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# **A Proposal to Provide Communications Consulting Services**

**presented to**

## **The Village of Orland Park**

July 27, 2011

## Introduction

Thank you for considering The Public Response Group as your communications partner, to advance a positive message to residents concerning the accomplishments of the Board of Trustees and Administration of the Village of Orland Park.

We are excited about the possibility of working closely with you to research and build a new, robust and tested message framework that enables effective and consistent communication of the vision, mission and achievements of those who have labored tirelessly towards creating a vibrant community.

PRG has a rich history of working with Orland Park and numerous other local governmental entities on a wide range of issues and communication needs.

Our strategic reputation and public communications counsel to units of local and county government and national professional associations spans nearly two decades.

The basis of our insights regarding public communication tools and activities have come from our nationally award-winning work in the realm of politics including competitive marketing for political clients such as our current President and numerous members of Congress; professional organizations such as the National Association of Convenience Stores, National Education Association and corporate clients such as American Airlines, SBC-Ameritech, General Mills and Nestlé's.

Bottom-line? Absolutely no one will match the level of experience, skill and personalized attention we will bring to your effort – no one.

Our proposal is organized into the following sections:

1. Project Scope
2. Our Approach
3. Project Timeline
4. Proposed Professional Fees & Costs

## Project Scope

As referenced from the request leading to this document, it is our understanding that Orland Park is seeking:

- Support for a fact-based, project-oriented, strategic communications program.
- An overall plan for more effective communications with residents and sub groups, e.g. businesses and specific residential demographics, regarding ongoing or upcoming projects of Village-wide importance.
- Assistance and guidance in developing and refining an overall, protracted communications plan based on feedback and input from the community
- Consultation on ways to more effectively communicate with residents on-going and ensure the delivery of critical public policy information and services
- Conceptualizing messaging vehicles that successfully deliver information to residents

Accordingly, PRG will work with you on the development of an overall communications plan and provide ongoing counsel on issues including, but not limited to, grass roots outreach; message development; media relations and social media. We will also work closely with the chosen survey research team to help develop structure and analyze the key attitudinal research yielding the information necessary to formulate, execute and manage Orland Park's public communication efforts.

### ***Communication research***

1. The overarching objective of the initial phase of our work will be to gain insight and understanding of the various projects that will impact village stakeholders, how they will be affected.
2. While the gathering of this core information will be the responsibility of the chosen survey research firm, PRG will draw from its extensive experience in structuring similar communications efforts, to assist in analyzing the data and formulating specific recommendations for subsequent activity.

The research phase will also serve to give the Village Board and Administration a better sense of current opinions, attitudes and values of the community as they relate to issues impacting policies, as well as guidance in the modification, elimination or expansion, etc., of Village policies and services. The survey research will also help identify emerging needs of residents leading to quantifiable data regarding the formulation of new policies and programs to meet the concerns and desires of residents.

The research phase also needs to determine specific vehicles residents rely on for information about the Village – newspapers, the Internet, mobile, email

communications, blogs, etc. This information will then be utilized to develop ways to most cost effectively provide residents and targeted demographics with information regarding current or proposed policies and programs designed to help them and the Village.

### ***Message development***

Assist the Village in developing communications plans for various projects. The communications plan designed shall specifically reflect survey results. That way, we let the research drive all subsequent public communication activities.

### ***Message vehicles and delivery***

Once the survey research is completed and a final assessment and analysis is made of attitudes, opinions and issue salience, we will provide specific recommendations as to the best, most effective ways to deliver public information developed, to residents and businesses.

This may incorporate a variety of communications disciplines currently not being utilized or perhaps a “refined/modified” use of vehicles that are being employed.

### ***Helping develop resident input, involvement and feedback***

When it comes to assessing governmental services, it is important to understand the overall level of residential satisfaction with village services and programs, governmental response to emerging issues, etc.

PRG will help develop an approach to and assist in executing an overall plan for “resident input and feedback” that goes beyond simply building stronger relationships with local homeowners and businesses through ongoing “community relations.”

We accomplish this not by getting village officials to communicate with residents, but rather by getting residents and other stakeholders to communicate with you, thereby ascertaining ways to adapt services and programs to better meet the community’s needs.

### ***Activities to enhance resident input***

A variety of community activities exist which can be employed to bolster community and residential involvement and feedback.

One possible way of achieving this is through the creation of “focus groups” and/or “town hall meetings”, etc., throughout segments of the village where participants are asked such questions as, “if you ran the local \_\_\_\_\_, what changes would you make / what services would you provide?”

Another, is to employ “immediate response” telephone surveys where auto calls are made throughout the village or business community asking specific questions to ascertain public attitudes on proposed issues. Residents are then asked to use the touch buttons on phones to respond and/or register opinions, etc.

## **Our Approach**

Our objective is not to identify whether village officials have a particular issue or policy they wish to advance, but what issues and concerns residents care about and their opinions and attitudes related to those issues.

Our approach is always designed with a clear end goal in mind: to ensure that our partner/clients communicate clearly, concisely, consistently with key audiences and constituencies.

The messaging process provides detailed insights on the specifics of the communications, for key stakeholders.

Once this is ascertained, we move into the creative stage – formulating an overall plan which includes messaging components, themes, vehicles for delivery, timetables for activity, budgets, etc.

### ***Communications workshop***

We will structure and present a communications workshop to further synthesize and refine the key components of what needs to be communicated. Those attending this workshop would be:

- Those responsible for delivering the communications on a day-to-day basis (in-house communications people)
- Those in a position to change the communications post workshop (the Mayor; Village Administrator and senior management team, etc.)

The agenda for this workshop generally follows this outline:

- Review of findings of the community survey
- Brainstorming and prioritizing on community needs assessments and village capabilities
- Structure key informational points on each issue or project

- Identify messages to address specific community concerns
- Agreement on messaging hierarchy and key points for which village officials will need consistent and compelling responses

***Media/spokesperson training sessions***

Once message components are shaped and finalized, PRG will conduct – as required – spokesperson training workshops designed to ensure continuity and consistency in message delivery.

### ***Development of collateral materials***

As overall communications efforts are formulated, finalized and executed, there will be need for press releases, perhaps direct mail brochures, on-line/social media communications, op-ed pieces, etc., and newly developed ways of communicating with the general population of the village. PRG will assist – as directed – or be responsible for the conceptualization, design and production supervision of whatever collateral communications materials are required.

We will also provide as needed media coaching to individuals or teams responsible for meeting with the general news media in press conferences, interviews, etc., to ensure appropriate/consistent message delivery.

### ***Digital strategies***

This could include any one or combination of the following:

- Consultation on Village web site content and development (depending upon your agreement with the web developer.)
- Assist in the identification of appropriate social media networks to elevate on-line profile of targeted issues.
- Develop strategies for connecting with on-line media, reporters, bloggers, etc., who may have an interest in local issues.
- Advise on the best practices to ensure on-line communities remain active and continue to thrive.

### ***On-going consultation***

We will provide on-going consultation on how best to position the Village vis-à-vis the general public and local media on any current or emerging issue that offers opportunities to advance or impede the overall communications goals of the village.

## **Project Timeline**

Effective public communications programs require a commitment to a pro-active, protracted effort.

We see this project initially as an 18-month program designed to formulate, structure and implement communications plans that consistently deliver an image and message to achieve desired objectives.

In the absence of more complete information regarding village issues, timelines and planned projects, etc., it would be nearly impossible to present in this document a calendar outlining specific timetables for communication activities. That will result from further meetings and discussions between designated village officials and PRG staff.

However, it is recommended that the initial stage of our involvement – which would begin immediately upon execution of an agreement and lasting thru September 30, 2011 – focus on finalizing a survey research team and developing, drafting, fielding, and analyzing a community-wide poll that yields the necessary information to proceed with formulating an overall communications plan and timetable.

## Professional Consulting Fees

PRG works on a fee plus cost basis. That means the Village of Orland Park would reimburse PRG for all approved in advance expenses incurred by our firm on behalf of Orland Park, in addition to a professional consulting/creative fee.

Should we be chosen to serve as communications consultants for the Village of Orland Park, Illinois and provide the general services outlined above, for the time period provided (18 months) our total consultant fee would be \$49,500.00 or \$2,750.00 per month, due the first of each month plus reimbursement for any/all approved in advance expenses as billed.

Hours: PRG will provide 15 hours of professional services each month for this fee and up to an additional 5 hours service each month at no charge.

Once 20 hours of services have been logged, PRG will charge \$137.50 per hour for each hour above 20 hours, but at no time will the total number of additional billable hours exceed 30 hours during any given month, without the expressed approval of appropriate administrative officials of the Village.

A full explanation and breakdown of hours worked and billed will accompany each month's invoicing.

Generally, that's about it, except to again thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal. We look forward to the possibility of working with the Village on this most worthwhile and critical project.