

CASE STUDY:

Roseville Environmental Utilities



A New Content Strategy: Create it Once, Publish it Everywhere

Roseville Environmental Utilities provides low cost and reliable water, wastewater, recycled water and solid waste utility services to residents and businesses residing in Roseville, California.

Additionally they provide important services related to conservation and responsible use of precious resources through programs such as water conservation, storm-water management and recycling.

Executive Summary

The demands on Maurice Chaney, the public information officer for Roseville Environmental Utilities (EU), exceeded his available time, a challenge facing many utility communicators. Maurice was a team of one, and the three utilities he supported — Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste — all had their needs. But rather than seek a quick tactical fix by cutting a few corners, he took a more strategic approach: working with Egan Energy Communications to implement a “create it once, publish it everywhere” approach to EU’s annual reports.



Challenge

Before Maurice (right) arrived at EU in 2014, EU's annual reports tended to consist of bullet-point lists of accomplishments drawn up by the organization's Water, Wastewater and Solid Waste utilities. The reports were too internally focused and didn't engage the reader. Moreover, the three bulleted lists suggested the three utilities functioned in isolation, with little collaboration, which was not the case.

But Maurice had his hands full with the daily tasks of being a spokesperson for EU, a well-regarded, locally owned, three-utility business located about 20 miles east of Sacramento, California.

EU was doing great things in the community and he wanted to tell those stories. But the press of day-to-day business prevented him from stepping back and figuring out how he could more fully use all the positive content that was constantly swirling around him.



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Solution

A solution presented itself. Egan Energy Communications had been hired to write EU's 2015 annual report, [Connecting to the Environment](#). We proposed adopting a stakeholder-driven narrative that linked all three utilities thematically: how each utility was practicing environmental stewardship, for example, or community stewardship, critical issues for a locally owned utility.

For the annual report, we proposed telling brief stories about the positive things Roseville EU was doing using the voices of employees, customers and other stakeholders who have benefited from those good deeds. We felt, and Maurice agreed, that it was more powerful to have others sing your praises than for the utility itself to sing its own praises.

We followed that same stakeholder-driven narrative for EU's subsequent annual reports, 2016's [Where Utilities Meet Life](#) and 2017's [Connections](#).

Conclusion

By building EU's annual reports around short stakeholder vignettes of four to eight paragraphs each, Maurice was able to easily extract them and use them in other communications vehicles, including social media, the bimonthly customer newsletter and the news section of the city's website. Two examples of this are a commercial food waste recycling story, featuring [Nugget Market](#), and a water efficiency story focusing on [Bud's Dry Cleaning](#), a local landmark.

"The 'create it once, publish it everywhere' approach allowed us to get a lot more mileage out of the content than had previously been the case," Maurice said.

"We know the importance of managing the public's perceptions, and we want our communications to more actively engage with our customers and employees," he continued. "We thought the best way to do that was to tell stories using first-hand experiences of our customers and employees."

"John's expertise in the utility industry, and his familiarity with the special needs of locally owned utilities, allowed him to quickly identify positive human-interest stories that could be repurposed," he continued. "His outsider's perspective, journalist's background and deep expertise in the utility business were invaluable."

