The 5 Pillars of Municipal Performance and Accountability

For any leader in municipal government, be it a Mayor, Town Manager, Business Administrator, Council President or Council Person, there is the sincere desire to have in place systems that ensure efficiency. Despite popular refrain to the contrary, we have found municipal officials and leaders to be truly altruistic and desirous of providing citizens with a level of government that is responsive and efficient.

The quagmire becomes one of how to accomplish this? Often time’s, managers and administrators are so inundated in the day to day operations, that the ability to take a step back and view the long term vision is put off for days, weeks, months and even years. For the vast majority of mayors and council, it is now become rare to have a municipality that possesses the long term leader in an elected position. For those very reasons, many elected officials have truly positive desires and intentions but do not have the experience or managerial training to put into place the outcomes they wish.

The answer for all of the above named persons is to put into place the five pillars of accountability systems and performance. This will remove from the to-do list an entire area of concern that is truly time consuming and intrudes upon the spatial leadership train of thought that is required.

So what are the pillars of accountability and performance every municipality, no matter the size should possess?

The one commonality among all, is the ability to accomplish through inexpensiveness means and having four of the five electronically and internet or intranet based. This provides the ability for:

- Searchable platforms
- Instant accountability in fixing direction and providing for accurate historical record
- Real time information

For even the smallest municipality these can economically be achieved.

1. **Online, electronic policy and procedure system**
Not just the old school policy manual which is never looked at after sign offs, but one that is reflective of the daily realities, protects the organization and fixes accountability and provides for instruction in a searchable centralized location.

2. **Performance metrics input system**

Do away with the outdated written work order system which is never, ever analyzed or reflects reality of what your departments do. Instead taking advantage of the mobility of today’s tablets and smart phones turn your work force into a mirror of what the utilities so effectively accomplish in the field through electronic and online work orders.

3. **Performance measurement dashboard**

Once pillar two is in place, it is a short leap to find an economic solution that mines this data and places out for instant visualization how, and what your departments are doing or not doing and where management can truly be brought to bear.

4. **Formal online communications systems.**

There are two types of communications (link here) formal versus informal. Formal communications’, must be saved for future posterity and to avoid waste of labor time in rehashing the same procedure every one, two or three years. Ties to the online policy and procedure system, the memorandums rising to such a level are written disseminated and done with.

5. **Regular, weekly face to face communications structure**

The basics of human communication and interaction in an organization are still the foundation of organizational direction. One cannot lead through email. This is aimed at regular, positive, open forum staff, agenda and other meetings. They cannot be beat downs, oppressive and closed to opposing views. This all falls upon the effective leader and their own leadership styles and ability to engage in open exchange of ideas.
In the coming blogs we are going to delve into the details of how to implement these pillars into your town.

Sean P. Canning  
The Canning Group LLC  www.thecanninggroup.org