

## **Michigan Municipal League**

**Webinar: Leading in a Crisis, with special guest Harvard Professor Stephen Goldsmith**

**April 9, 2020**

### **Q&A**

#### **Is crisis a necessary precursor to real innovation happening at the local level?**

Crisis produces and catalyzes innovation in unusual ways. No, it's not necessary but it is necessary to have something in your city that stimulates innovation. Additional sorts of information – cross agency innovation needs a sponsor and a champion. If you try to innovate and fail, you need inoculation for them.

#### **In times of cognitive overload, how do we tap into imagination at all level of our organization?**

Had job of deputy mayor but thought it was chief innovation officer. Couldn't do both. Difficult to manage day to day crisis and innovation. Can get mired down in day to day job. Someone has to step back. A lot of what was measured was activity (in New York under Mayor Bloomberg). Does a unit of activity produce a unit of outcome. If it doesn't, we should turn it on its head.

#### **Ways to communicate with residents when we get back to normal-are there approaches we should use? Not to scare them but to reassure them that we are able to move forward with challenges in the future?**

After 9/11 there was a huge resurgence in civic spirit. What are the set of things that we would do together? We're not going to shake hands; we're going to help shut-ins in our neighborhood.

#### **How do we get buy in from other city officials when coming up with creative ideas to inform citizens, and keep them safe? When more imaginative ideas may ruffle a few feathers.**

The people who are against change know who they are and are really against it. Those who would benefit from change don't know who they are and wouldn't believe you anyways (paraphrasing Machiavelli quote). Go through an exercise of who the stakeholders are, why are they against it, who's going to manage the message and who is going to manage the stakeholders. In Indianapolis they went to the unions for partners. No one is going to lose their jobs. We created an environment of trust.

**From your research and experience, what are some best examples/case studies of city leaders who have led successfully during a crisis? Why and what was successful about their leadership/decision-making?**

Obvious one that comes to mind is Rudy Guiliani after 9/11. He was omni present, competent, empathetic, and knowledgeable. Can't be a leader during a crisis if you're not providing services your citizens need. People give you the benefit of the doubt when you're trying to inspire them However, if you don't deliver, they won't. Day to day acts build up reservoir of trust. Lead with confidence. Empathy combined with operational excellence.

**Can you offer any ideas about how to thank and inspire employees for coming to work without giving money?**

People who work in government don't want to get rich. They seek to help but don't realize what they are doing is helping. Recognizing that we need to give more opportunities. Some workers see citizens every day, some don't. Create a relationship of employees to citizens. Thank people who come in – team leader should have lunch with mayor. Tie balloons on desk of someone who did something great. Tickets; restaurant coupons. Bonuses to solid waste workers when he was mayor. Little things – the recognition is important, not money.

**What is better – data driven, or data informed?**

Don't want to advocate the use of data. Want to advocate how we're going to solve a problem through data. The use of data helped solve rat problem. Can use data to pre-empt a problem. Doesn't have to be complicated—can be a query – what if I did this, what if I did that? Data-informed is better way to look at it.