

Local Government

REIMAGINED CONFERENCE

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The Power of Professional Friendships: Maintaining and Cultivating Your Network to Future Proof Your Career

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ICMA | conference

Blanket Disclaimer & Important Notes

- All examples in this presentation are hypothetical:
 - Seriously, this would *never* happen in real life...*right?*
- ICMA Conferences, other CAOs/ACAAs, and your support system should be safe spaces
- These relationships are built to last one's whole career
- Lasting support happens in a safe space
- This the missing middle network – *not* your friends & family, and *not* your boss & mentor

Spoiler Alert – These jobs are hard.

Let's play *never have I ever*...

- Had to ask myself – AITA?
- Thought – *am I crazy?*
- Questioned if instead of an MPA you should have trained in early childhood education?
- Had something occur your non-government friends would not understand?
- Had to keep things confidential even through they are eating you alive?
- Questioned if I am actually an extra in *Parks and Recreation*?



Why do you need professional friends?

- For your sanity and mental health
- For your physical health
- For your loved one's sanity
- For growth
- For support

Surprise! A new issue appears!

Good news! You have friends who can help.

Navigating the Unknown

- New projects
 - Complex tasks
 - New roles or responsibilities
- How do professional friendships help?
 - Connection to resources
 - Connection to their networks
 - Experience
 - Different perspectives
 - Head checks

People are hard.

My HR textbook didn't teach me this.

Interpersonal Issues

- Personnel issues
 - Workplace drama
 - Interpersonal conflict
 - Crazy constituents
- How do professional friendships help?
 - They know you, not your team, so can provide neutral feedback
 - You might be overreacting; your professional friend can tell you that
 - Honest, direct feedback

Should I stay or should I go?

Knowing when to stick it out.

Career Development

- Growth in current position
 - When to seek new roles
 - Starting a new role
 - Does this pass the *PITA Test*?
- How do professional friendships help?
 - Sharing opportunities
 - Honest conversations (compensation, workload, etc.)
 - Feedback/reflection
 - Noticing change in behavior
 - Leveraging networks

You *literally* cannot make this up.

No seriously, what just happened?

When the unexpected happens.

- Pavilion Breaks in Half
- CrowdStrike Outage
- Executive Orders
- Sinkholes (on only in/out road)
- How do professional friendships help?
 - Let's all have a good chuckle
 - Opportunity to level-set

Hello Murphy, my old friend.

When *Murphy's Law* isn't funny anymore.

Resiliency - when the hits keep coming.

- When it feels overwhelming
- Many small things adding up over time
- Sometimes it doesn't get better
- How do professional friendships help?
 - Keeping your phone on
 - Honest conversations
 - Resources/networks, perspective, support
 - Wellness checks
 - Reflection – Commiseration – After Action & Learning

How do you find professional friends?

- Professional Associations:
 - ICMA, CCCMA, ELGL, ...
- Overlapping Work
- Education & Training
- Ask!
- Engage
- Time
- Trust your gut/vibes
- Don't discount the value of a happy hour

Not just for extroverts....

- Not the good old boys club
- More than formal networking – seeking advices of peers
- For those who may feel excluded, don't have a network yet, new to the industry/area
- Finding your group
- It's a small world, but we're all in a big tent

How to be a professional friend.

1. Be ethical, respectful & kind
2. Set boundaries
3. Be safe spaces
4. Active listening
5. Support each other – this profession needs us too
6. Give back to your network



Thank You!

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What have we missed?

- Questions?
- Clarifications?
- Compliments?