

The Administrator

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Summer Seminar returns to Sea Trail

June 6 is the deadline to register for the 2011 N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA)'s 2011 Summer Seminar, which will once again be held at the Sea Trail Golf Resort & Convention Center in Sunset Beach/Brunswick County. This year's seminar will be held June 23-25.

As usual, the summer seminar schedule is packed with educational and networking opportunities. (See the agenda, beginning on page 4.) There will be a pre-conference golf outing on Thursday, June 23 at Sandpiper Bay, followed by a reception that evening.

Friday's festivities kick off with ICMA Credentialing (see below), as well as sessions on wellness, personal development, communications, asset management, a legislative update from the National League of Cities and more.

Saturday's events will feature the annual

NCCCMA business meeting as well as legislative updates from the leadership of the N.C. League of Municipalities and the N.C. Association of County Commissioners.

As a part of the regular seminar agenda, the planning committee has included two ICMA Credentialing workshops:

Applying Innovations in Technology to Improve Local Government: Performance Management and Social Network Analysis: Representatives from SAS Institute will discuss how innovations and social network analysis can help local governments improve performance, management decisions, transparency and understanding their community.

How Managers Relate in a Political World: This workshop focuses on the changing internal and external roles of city and county managers, the value propositions that underlie



decisions made by professionals and elected officials, and the competencies necessary for managers to be successful in the world of local politics. Veteran managers will offer promising practices from their experiences, and presenters will offer practical tips and strategies for promoting more effective and diverse communication styles to survive in an increasingly charged political environment.

Innovation edge: Use of the latest technology webinar reflection

The local government landscape is changing seemingly daily in this age of budget shortfalls, citizen discontent and a wariness of public spending. There has been a marked increase in the organizational, cultural and financial value technology provides, especially for those of us in the public sector. As budgets and staffs are reduced, we must discover new ways to provide the same level of services our constituents are accustomed to, while simultaneously finding new and innovative ways to produce these services. This includes local governments finding new methods of reducing its overhead



by using utilizing technology to improve its internal operations. After all, we can only be as efficient providing our services as we are efficient in developing and implementing them from inside our organizations.

During the Alliance's February 23rd, 2011 Local Government Use of the Latest Technology Webinar, our panel of experts broached the topic of how local governments

can more effectively use technology within their organizations to improve internal infrastructure, communication process, employee training, collaboration, service delivery and more. Mainly focusing on cost reduction, portability/mobility, and ease of use, the following article highlights the use Wikis and Google Apps and how they are helping transform the day to day operations of local governments.

At the opening of the February 23rd webinar,

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You're naked, and who is going to tell you?

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Your personal board of directors will

Chief executive officers (CEOs) of private and public organizations share a common and difficult leadership challenge: it's lonely at the top. There is only one "big cheese" with the leader's title and role of running the organization.

No equals with whom to share the responsibility. No freedom to test ideas or express concerns unguardedly with a peer. Effective leaders build teams of talented individuals to assist in the effort, but those team members are not and will never function as peers.

Leaders are isolated from the rest of the organization and usually don't get the direct, unvarnished truth they need. Why? Although effective leaders encourage honest and open dialogue and dissent, even the most talented and seasoned person finds it a hugely difficult task to challenge the CEO.

Think about the last time that a staff member had the courage to walk into your office, tell you that you were wrong, and, after the ensuing debate, stand firm. It's just not the norm in organizations. Bosses and team leaders want to be loved, and that leads to a tendency to surround themselves with supporters—the quintessential yes-men. Witnessing that pattern, what staff member would choose to be the no-man on the team?

All Alone

Local government managers face the added challenge of managing the organization in the open forum. No trade secrets to conceal that would allow difficult management issues to be debated and decided in the CEO's office.

Transparency is good but, for leaders trying to reach the right outcome, messy. And there is always the reality that the elected governing body—the local government's board of directors and the manager's boss—is not always in agreement about the way forward.

Managers in small localities have an added disadvantage. Because they have such limited staff resources, the CEO plays the dual roles of leader and subject matter expert. At least that arrangement makes for shorter staff debates!

This environment is rich in opportunities for



managers to make uninformed, unwise, and even unethical decisions. As author and philanthropist Warren Buffett so sagely notes, "Of one thing be certain: if a CEO is enthused about a particularly foolish idea, both his internal and outside advisors will come up with whatever projections are needed to justify his stance. Only in fairy tales are emperors told that they are naked."

Two Examples

You can certainly craft any number of scenarios that would happen in this environment. Here are two real-world situations that come to mind.

Scenario 1: A month into his new position, the city manager was stunned to discover that the city, considered by most to be on sound financial ground, had a huge unfunded liability in the city pension plan. The issue never surfaced in discussions the new manager had, when still a candidate, with the retiring manager or city council. No inkling of a problem surfaced

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Calendar of Events

NCCCMA Summer Seminar

June 23-25, 2011
Sea Trail
Brunswick County

NACo Annual Conference

July 15-19, 2011
Oregon Convention Center
Multnomah County, Ore.

NCACC Annual Conference

August 18-21, 2011
Embassy Suites Hotel &
Concord Convention Center
Cabarrus County

NCLM Annual Conference

October 23-25, 2011
Raleigh Convention Center

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we posed two questions asking the audience to identify both their IT departments and overall organizations likely willingness, ability and desire to use new technologies. Our survey results indicated that approximately 80% of participant IT departments and entire organizations would be amenable to the possibility of using new technologies. While an enthusiasm gap existed (50% of respondents indicated they would be willing to test the waters slowly, whereas 30% of the respondents indicated a desire to jump right in), it is clear that local governments are anxious to find new ways to

reduce costs and maintain or increase productivity through the use of technology.

Through case study examples, it is clear that technologies provide us a new window through which to collaborate & communicate. More than changing how we work, the advances in technology allow local governments the opportunity to find new cost savings and reallocate staff time previously spent working with older technologies. Read specific case study examples by clicking here.

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About the Alliance for Innovation

The Alliance is a network of local governments driving innovation throughout their organizations. You can learn more about the Alliance for Innovation and or the new joint Alliance and ICMA Knowledge Network at www.transformgov.org or contact our Regional Director, Toni Shope at tshope@transformgov.org.

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in budget reports or old media coverage when the new manager was vetting the organization.

After further review, the new manager could find no evidence that the former manager, who led the negotiations with the unions whose members benefited from some of the plan enhancements, ever raised a red flag with council or put into place a credible funding scheme. Following extensive press coverage of the issue, the former manager accepted responsibility for not informing the city council.

Now the organization is tasked with finding a way to pay the debt in a sustainable manner and deal with the impact of doing so.

Scenario 2: In another city, the recession was stressing local employers and city staff. For a small city with just a few sources of jobs, the loss of even one employer can be devastating. The city manager, fearing that a relatively new addition to the employment base would leave, would not enforce the provisions of the loan agreement that enticed the company to

move to the city.

As the recession grew worse, the company fell further into arrears on the loan repayment. First individually and then together, the city's finance director and assistant manager raised the issue privately with the city manager. They tried to point out what seemed to be a critical flaw with the manager's approach: enforcing the loan terms could force the company to relocate, but the company could do that even in the absence of any enforcement action, and if that happened the city would be left high and dry.

The manager was not persuaded and took no action. Motivated by her fiduciary responsibility to the city, the finance director finally reported the matter directly to the city council.

A sense of empathy for a colleague who is embarrassed or fired over what appears to be a management mistake or error in judgment is natural. After all, we are all vulnerable to the isolation and rationalization that can lead to bad decisions. The cure might just rest in what Bill George, author of the book *True North*, calls a

personal board of directors. It's the support team of individuals outside your organization with whom you will be totally candid and who will challenge your assumptions, point out when you stray from your values, and support you in your professional wins and losses.

Friends and spouses, who are invaluable in providing personal support, are candidates for the board only if they have the insight to be helpful and the courage to tell you when you are wrong. It's best to recruit from your peers. And for those of you ascending to the leadership role, build your personal board of directors now and take them on the journey.

—Martha Perego
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**Know someone who would like to be a sponsor at the
2011 NCCMA Summer Seminar?**

Then tell them to go to www.ncmanagers.org to find out how they can support this association.

2011 NCCCMA Summer Seminar

June 23-25, 2011

Sea Trail Golf Resort & Convention Center

Thursday, June 23

9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Executive Committee Meeting

11 a.m. – 3 p.m. Registration and Sponsor Move In

12:30 p.m. Pre Conference Golf Outing - Shot Gun Start, Sandpiper Bay

6:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Welcoming Reception, Sea Trail Golf Resort and Convention Center

Noon – 1:30 p.m. Lunch and Federal Legislative Updates on Legislative Issues Affecting Local Governments with Carolyn Coleman, Director of Federal Relations, NLC

1:30 – 3:00 p.m. How Managers Relate in a Political World – ICMA Credentialed Workshop

1:45 – 3:00 p.m. ‘Municipal Safety is to Good Government’ as ‘Asset Management is to Financial Security’

3:00 – 3:30 p.m. Networking Break

3:30 – 4:45 p.m. Improving Communication with Staff and Board Attorney

3:30 – 5:00 p.m. How Managers Relate in a Political World – ICMA Credentialed Workshop

5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Reception and Dinner

Friday, June 24

8:00 a.m. Registration Opens and Full Buffet Breakfast

8:30 – 10:00 a.m. Applying Innovations In Technology to Improve Local Government: Performance Management and Social Network Analysis - ICMA Credentialed Workshop

8:45 – 10:00 a.m. Wellness Session on trends, best practices, wellness assessments

10:00 – 10:30 a.m. Networking Break

10:30 – 11:45 a.m. Personal Development for Professional Growth

10:30 – noon Applying Innovations In Technology to Improve Local Government: Performance Management and Social Network Analysis - ICMA Credentialed Workshop

Saturday, June 25

8:00 a.m. Registration and Full Buffet Breakfast

9:00 – 10:15 a.m. Business Meeting

10:15 – 10:45 a.m. Networking Break

10:45 – noon NCLM and NCACC Legislative Updates

