



December 4, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Toni Messina, Director, Public Communications *Am*

SUBJECT: 2009 Winter Retreat – Public Communications Plan

By the end of our discussion on December 12, 2009 I hope for the following outcomes.

**1. Council will understand and acknowledge the department's vision and mission**

Vision

The department facilitates a modern internal communications network; has an electronic information presence in homes, businesses, public places and on personal communications devices; and supports work to convert the City's information storehouse to knowledge that is useful for citizens.

Mission

The department's mission is to increase opportunities for citizens to communicate with City government; improve clarity, consistency and timeliness of City communications, both internally and with external constituencies; and provide high-quality service that helps all aspects of communications.

**2. Council will acknowledge that a communications survey is needed to guide decisions about message delivery, development and to contribute to achieving the department's vision and mission**

Our most recent survey data was part of the 2007 general citizen satisfaction survey. We asked:

- How do you get information about City issues?
- What is your level of satisfaction with various aspects of City communications?

We propose contracting with the University of Missouri to ask more...and more relevant...questions, such as:

- What are your preferred methods for getting information? (list options)
- What information interests you, generally?
- What City information interests you or would you find helpful?

- When do you become interested in information relating to the City of Columbia?
- When you get information relating to the City of Columbia, do you understand it?
- Are you aware of the City's online services? What online services do you expect from City Government?
- Are you aware of City information outlets? Do you use them and, if not, what would make them more attractive to you?
- Age, gender, income level, education

After I meet with Ken Fleming, Associate Director of Research at the Reynolds Journalism Institute, on Dec. 8, 2009 I will report on their capabilities and cost associated with the survey.

### **3. Get Council thoughts about our proposed changes in products**

- End recorded and web-based Community Line messages

Use of recorded telephone messages has decreased about 55 percent, from 6,600 messages played in FY 2006 to 2,959 in FY2009.

Online use peaked at 13,353 messages in FY 2008 and has declined to 12,250 in FY 2009. The online messages duplicate information found in other places on our website. Our website had 1.6 million visits 9 million page views last year.

Other City departments have not objected to this proposal. They continually update their own web content, making the Community Line messages redundant and inaccurate.

- Phase out the hard-copy version of CitySource – City is promoting online billing

It already is possible to view CitySource online, although it is not in a desirable format. A web-only version offers much more flexibility in design, content and production time.

Other City departments tend to agree, but more discussion is needed. A survey or other form of questioning is needed to identify user preferences.

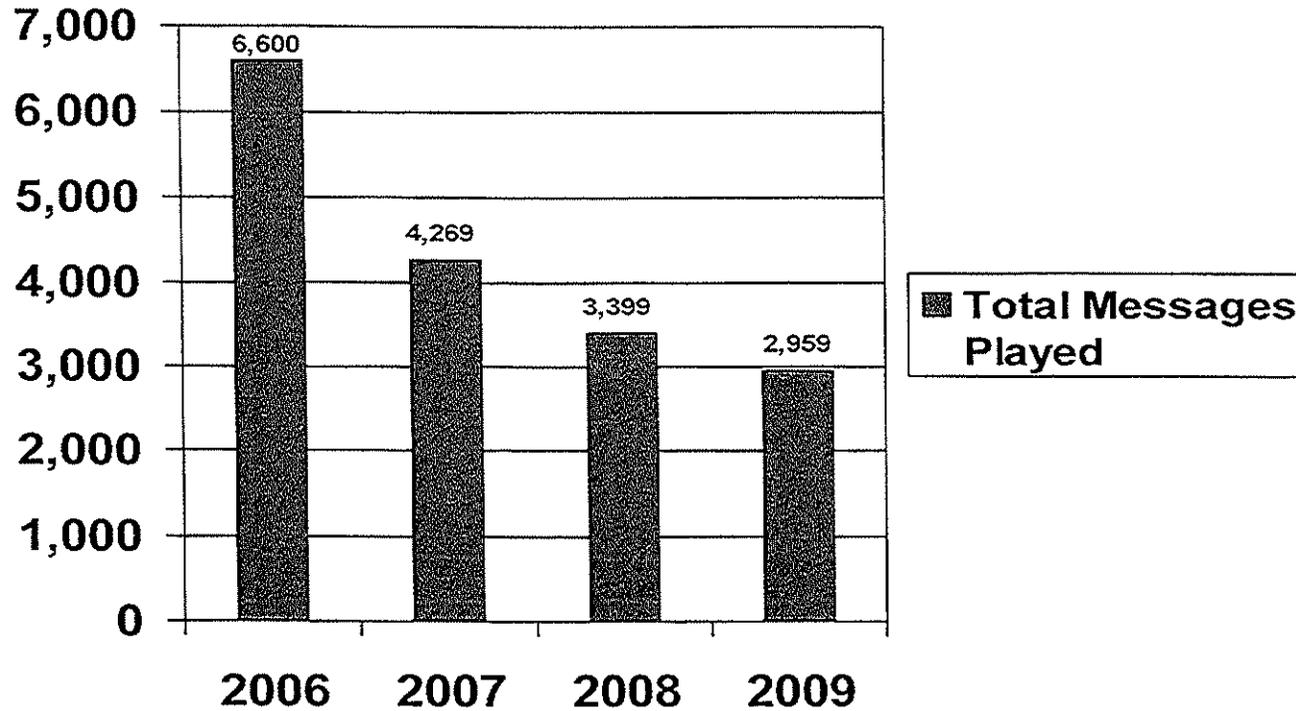
### **4. Get Council thoughts on redirecting savings as product mix changes**

Our key strategies to achieve the department's long-term vision and mission include:

- Evaluating all future requests against the department's strategic plan (already in progress)
- Establishing written departmental and City-wide communications policies
- Converting the City Channel "division" to a Media Resources division

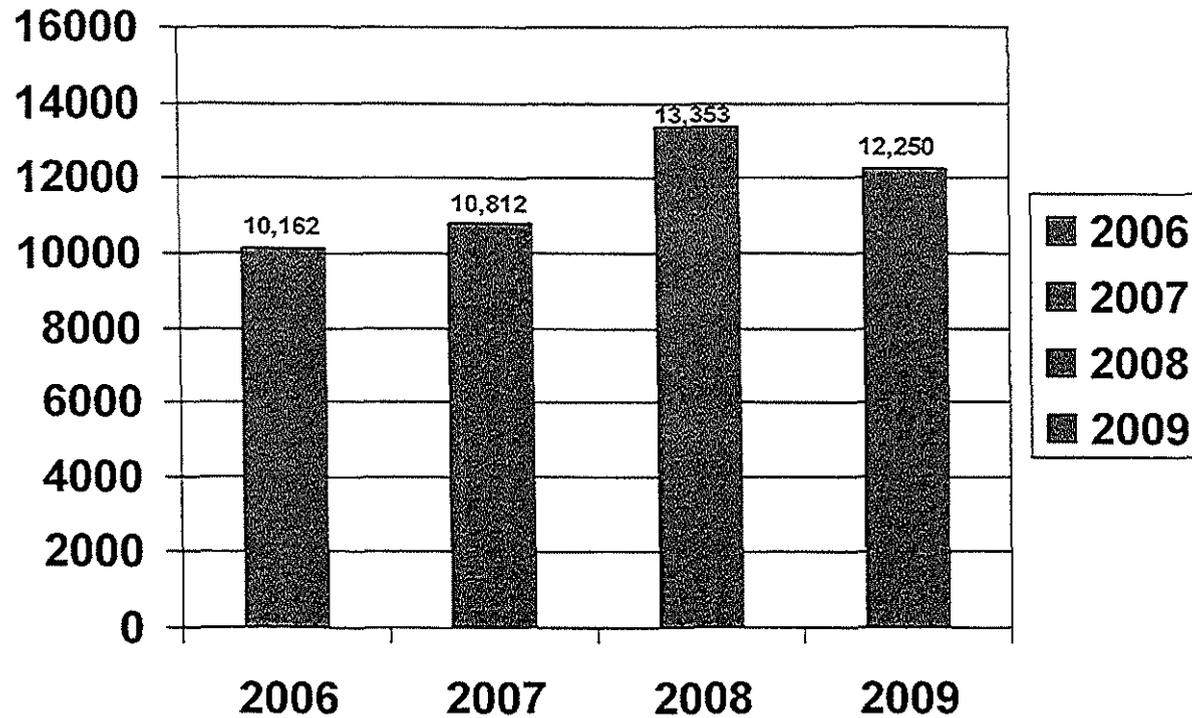
- Expanding our communications reach through electronic media
- Updating staff skills and competencies
- Effectively delegating work
- Adapting our suite of services to client needs and changes in the environment

## Community Line Phone Trends



## Community Line Web Trends

Web messages are a duplication of information already provided in a different format.



## **Public Communications Department Strategic Plan August 11, 2009**

### **Vision**

The department facilitates a modern internal communications network; has an electronic information presence in homes, businesses, public places and on PDA's; and supports work to convert the City's information storehouse to knowledge that is useful for citizens.

### **Mission**

The department's mission is to increase opportunities for citizens to communicate with City government; improve the clarity, consistency and timeliness of City communications, both internally and with external constituencies; and provide high-quality service that helps all aspects of communications.

### **Departmental Values**

Within available resources, the department:

- Provides the best possible service and advice for internal clients and citizens
- Continually innovates and modernizes its processes and products
- Assures that its work product is accurate, responsive and timely
- Seeks internal and external partnerships to enhance service delivery and influence

### **Business Objectives**

- Capture business opportunities through transition from other internal or external providers
- Adapt low-yield products to increase value to department and clients
- Shed or minimize or adapt products with no or little value to department
- Charge (and pay) reasonable internal service fees that reflect the cost of doing business
- Increase department's and City's communications capacity through joint assignments with other City agencies

### **Key Strategies**

- Evaluate all future requests against department's plan
- Establish written departmental and City-wide policies
- Convert City Channel "division" to Media Resources Division
- Expand communications reach through electronic media
- Update staff skills and competencies
- Effectively delegate work
- Adapt suite of services to client needs and changes in environment

### **Major Goals**

FY 2010 (from proposed FY 2010 budget)

- Public Communications Office: successfully transfer neighborhood improvement programs to a new entity; become a smart user of electronic social media to communicate with our audiences; improve the consistency of City's responses to requests for public records; staff a Complete Count committee for next Census; support short- and longer-term assignments from Manager, departments and Council.

- E-Government: Accommodate increasing internal and external demands for services and resources; support and promote use of live-streamed and archived Council meetings; facilitate emergency services alerts through phones and email; place more information online as use of paper decreases.
- Print Services: Start internal document scanning service; look at potential to offer CD-burning and shredding services; adopt cost-savings and efficiencies.
- Mail Services: Assure secure, accessible mail during move to interim space. Adjust to changing practices as customers rely more on electronic transmissions.
- City Channel: complete three years of upgrades to digital technology. Assure that City Hall addition is properly engineered and equipped for broadcast and other technical services. Investigate potential to expand and fund new media resource services for City government.

**Strategic Action Programs – To Be Determined**

## “SWOT” Analysis

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| <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional, skilled staff with good customer service record and reputation</li> <li>• Manager values improved communication services – has provided reasonably adequate resources, so far</li> <li>• “City” brand for our outlets - have full or partial responsibility for CityInsider; CitySource; City Channel; E-Gov; CityStream; Community Line</li> <li>• Not “General Fund” – fewer effects on budget</li> <li>• Not highly visible or controversial</li> <li>• Not responsible for ALL City communications work</li> </ul>   | <p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional local news outlets are changing - fewer staff, less coverage, focus on “sensational”</li> <li>• Other City departments have independent communications efforts that rarely function w/ a collective mission</li> <li>• No plan against which to evaluate requests, measure progress or guide work and spending</li> <li>• Inadequate continuous financial review</li> <li>• Tough to get enough staff or to adapt them to change – our skills are uneven</li> <li>• Not up-to-date in use or acceptance of technology</li> <li>• Slow response time on some seemingly complicated procedural questions – no one is thoroughly familiar with all policies</li> <li>• Must compete for public's attention in context of all the messages they receive</li> <li>• Public increasingly seeks personalized information, rather than waiting for general information to be pushed out – less common context</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Electronic communications supplant print and mail products and services</li> <li>• Cable audience may be shrinking</li> <li>• Departments use private vendors, at will</li> <li>• Revenue diverted to private vendors; our own higher cost for internal service fees; customers may feel internal service fees for our services are not justified</li> <li>• City-sanctioned technology, Council preferences and cost-savings reduce traditional print service revenue</li> <li>• Revenue sources are less stable than in the past – continued pressure to be more self-sufficient and to reduce costs</li> <li>• Easiest way to reduce cost is to cut jobs</li> </ul> | <p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Neighborhood relations moving out – will improve our ability to focus on core mission</li> <li>• Capture or facilitate more aspects of the City communications network</li> <li>• Increase department's scope – improve and update employee skills</li> <li>• Revisit mission, production and financing of CitySource</li> <li>• Eventually, department will be under one roof, though at three non-adjacent sites</li> <li>• Engaging other departments in common tasks – ability to use their special knowledge, build internal work partnerships</li> <li>• Large local media base to engage</li> <li>• Participation in records management and document imaging systems</li> <li>• Capitalize on needs for effective electronic information</li> </ul>  |