

# Communicating the Value of Water with the Resources You Have

Megan Chery  
Alliance for Water Efficiency

A VOICE AND  
A PLATFORM  
PROMOTING THE  
EFFICIENT AND  
SUSTAINABLE  
USE OF WATER



Alliance *for* Water Efficiency

# AWE: A Voice for Water Efficiency

- Our mission is to promote an efficient and sustainable water future
- **Nearly 500** member organizations in **200 watersheds** delivering water to **50 million water users**

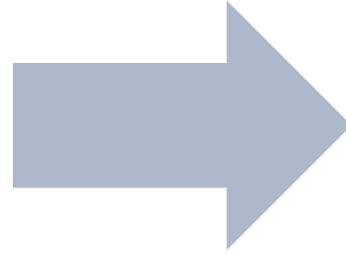


# Our 2030 Sustainable Water Vision

<b>Efficiency First</b>	Homeowners and businesses are smart water users, empowered by awareness of the value of water, real-time information, and technologies that help them save indoors and outdoors.
<b>Water-Smart Federal, State/Provincial, and Local Policies</b>	Governments adopt and implement policies to use limited water supplies more sustainably.
<b>Sustainable Water Rates and Fiscally Healthy Utilities</b>	Price signals inform customers of the value of water, and financially resilient utilities can provide reliable, safe, and affordable water service today and into the future.
<b>Right-sized, Water-tight, and Intelligent Systems</b>	Utility systems are built to the right capacity, proactively managed to reduce water loss, and equipped with the latest technologies to ensure safe water quality and to leverage data for efficiency.
<b>Integrated, Systems-based Approach</b>	Water efficiency is addressed in the context of a broader, systems-based perspective.

# Why Proactively Engage the Public?

- Change awareness and public perception
- Build a sense of shared responsibility for a communal resource
- Build customer trust in utility decisions
- Create an educated and involved customer base



- ✓ Rate increases or revisions
- ✓ Behavior changes
- ✓ Repair and replacement of aging infrastructure
- ✓ Investment in modern technology
- ✓ Innovative approaches

“

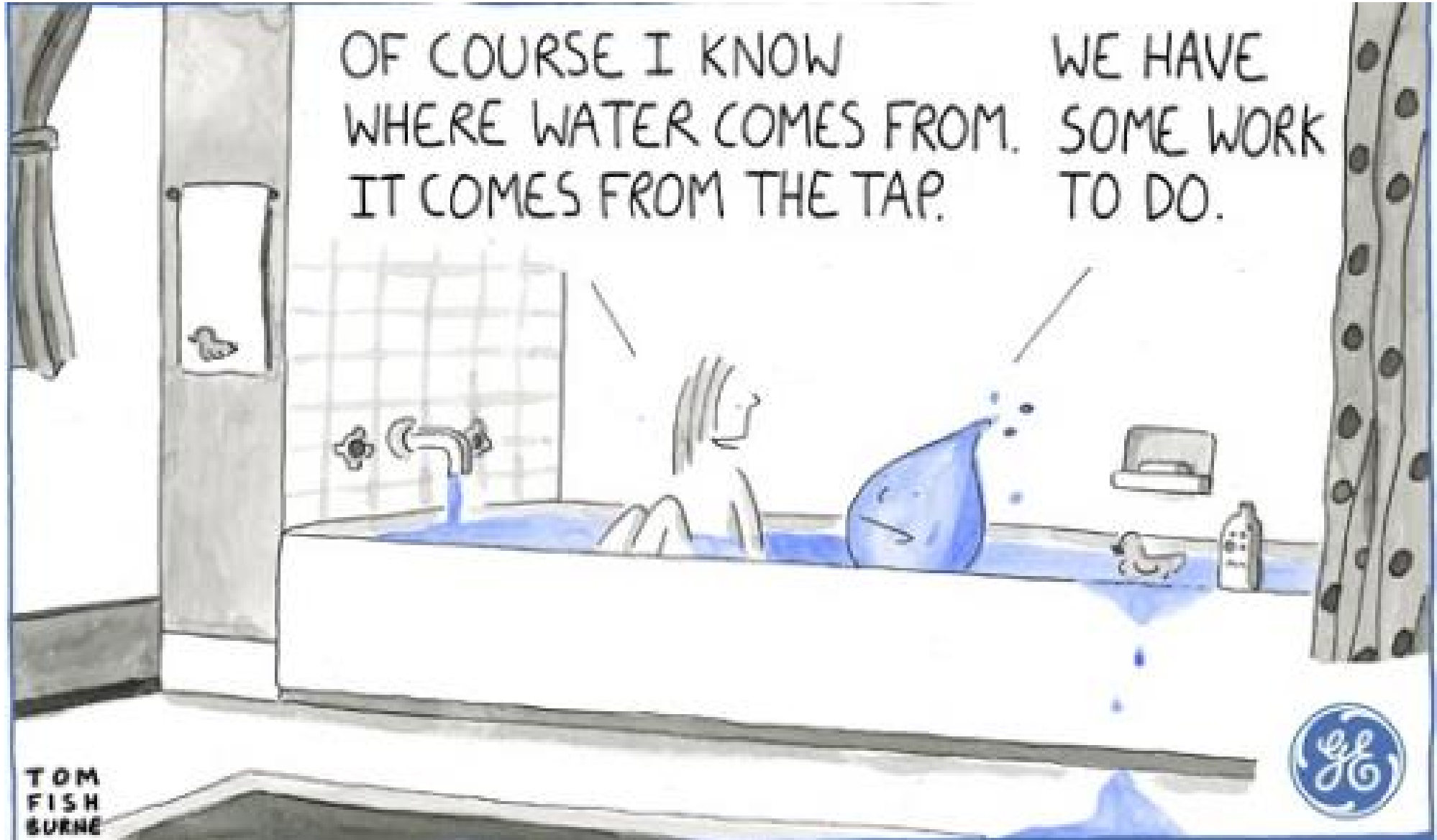
Only by **communicating to our customers** about what it takes to deliver our essential service, the value of our people and the need for infrastructure modernization can we generate the support that's required to raise the revenue needed.

”

- *George Hawkins, Former GM of DC Water*

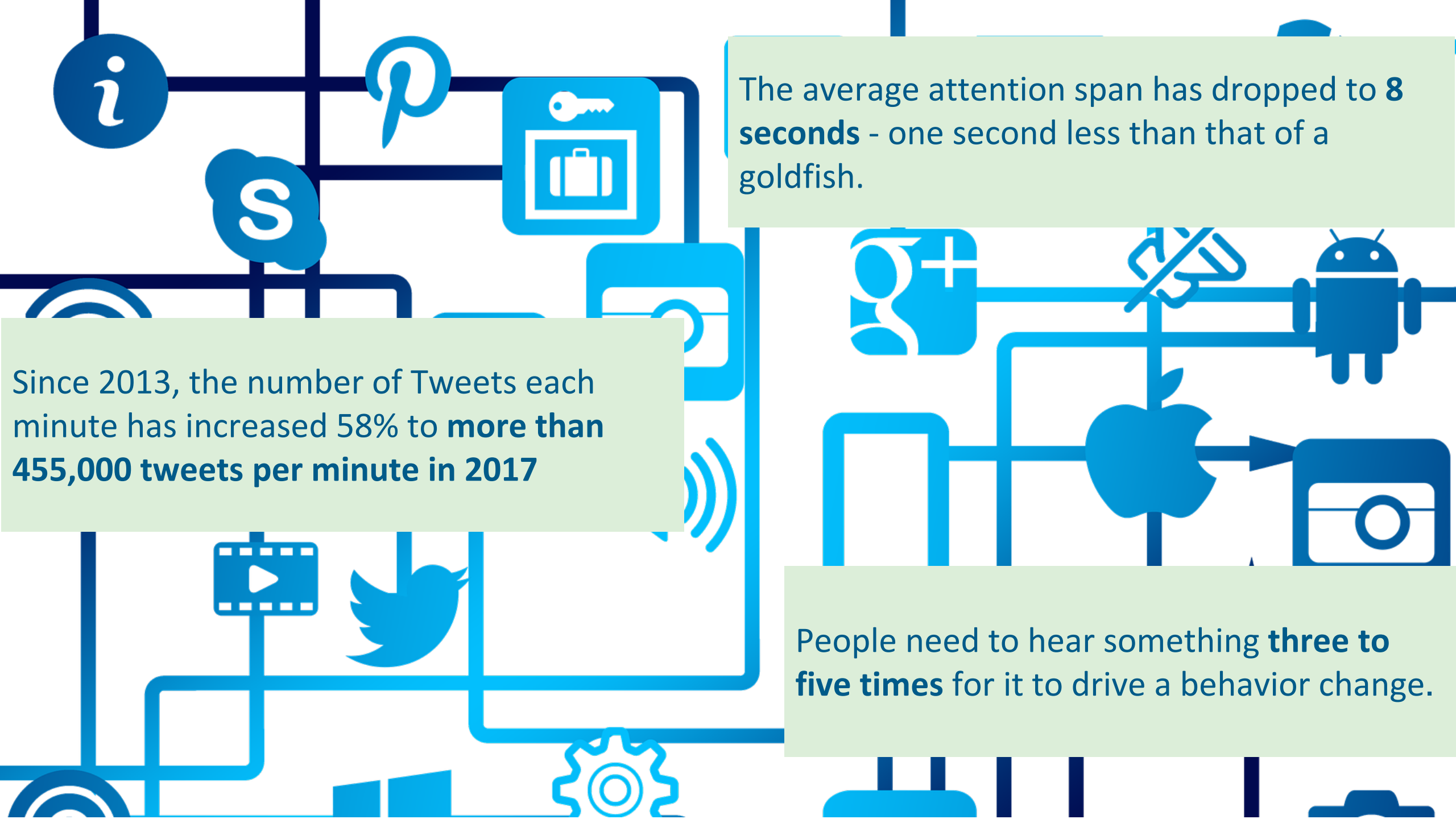
OF COURSE I KNOW  
WHERE WATER COMES FROM.  
IT COMES FROM THE TAP.

WE HAVE  
SOME WORK  
TO DO.



TOM  
FISH  
BURNE





Since 2013, the number of Tweets each minute has increased 58% to **more than 455,000 tweets per minute in 2017**

The average attention span has dropped to **8 seconds** - one second less than that of a goldfish.

People need to hear something **three to five times** for it to drive a behavior change.

# A Changing Stakeholder Universe

- Utility universe is **changing and expanding**
- Rise of **peer-to-peer communications**
- It's a **more connected world**
- Trust and reputation **harder to build and control** as information flows at a new speed



# So What Does Public Engagement Mean?

- Embrace the complexity
- Own your story
- Create and curate content
- Activate your experts
- Participate in the conversation
- Engage with multi-channel outreach
- Evaluate and evolve



## What's YOUR community's water story?

The key is to craft a strong, concise narrative and **communicate it consistently** through all channels and news streams.



# Start With Key Messages

- ▶ Prioritize points, focus the speaker and ensure consistency
- ▶ AWE - Jargon-free messages on:
  - The value of water
  - Benefits of water conservation
  - The need for a rate revision
  - Relationship between conservation and rates
  - Impact of drivers such as water quality and sustainability
- ▶ Customizable to tell your story!
- ▶ Comes with Guidance document
- ▶ [www.financingsustainablewater.org](http://www.financingsustainablewater.org)



## AWE Water Rates Message Plan

The Alliance for Water Efficiency has developed a set of key messages for utilities implementing conservation and efficiency-oriented rate structures or rate revisions. These messages have been developed to help utilities communicate to ratepayers, the social, fiscal and regulatory challenges that all utilities face, without jargon. As more regions become concerned with drought, crumbling infrastructure and population growth, these messages highlight the benefits and value of promoting water conservation and the significance of investing and planning for long-term water use efficiency solutions. Finally, these key messages may be helpful to support outreach to drive change in public perception, as utilities implement new rate structures (or a rate revision), garner support for new water resources, cultivate local support to repair aging infrastructure, and seek to grow support to add modern, more reliable technology to sustainably resolve our water supply issues.

Messages are the “elevator pitch” for communicating with the public. Messages summarize issues and must be backed up by facts. Key messages help **prioritize** key points; **focus** the speaker on what is most important; and help ensure **consistency** across written and verbal communications.

Utilities change their rate structures or increase rates under these broad scenarios, including:

- Drought or shortages of local water supplies (e.g. like pressures on groundwater);
- Operating and maintaining a reliable water system 24/7/365, including replacing aging infrastructure, responding to regulatory requirements, and addressing increasing costs (e.g. energy, safety);
- Population growth, including stretching existing supplies while building new capacity;
- Crumbling infrastructure and the significance of how a reliable water supply contributes to the growth and livelihood of the local economy;
- Regulatory mandates from local or state levels to ensure a safe and high quality supply of affordable and reliable drinking water; and
- Meeting sustainability objectives (e.g. long-term planning for the region and economy, including preparing our infrastructure to withstand extreme weather conditions, among many other disasters).

The messages have been developed to accommodate each utility’s unique rate-setting scenario, and should be customized or adapted as needed to address specific challenges and/or objectives. For additional guidance on how to use these messages, please refer to the AWE Message Protocol and Q&A document on [www.FinancingSustainableWater.org](http://www.FinancingSustainableWater.org).

“ [Utility name] has been delivering reliable water service to you since [year], thanks to hundreds of miles of pipe, thousands of watts of electricity and hundreds of dedicated people working around the clock ”

“ Water is essential to human life and a shared resource for our community. It gives us sprinklers, pools and lakes to play in, keeps us clean, fuels our power grid, and keeps our economy healthy. ”

“ Using water efficiently is the most inexpensive way to make our supplies more sustainable, and it keeps your rates lower over time. ”

# You Have Messages, Now What?



Web content



Fact sheets



FAQs



Press releases



Talking points for media interviews



Speakers Bureau



Infographics/Data Visualizations



These large tanks are used for cleaning  
large sewer pipes

A Day in the Life of Sewer Cleaning Crews



1,552



TWEETS	FOLLOWING	FOLLOWERS	FAVORITES
1,079	105	1,019	137

**Lady Bird TBM**

@ladybirdtmb

I love a challenge. Like tunneling 4 miles deep underground. I'm passionate about the environment and dirt. Read more about me at: [dcwater.com/ladybird](http://dcwater.com/ladybird)

Joined March 2013

Tweets Tweets & replies Photos & videos



Lady Bird TBM @LadyBirdTBM · Jul 27  
To the free skies unpent and glad and strong.

(To a Locomotive in Winter - Wall Whitman)

Farewell, for now.

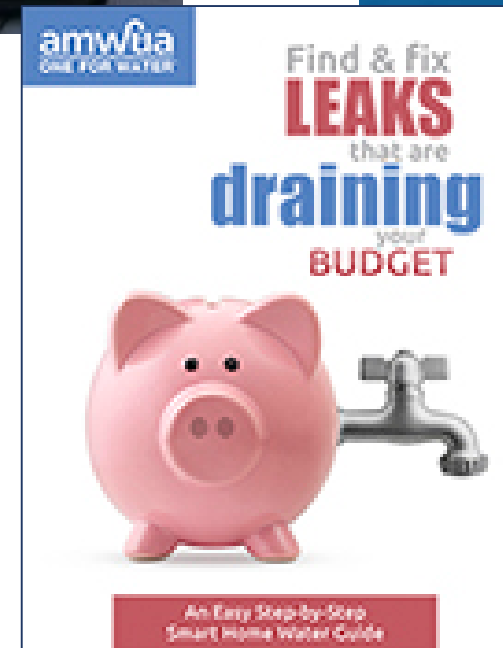
Don't tell, show  
how pipes, plants and  
people keep water  
flowing with pictures,  
videos and graphics.

- Your smartphone
- Canva
- Fiverr
- 99designs
- Venngage



Create or curate content.

Frame the issue the way you want it to be seen and you own it. Sharing content positions you as an authority and trusted resource. Customize wherever possible.



Water: What You Pay For

A4WE

Subscribe 284

1,924

+ Add to Share More

23 0

**Share and Embed:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dq9Yg\\_jlsUc&t=1s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dq9Yg_jlsUc&t=1s)

Elevate and activate a group of subject matter experts who can cultivate new ideas and engage in meaningful conversations. Make digital engagement 1% of everyone's job:

- Consumer Q&As
- Blog posts
- Tweet Chats

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[Water Fest soaks students with knowledge](#)

[Green with envy: The one step to help your yard look good all year.](#)

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MAY

### An open letter to Jay Z

Posted May 26, 2015 by Denver Water in [Your Denver Water](#). Tagged: [Conservation](#), [Denver](#), [Denver Water](#), [Drinking water](#), [Jay Z](#), [Value of water](#), [Water](#), [Water conservation](#), [Water supply](#). [Leave a Comment](#)

#### An open letter to Jay Z

*Denver Water weighs in on the rap mogul's recent comments about the price of water and how it relates to music*

By Steve Snyder

Dear Jay Z,

First of all, Big fan! I've listened to your music for years; I've admired how you've become much more than an entertainer, and you have perhaps the coolest line I've ever heard, "I'm not a businessman, I'm a business, man."

But recently, you made a comparison [about water and music](#). And since water is my business, I have to say, "Stick to your own business, man!"

I get what you are saying. Artists should be paid for the music they create. But to say that "water is free while music is \$6" isn't exactly true.

This isn't meant to state the obvious fact that [some people can't pay their water bills](#), so water must not be free. But your comments bring up the issue of how people value water — an issue our industry [struggles with](#) all the time.



Rapper Jay Z performs onstage at the 2009 American Music Awards on Nov. 22, 2009, in Los Angeles. (Photo by Kevork Djansezian/Getty Images)





Ummm....we meant this to happen.



## Participate in the conversation.

Think service first, but human always. People want to engage with other people, not brands. Try humor, humility, fun, and transparency.

**Evaluate and evolve.** Measure results against program objectives and desired outcomes. Refine and reshape content and engagement.



# If You Have....

1 Hour

- Craft 5 key messages and FAQ on a specific issue (and send them to every department with instructions on how to use!)

5 Hours

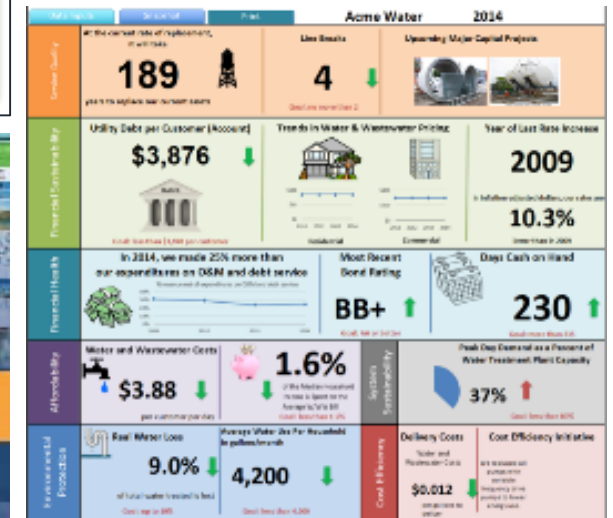
- Video an engineer in the field (use a smartphone!) and incorporate into a newsletter or email. Consider a series!

10 Hours

- Plan an internal training on your key messages. Invite staff from every department.

# Planning Resources

- FinancingSustainableWater.org
  - Tools → Communications
- Regional & state organizations
- Your fellow water providers
- Nonprofits and think tanks
- Communications firms





# AWE Can Help With:

- Conservation Program Planning
- Communications Resources and Multimedia
- Education and Leadership Opps for Staff
- Technical Assistance



**Any Questions?**

**Thank You!**

**Join Us:** Email  
[membership@a4we.org](mailto:membership@a4we.org)

