Spreading the word

and engaging your audience

Sara Habig, Dakota County
Communications manager 2/17/09
Effective communication is...

Meaningfully reaching target audiences with the messages you want them to hear to reach the goals you have identified.

Sara Habig, Dakota County Communications manager, 2/17/09
First, create clear goals

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The best goals are…

- Focused/singular
- Measurable
  - 10 percent will buy compost bins
- Based on outcomes
  - What you want people to do
  - What you want the result of communication to be
Second, know your audience(s)
It’s not about you; it’s about them

• What do they need to know?

• What are their characteristics, biases, concerns?

• What is the best way to reach them?

• Where are they now?
Third, don’t overwhelm people
The simpler the better

- Avoid too much of anything
- Be choosy with numbers/statistics – be compelling
- Don’t try to cram it all in
- Get rid of jargon
Fourth, it’s not one size fits all
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• Advertisements, brochures, postcards
  – Purpose: Gain interest, grab attention
  – Little detail, more graphics
It’s not one size fits all

• Web site, email
  – Purpose: Gain interest with more detail, provide information
  – A little more detail, more graphics

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It’s not one size fits all

- Fact sheets, reports, booklets, newsletters
  - Purpose: To provide information
  - More detail, less graphics

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It’s not one size fits all

- Workshops, presentations
  - Purpose: To engage, educate
  - More detail, more graphics, hands-on
Fifth, try it first

• You are the expert – embrace that

• If you don’t understand it – chances are you will not communicate well about it
Last, evaluate

- Do it often
- Helps identify what worked, what didn’t
- Helps determine if and when to change course