategic plan. A comprehensive communications strategy encompassing the entire organization is a necessary step toward ensuring we are communicating effectively and efficiently.

Another integral part of external communication is public relations, which is probably one of the most important challenges facing Independence. The field of public relations encompasses all of the various communications strategies discussed above with a comprehensive view of building and maintaining a positive public image, fostering citizen engagement, and increasing public support for the organization or a specific topic. According to University of Massachusetts Boston Professor Aroon Manoharan, there are three underlying reasons for external communications in the public world (democratic, pragmatic, and political)². This is a good lens through which to evaluate the city's current public relations tactics.

The democratic reasons for external communications include media relations, public reporting, and responsiveness to the public as taxpayers, customers, and citizens. As mentioned before, the city is doing a satisfactory job of meeting the basic public expectation and statutory requirements related to communicating with the public. However, steps could be taken to develop additional plans and evaluations to improve the overall democratic aim of public sector public relations.

According to Manoharan, the next goal or reason for public sector public relations is for the pragmatic purpose of program implementation. Citizens must be aware of information about city processes and

² E-Government and Websites: A Public Solutions Handbook, M. E. Sharpe, 2014

programs in order to use them. Because of this, the city must provide basic, straightforward, and accurate information that increases the likelihood that citizens will utilize the programs and services available. A basic example of this type of public relations is being responsive to the public as customers, marketing to raise awareness or increase the utilization of services, and public education campaigns in order to gain voluntary compliance with rules and ordinances. This review showed that the organization understands these aspects of external communications well and has focused some major attention on issues like this. For example, a review of the publication *CityScene* showed that on average one article per month deals with services being provided or other educational purposes. However, it is also clear that more could be done to integrate public communications and deliberation into the planning of new initiatives.

Manoharan's final reason for public sector public relations is for political purposes. He characterizes this as the goal to increase public support for the institution and thus increase its political power. To Manoharan, the more the city as an organization gains support from citizens, it necessarily gains political clout in the eyes of the public as promises are met, expectations kept and trust is built. In this example we can put aside the idea of political power and focus on the idea of garnering public support for the institution or particular program as the end goal. This gets right to the heart of public relations, in that it builds and maintains a positive view of the city as an organization and a community. The city benefits by capitalizing on these feelings of good will toward the city as an organization and transfers that to the community as a whole. This is where the current lack of strategy really catches up with us. If, as an organization, we can build support for the city generally this should have a positive impact on public's perception. While there may be wins here and there we can point to, it is far more likely that a well-planned public relations strategy will have the desired positive impact on the perception of our city and community.

Proliferation of Different Logos & Collateral Designs Lead to Confusion

A visual audit of the city's external publications, websites, social media accounts, and other visual identifiers made it is clear that a lack of rules guiding the use of city logos and collateral design has led to a proliferation of discordant logos and an inconsistent branding message across the board. To date, there has been no guiding principle, philosophy, or document to answer any of these questions. Over the years, a lack of such oversight and direction from the City Manager's office has led the departments to exercise their own authority when producing publications and collateral materials. Departments did not do this out of spite but simply to meet their needs. Today almost none of the city's various external communications tactics contribute to the city's overall branding or messaging.

This problem is not just found at the departmental-level, as the city itself currently uses no fewer than four "official" city logos. There are so many different logos and collateral designs among department and divisions that there is nothing to visually tie something from the Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Department with the *CityScene* newsletter, for example. Additionally, none of these communication tactics comports with the stated goals of the City Council of projecting an image of a clean, safe, and economically vibrant city.

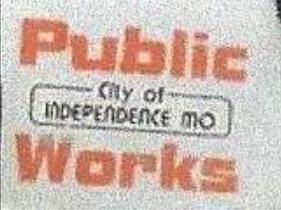
The proliferation of many logos and inconsistent collateral material design begins at the top. There are no fewer than four different logos or variations currently in use as citywide identifiers. Table 1 shows the most frequently used city logo or brands. Beside the original city seal (logo B), each was created for a specific purpose but there have been no rules about their use. Because of the wide use of these four logos, citizens and customers are left with a muddled and confused image of the City of Independence. By way of example, logo D was created for use on the website while logo C, has been used in association with video content available through the website. Both are modified versions of previous logos however, there are no similar design aesthetics tying the two together. Logo A appears regularly on the CityScene and other publication from the City Manager’s Office. The official city seal (logo B) will continue to be used in some form, going forward, simply because of its official status but how many other logos will continue to be used regularly? At a minimum there should be rules governing the use of these logos, as well as, when and where they are appropriate. Ideally, the city should identify one logo for the city and implement its use across the organization.

Table 1. Current City Logos in Use			
 A	 B	 C	 D

At the departmental level a similar problem exists. Each department has their own logo dating to when they were created and/or when changes were made to scope or function of that department. There is no consistency of look and feel among them and nothing much tying them to the city other than the words City of Independence. Table 2, shows several examples of departmental and division logos to illustrate the various design motifs. These different logos compound the problem because they are often used on the side of city vehicles and equipment. Those logos, on the side of vehicles, are some of the most visible signage representing the city around town.

Another important area of concern about these logos is that they could cause a public safety threat. An unsavory person or group can, in theory, more easily impersonate a representative of the city in order to steal personal information or gain access to private property. With a more standardized brand the city could engage in a community awareness campaign to ensure more people are aware of the official identifiers of the City of Independence.

Table 2. Current Departmental and Sub-Departmental Logos

Similar concerns arise as they relate to the city’s website and social media accounts. The look of the city’s main website was updated several years ago. This update went a long way to refresh some of the imagery and branding associated with the organization. Each department has their own page and those that have a logo appear on their page. However, this was not done with the intent of carrying those design cues throughout other documents or social media accounts. In today’s media environment our websites and social media accounts need to be a reflection of the brand seen in other media. Over the years, the city’s websites and social media accounts have become the more important and highly visible communications stream for our public.

The final piece to this puzzle is the collateral materials such as brochures, city and departmental newsletters, and other smaller aspects of communications like e-mail signatures. Again lack of consistency mean that a lot of confusion for the average citizen or customer. The lack of centralized design personnel and/or design guidelines leaves individuals and departments with nowhere to turn but to do it themselves. While collateral materials within departments are mostly similar, there are situations where staff is using an old template just because it was easier to use then creating a new document in line with more current design schemes. Appendix A shows some examples of collateral materials to illustrate the inconsistent nature of the design.

Customer Service Technology Lead to Frustrated Customers

The final piece of external communication that needs some investigation is the customer service function of the city. While there are a lot of departments and individuals involved in all aspects of customer service, the key component relevant to this discussion is the inbound call management, monitoring, and complaint tracking function. Many departments are currently involved in regular interactions with the public. These interactions fall into roughly three categories or types of interactions. The first type is citizen/customer questions and information requests; the second type is business transactions (including licensing, permitting, cashiering, utility customer service, and most other person-to-person interactions). The last type of interactions with customers is dealing with citizen requests and complaints. Each of these types of interactions comes with a different set of customer expectations about how they should be handled. The city's current customer service functions are ill equipped to deal with changing customer expectations in the age of smartphones, computer voice assistants, and ever shortening attention spans.

Today, customer questions and information requests are handled by almost all departments when called directly by the customer. Offices like the Clerk's Office, City Council Office, and City Manager's regularly receive calls that need to be directed to another department or from citizens who believe those departments to be the first resort for requests and complaints. Citizens who call those offices find staff that have a great deal of experience with the city and have a more global view of the organization. Calls to other departments are addressed in an efficient manner when they are directed to the right place because employees are peer-trained in that subject matter. However, regular breakdowns occur when staff members receive calls not related to their department all together. In most cases this is caused by lack of training and/or a narrow scope of knowledge about the role of different departments and organizations. These facts indicate a strong need for additional training of staff on basics of the organization; like the role and responsibility of the departments and the processes for reporting citizen questions to appropriate staff.

The ongoing business transaction functions of the city include licensing, permitting, cashiering, and utility customer services, among others, and each are handled at the departmental level. Staff members in these roles are hired and trained by division managers or department directors and become experts in their fields over time. Because each position and function needs something slightly different in a permit tech, cashier, or attendant specialty skills develop. Based on this review, this part of the customer service function seems to be working reasonably well. Staff reported the need to some standardized customer service training offered to customer service personnel throughout the city. This would help create a more coherent citywide customer service approach that would set expectations and hold employees accountable to those expectations. Improved customer service training would benefit the citizen or customer, obviously, but would also benefit the organization by increasing the public perception of the city and improving public relations.

The final type of customer service interaction the city engages in is collecting and managing citizen complaints/requests. Currently, citizens have three options to issue a complaint to the city. They would use the online Action Center through the website, call the department responsible for their issue (if they know the proper department), or try their luck with the city's automated phone directory (325-7000).

Reports indicate that the automated phone system sometimes leads to frustration on the part of the public because it either misinterprets what they say or the person who they are eventually connected to doesn't actually deal with those requests. If the employee they are directed to doesn't answer, customers sometimes do not receive calls back when they have left a voicemail. Finally, customers report that some calls to general phone numbers ring unanswered when no one is available. All of this leads to poor feedback on these issues.

Currently, the best course of action is for a customer to use the online Action Center because complaints are automatically directed to the correct department. Tracking of complaints and a mechanism for the city to follow up with customers is built in. Citizens can choose to report a complaint anonymously or include their contact information so they can check the status of the request. The Action Center is a really great tool for the organization and the customer but is not as widely used as it should. Additionally, the Action Center does not meet the needs of every citizen, leaving those who do not feel comfortable with or who do not have access to the internet without the option.

Independence for All, the city's recently adopted strategic plan, identifies several main goals for the next five years, including becoming a more customer focused organization. The objectives outlined to achieve that goal are to improve customer service and to communicate more effectively both internally and externally. The city should be offering the best customer service possible to their customers and citizens. Customer service includes how city employees represent the city, their department, and themselves. But it also includes the means by which the city interacts with their public through more traditional means (newspaper and television) and newer ones like social media and the technology used to manage the interactions. For that reason the city must look at customer service in a comprehensive way that includes the technology used.

Good customer service skills can be taught but it takes more effort and consistency to deliver excellent customer service as a hallmark of an organization. It begins at the top with a vision for how to achieve that goal and then consistent training and reinforcement to build those skills. After those skills are built, they are more easily incorporated into the culture of the organization by giving it the proper focus, employing the right types of individuals, who enjoy and thrive on interactions with the public. Finally, the means by which our citizens interact with us need to contribute to the customer service experience and not detract from it. These avenues of communication should be user-friendly, easy to navigate, and meet our customers where they are (smartphone apps, telephone lines, and online).

Consolidated Customer Service (311 Call Center)

One possible solution to these customer service issues could be to implement a consolidated customer service call center, sometimes called a 311 Call Center after the popular three digit number implemented in other cities. Several communities the size of Independence and larger have implemented systems including Kansas City, MO; the Unified Government of Kansas City, KS and Wyandotte County; and Columbia, MO. Both Kansas Cities have implemented a 311 system where citizens can actually call 311 within the boundaries of their respective cities to report an issue or make a

request. In Columbia they called their system a “Contact Center” and use a seven digit number for people to call.

The benefits of such a consolidation would include a more comprehensive, thorough, and customer friendly way of handling requests. Additionally, it could provide better data regarding service requests and complaints by making sure all requests are handled in a similar manner. In municipalities that have implemented such systems, citizen satisfaction on service quality increased on average 20%.

Consolidation would make training and management of customer service staff easier because 1) they will be in the same physical space, 2) managed by the same person, 3) staff’s focus will be exclusively on handling calls from customers, allowing them to become experts in short order. Additionally, implementing a consolidated customer service center utilizing a state-of-the-art Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system would provide staff with the tools needed to answer almost any question as they arise. A CRM system hooked into the online Action Center would also provide management with better more complete data pertaining to the types and volume of service requests received. That data can then be used when making future budgetary decisions.

Implementing a new 311-style system is anywhere from an 18 month to 24 month process that could include engaging the services of a consultant. The consultant would play a major role in helping to define what the city’s requirements for a CRM system and then selecting and implementing the chosen system. Other communities have phased in the departmental phone numbers that feed the system to work out any kinks in the system. Over a period of time, all calls will be directed to one number and handled by the call center.

If we were to model ourselves on systems already in place, in peer communities, we would expect to need approximately 7 customer service reps and 1-2 higher level managers. Based on salary averages from across those same communities, a 311-style system is estimated to cost between 1-2 million dollars per year plus initial capital outlay for the CRM software and physical buildout.

Recommendations

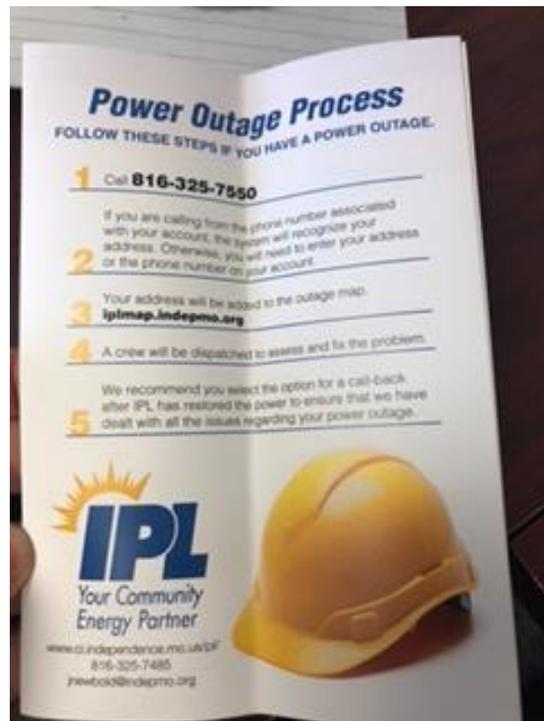
Based on the findings of this report and an understanding of the city’s current priorities, as outlined in the strategic plan, the following recommendations are respectfully submitted. It is the Management Analyst’s intent that these recommendations provide a framework to address the specific deficiencies identified in the city’s current external communications.

1. The city should undertake an organization-wide rebranding process. The final outcome should deliver ONE new or reworked logo/brand for the entire city as well as templates for collateral design and guidelines for their use by all departments. The final brand should be consistent with the vision laid out in the *Independence for All*, strategic plan.
2. The City Manager’s Office, through the Public Information Officer, should develop a citywide communications strategy that reflects the organization’s values and goals as outlined in the

strategic plan. To achieve that goal the strategy should incorporate best practices in public sector communications, public relations, and new branding.

- The communications strategy should (at a minimum):
 - Outline specific strategies or plans for each department or subject area
 - As new programs or issues come forward, develops specific communications plans that:
 - Put those issues front of the public earlier and solicit public feedback
 - Educate and inform key stakeholders to assist in the communication
 - Establish criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the strategy
3. In order to execute the new communications strategy and achieve message consistency, external communications should be funneled through the Public Information Officer. The final scope of the oversight provided should to be determined by the City Manager.
 4. The city should implement a comprehensive customer service training program that includes ALL employees. The program could be structured something like the following:
 - Basic customer service training for all employees
 - Specialized training on managing effective customer service teams for certain managers
 - In-depth customer service training for customer service staff tailored specifically for the City of Independence, by including training on the role of city departments and processes
 5. The city should evaluate the technology (automated phone directory, call queuing, website, and voicemail) that customers interact with on a daily basis to ensure:
 - Queuing/call waiting systems are in place.
 - Voicemails are in place and checked on all general phone lines. (alternatively remove the numbers if they are routinely unmanned)
 - Website is user friendly and information is provided in plain language citizens will understand.
 6. The city should consider developing a smartphone application for the online Action Center that would allow citizens to enter requests or complaints via their phone.
 7. The city should further explore the feasibility of implementing a 311 call center or similar “one-stop-shop” for customer calls. The goal should be to consolidate the service request functions with the complaint function to better serve Independence Residents. The acquisition and maintenance costs of a Customer Relationship Management (CRN) software system and the staffing needs of the center are the two key points for the decision.

Appendix A: Examples of Collateral Materials



Informing Citizens

CityScene

May 2017
Volume 24 Number 5
www.independencemo.org
City of Independence, MO

EcoFest Returns To Waterfall Park

Want a fun way to teach the kids about protecting the environment? The 10th Annual Independence EcoFest – "It's All About Water" – will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 3 at Waterfall Park, 4501 S. Bass Pro Drive.

EcoFest is an interactive environmental education festival aimed at teaching children and families the importance of preserving and protecting our natural resources.

Visitors collect stickers for their Eco-Passports by answering quiz questions as they visit various exhibit booths throughout the park. Each exhibitor will have a question associated with their booth's theme. Completed Eco-Fest Passports earn a free t-shirt, and there will be lots of giveaways throughout the festival.

There's a lot of eco-friendly fun to be had at the 10th Annual EcoFest! For more information, visit the City's websites at www.independencemo.org/WPC or www.independencemo.org/ecofest, or call Water Pollution Control at (816) 325-7711.

See you at Waterfall Park on June 1!

Drinking Water Week May 7-13

Each May, the City of Independence Water Department, the American Water Works Association and water professionals across North America celebrate Drinking Water Week. This year the chosen theme is "Your Water – To Know It Is To Love It."

Independence tap water has repeatedly been named one of the best-tasting municipal waters in the nation, and Drinking Water Week provides a time to celebrate the importance of safe, reliable tap water.

The American Water Works Association encourages all water consumers to be aware of how they use water. Everyone should know how to locate and fix a leak, how to care for the pipes inside the home and how to shut the water supply off in case of emergency, such as a broken faucet.

The City of Independence Water Department was established in 1883. It supplies water to about 250,000 people, including residents and businesses located in Independence. In addition, it has 12 wholesale customers, including Blue Springs, Grain Valley and Lee's Summit.

Water is supplied from 42 wells located at the Courtney Bend Water Treatment Plant. The well water is softened and disinfected at the treatment plant, and meets or exceeds all federal, and state quality regulations.

For more information about your water quality, contact the Independence Water Department at (816) 325-7698.

Join The Clean Up!

The Independence Chamber of Commerce is planning a litter pickup day on Saturday, June 3. Volunteer groups will be picking up trash and litter along U.S. Hwy. 24 and U.S. Hwy. 40, beginning at the western city limits.

This project is part of an overall campaign to show pride in the community by making it more attractive for its residents, businesses and private investors.

Civic leaders are working with the Chamber, elected officials and City staff to explore ideas and identify ways to improve Independence.

To volunteer or learn more about the litter pickup project, call the Chamber of Commerce at (816) 252-4745.

May 2017 CityScene CityScene CityScene CityScene CityScene CityScene Page 4

Directory

CityScene is published monthly by the City Manager's Office, 111 East Maple Street, Independence, Missouri 64502. For information call 325-7170. Website address is www.independencemo.org. Follow us at [Twitter.com/CityofIndepMO](https://twitter.com/CityofIndepMO).

Where To Call

The City of Independence has an automated voice-response telephone system. Call (816) 325-7000 and say the name of the person or the department you wish to contact.

Adopt-A-Street	325-7602
Barking Dogs	325-7213
Building Permits	325-7401
Business Licenses	325-7079
Crime Stoppers Tips	474-8477
Drop-Off Trash	325-7623
Drugs	325-6272
Graffiti	257-7824
Municipal Court	325-7230
Neighborhood Watch	325-7643
Park Vandalism	325-7206
Police Non-Emergency	936-3600
Fire Non-Emergency	325-7123
Potholes	325-7624
Report Power Outage	325-7550
Street Lights	325-7835
Storm Water Pollution	325-7727
Utilities	
Customer Service	325-7930
Pay by Phone	325-SERV
Payment Assistance	254-4100
Weeds, Trash	325-7193

Recycling Information

The two City recycling centers were permanently closed on March 31, 2017. Most trash companies now offer curbside pickup for recyclables; check with your service provider.

Your one-stop spot for recycling information in the Greater Kansas City area is www.recyclespot.org or call (816) 474-8325.

Pink Hill Park Recycling Center
2725 NW Park Road, Blue Springs
Open Weds., Sat., Sun. 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Todd's Trash Recycling
10800 E. Truman Road, Independence
Drop off recyclables 24 hrs/7 days a week

Surplus Exchange
519 Santa Fe St., KCMO (816) 472-0444
Computers, monitors, printers, TVs, etc.

City Drop-Off Depot

8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
Saturday, May 13
875 Vista Avenue
From Midway to Truman Road east approximately one mile, then north on Vista Avenue.

Trash: Cars, \$11; Trucks, Vans, SUVs, or Trailers 8' or under - \$16; Trailers Longer than 8' - \$28
Brush: Limbs, Firewood, Bushes, Stumps, No Leaves or Grass:
All vehicles and trailers, \$11/load
Major Appliances: \$15 Each
Batteries/Lawnmowers: Free
Tires: Car, \$2; Mounted Car, \$4; Truck, \$5; Mounted Truck, \$11;
Farm/Tractor, \$16

Next Drop-Off
Saturday, June 10
Residential vehicles only, no commercial. No vehicles larger than a pick-up truck. Proof of residency required.

Watch City Meetings On Streaming Video

City Council meetings and study sessions are available as live and archived streaming video on the City's website, www.independencemo.org.

Each live City 7 TV broadcast is available online during the 8 p.m. Monday City Council meetings. An archive of the program is available on the site the next morning for viewing 24 hours a day. Archived videos are available for a few months following their posting. If you would like to purchase a copy of a Council meeting call (816) 325-7722.

CITY COUNCIL

Mayor	Elleen Weir	(816) 325-7027
City Council Office	(816) 325-7022	www.independencemo.org/citycouncil
Councilmembers		
John Perkins	District 1	
Carl Daugherty	District 2	
Scott Robertson	District 3	
Tom Van Camp	District 4	
Karen DeLuca	At-Large	
Chris Whiting	At-Large	
City Manager	Zachary Walker	(816) 325-7170

printed on recycled paper

Regional Animal Shelter

21001 E. Hwy. 78, Independence
Help them find a forever home. Adopt a homeless pet.
Noon - 7 p.m. Tuesday-Friday
11 a.m. - 6 p.m. Saturday-Sunday
Call (816) 621-7722

Always Spay or Neuter!

City of Independence

Government Access Television
CITY COUNCIL
8 p.m. Mondays
10 a.m. Tuesdays
7 p.m. Wednesdays
2 p.m. Sundays

PLANNING COMMISSION
6 p.m. 2nd & 4th Tuesdays
10 a.m. Wednesdays
7 p.m. Thursdays
For more information:
www.citytv.org
*Denotes live meeting, all others are rebroadcasts.

Cleaning & Sanitizing

- Manual Dishwashing – Scrape, wash, rinse, sanitize, and air dry.
- Wiping cloths should be stored in sanitizing solution.
- Chemical Sanitizers:
 - Measure for proper concentration
 - Use test papers
 - Use proper water temperature
- Cleaning with soap and sanitizer are two different processes.
- Store chemicals and cleaners away from food or food contact surfaces.

Thawing Potentially Hazardous Foods

- In refrigerated units at a temperature not to exceed 41° F.
- Under potable running water of a temperature of 70° F.
- In a microwave oven only when the food will be immediately transferred to conventional cooking facilities.
- As a part of the conventional cooking process.

City of Independence Health Department
515 S Liberty Street
Independence, MO 64050
(816) 325-7803

06-3-049 (Rev. 7/08)

The Safe Food Handler



Components of Good Personal Hygiene

- ◆ Hygienic hand practices
- ◆ Maintaining personal cleanliness
- ◆ Wearing clean and appropriate uniforms
- ◆ Avoiding unsanitary habits and actions
- ◆ Maintaining good health
- ◆ Reporting illnesses

Knowing How & When to Wash your Hands

1. Wet your hands with warm running water.
2. Apply soap.
3. Rub hands together for at least 10-15 seconds.
4. Clean under fingernails and between fingers.
5. Dry hands with single use paper towels.



When

- After using the restroom.
- Before and after handling raw foods.
- After touching the hair, face or body.
- After sneezing, coughing or using a tissue.
- After smoking, eating or drinking.
- After using any cleaning or sanitizing chemical.
- After taking out garbage or trash.
- After clearing tables or busing dirty dishes.
- After touching clothing or aprons.
- After touching anything that may contaminate hands, such as sanitizing equipment, work surfaces or wash clothes.

Use of Gloves



- Food handlers must keep fingernails short and clean and should not wear nail polish.
- Hand cuts or sores should be covered with a clean bandage and gloves.
- Food handlers must not work with or around food if they have symptoms which include fever, diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat or jaundice.
- Vaccination and effective hand washing can help prevent an outbreak of Hepatitis A.
- Food handlers are not allowed to wear facial jewelry.

- Gloves must never be used in place of hand washing.
- Food handlers must wash their hands before putting on gloves and when changing to a fresh pair.
- Gloves used to handle food are for single use and should never be washed and reused.
- Food handlers should change their gloves when necessary.

Ensuring Food Safety

- **Receiving:** Receive and store food quickly.
- **Storage:** Store foods at their recommended temperatures and never directly on the floor.
- **Preparation:** Minimize time spent in the temperature danger zone of 41° F – 140° F.
- **Cooking:** Cook food to its minimum safe internal temperature for the appropriate amount of time.
- **Holding:** Hold hot foods at 140° F or higher and cold foods at 41° F or lower.
- **Cooling:** Cool cooked food to 70° F within 2 hours and from 70° F to 41° F or below in an additional 4 hours.
- **Reheating:** Reheat foods to an internal temperature of 165° F for 15 seconds within 2 hours.



For more information about the rental ready program contact:

Community Development Department
Perry Hill
816-325-7405



www.indep.us/rentalready



City of Independence
Community Development Department
111 East Maple
Independence, MO 64050
(816) 325-7405
www.independencemo.org



Rental Ready Program



Community Development Department
Current Planning Division
111 East Maple
Independence, MO 64050

May 2017

Rental Ready Program

What is the rental ready program?

Rental ready is a rental inspection program that requires residential rental units to pass a basic health and safety inspection every two (2) years.

Who performs the inspections?

The landlord will be required to hire a qualified housing inspector from the City's approved list. The qualified housing inspector will inspect each unit for the five (5) basic health and safety items



What are the inspection items?

The rental unit inspection include:

- No exposed electrical wire.
- All smoke detectors are in proper working order.
- All handrails are secure and functional.
- Property address street number shall be visible.
- All units shall have a working sanitary sewer system.



How do I contact a qualified housing inspector?

The City has six (6) qualified rental housing inspectors. A list of those six companies, with contact information, can be found by visiting the Rental Ready website at www.indep.us/rentalready.

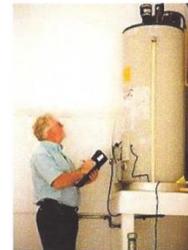
What is the purpose of the program?

The goals of the program are to protect the health, safety and welfare of the residents, maintain attractive and desirable neighborhoods, and ensure minimum standards for the interior of residential buildings.

What happens if a unit fails an inspection?

If a unit fails an inspection, the landlord will be required to resolve any deficiencies and have the unit reinspected. No unit can be rented without an approved inspection form.

For more information about the rental ready program, see the City of Independence website at www.indep.us/rentalready.



May 2017

Appendix B: City Counselor's Response

City of Independence

MEMORANDUM

Law Department

DATE: June 14, 2017

TO: Jordan Ellena, Management Analyst

FROM: Dayla Bishop Schwartz, City Counselor *DBS*

SUBJECT: Report No. 16-03
Review of External Communications



I have reviewed the draft report for Report No. 16-03, Review of External Communications. I am of the opinion that there is nothing contained within the draft report that would expose the City to a lawsuit. Furthermore, it is my opinion that the draft report would not qualify for an executive session discussion before either the Council Audit and Finance Committee or the City Council.

1

CONFIDENTIAL AND PRIVILEGED

THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS COMMUNICATION IS ATTORNEY PRIVILEGED AND CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION INTENDED ONLY FOR THE USE OF THE INDIVIDUAL NAMED ABOVE. THE INFORMATION IS AN ATTORNEY WORK PRODUCT PREPARED IN ANTICIPATION OF POTENTIAL LITIGATION. IF THE READER OF THIS MESSAGE IS NOT THE INTENDED RECIPIENT, YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED THAT ANY DISSEMINATION, DISTRIBUTION OR COPYING OF THIS COMMUNICATION IN RELIANCE ON SUCH INFORMATION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

Appendix C: City Manager's Response

City of Independence

MEMORANDUM

City Manager's Office

DATE: June 19, 2017
TO: Jordan Elena, Management Analyst
FROM: Zachary Walker, City Manager *Zachary Walker*
SUBJECT: Audit Review – City Communications



Thank you for the opportunity to review the above report and to provide feedback. The report provided valuable detail and insight into a topic of utmost importance to myself and City employees. There is always room for improvement when it comes to external communication. In accordance with the new Strategic Plan I have directed staff to begin looking into a branding review of all City department logos, and we are currently working to begin a comprehensive communication plan.

One key area focused on in this report is customer service. I strongly agree that customer service and external communications are inseparable. I will work with department directors to identify opportunities to cross train members of our staff, as well as steps we can take to streamline the phone and web interactions with citizens. We are working to utilize social media as an opportunity to not only communicate with the public, but also respond to constituent concerns.

Finally, as outlined in the Strategic Plan, I support the recommendation to evaluate potential 3-1-1 programs here in the City of Independence, but must caution that this is a long term goal requiring greater research to better understand the costs and staff needs associated with such a program.

Overall, I see this report as a reminder of our continued opportunity to learn, engage and educate our staff and the citizens we serve.

HC