

CORNERSTONE

PERFORMANCE AUDITS • STRATEGIC PLANNING • ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT • TRAINING

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The Rollout Stage of the Performance Audit Report: Principles And Steps

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You are the leader. You came up with the idea to hire an independent, third party auditor to examine the department of...fill-in-the-blank. The audit is in its draft form and is nearing completion.

You are thinking, “Now what? How do we handle going public with it?”

Citygate Associates, LLC has assisted hundreds of clients through the performance audit process. Sometimes the audit findings are uncomfortable to hear, much less present publicly. For the benefit of our clients, we’ve developed ***Rollout Stage*** principles that serve as a guide as we work with our clients through this sensitive phase of the review. It is at the rollout stage that the rubber begins to meet the road!

Principle #1: Do Unto Others As You Would Have Others Do Unto You

If performance auditors were examining your department or work program, you would first and foremost want an opportunity to be heard in a meaningful way. You would want to be treated with respect throughout the process. At Citygate Associates, when writing a report we often ask ourselves if this phrasing would pass the “breakfast with your spouse” test. In other words, are the difficult points in the report presented in a way that the employee could show them to their partner or spouse without being dehumanized? It’s advisable to apply this same test to the staff report and press releases that accompany the performance audit report.

It is wise to depersonalize the report by referring only to programs, processes and systems that need attention, not individuals.

Principle #2: Forewarned Is Forearmed

Make them angry as early as possible. This sounds counter-

intuitive, but it is not. It is best to deliver the negative findings to key personnel early in the performance review process. That gives leadership staff the time needed to react to it, think about it and accept it...before you go public. This approach increases the odds for a successful outcome.

It is always best to give an alert or “heads up” to the elected officials before they get the report. Seasoned leaders do this automatically, but it is worth repeating.

Principle #3: Accentuate The Positive

Performance audits can be difficult even for the most confident administrator. It is wise to lead with those findings that denote accomplishments and things that are being done in accord with best practices. Context is important.

ROLL-OUT STEPS...

Step #1

The client receives the Draft Report and reads it for tone, incorrect facts and glaring implementation problems.

In most cases, there is little in the way of major changes to the Draft Report because the client and Citygate Associates are on the same page coming out of our confidential meeting to discuss Preliminary Findings.

Step #2

After discussing the Draft Report with the client, Citygate Associates works out any needed changes for the Final Report and gets it back to the client.

Step #3

The client then schedules the Final Report to be presented before the Board or City Council in a public meeting, and we deliver copies to the client.

Step #4

The client should meet with staff the day the report becomes a public document. We suggest that the client meet one-on-one with the managers and then hold an all-hands meeting (or two) for the employees. They need to hear it from their leaders, not read about it in the papers or hear it from someone else.

Step #5

Citygate Associates strongly suggests that key personnel review the press release in advance. It is important that everyone stay on message throughout the rollout. The press release becomes the guide. Citygate Associates is

always available to talk to the press, if need be. We know how to be truthful, positive and constructive in our remarks.

Step #6

Citygate Associates attends the City Council or Board meeting, makes a PowerPoint presentation and answers questions.

Step #7

Citygate Associates provides follow-up services and support, as needed.



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Citygate Associates, LLC is a management consulting firm providing services to local and state governments across the Western United States. Headquartered in Folsom, CA, Citygate specializes in:

- Performance Audits
- Process Improvements
- Management Studies
- Strategic Planning
- Organizational Development
- Community Development
- Animal Care and Control
- Budget and Financial Analysis
- Character Training
- Employee Training

Citygate's clients benefit due to their ability to provide more effective and cost-efficient services through improved management approaches and systems, clarified focus, and upgraded skills.

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