How to Secure the Resources Needed to be Successful
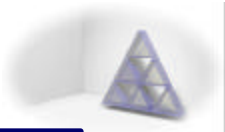
A Seminar Sponsored Jointly by:

Advanced Strategies, Inc.

St. Paul, MN - Atlanta, GA

MINNESOTA
Government Information
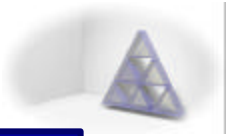Technology **Symposium**

An opening comment from our Sponsor

Top complaints from past MN Government IT Symposiums:

1. There were no handouts

2. The presentation didn't follow the brochure description

Description
(Source: 2000 MN Symposium Brochure)

Objectives:

To help you better secure the resources needed to be successful

By delivering a structure for determining what messages you need to present to gain project support

Specifically,

- **How to use a strategy of a series of "gates" to determine what messages are needed for the specific situation;**

- **To discuss what messages are typically important;**

- **And to identify common mistakes which may hurt your ability to get funding.**
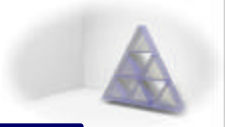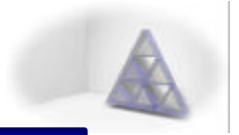
About this Technique

A Common Sense Approach

That has been used by many State Technical Professionals to successfully gain approval from

- **Their Users**
- **Their Management**
- **The Legislature**

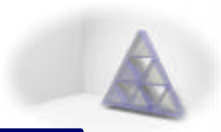**That was widely accepted as a framework by executives throughout the state in doing Strategic IRM Planning**

That is a foundation of Advanced Strategies' practice

What this Session is Not

Not Going to Guarantee Funding

Not a Recipe to follow, but rather a framework to enhance your thinking

Intro: Do You Know This Person?

A person:

- **Who exists in an environment that is chaotic and ambiguous, and where there is a lack of full knowledge.**
- **Who, because of the complexity of the situation, cannot understand the details of all that is happening**
- **Who does not know all of the problems and opportunities that exist.**
- **Who is asked to commit support**
- **Who does not have enough resources to do it all**
  - **Money, People**
  - **Time, Stress, Attention, Energy**

**And yet is expected to function effectively in spite of all of this!**
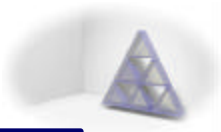
Assumption 1: This is not an Uncommon Situation

Examples are:

- **Top management in your organization**
- **Your Chief Executive Officer's office**
  - **(e.g. the Governor, the Mayor)**
- **The Legislative Bodies or County Commissioners**
- **Your boss**
- **People on your team**
- **Your spouse**
- **You!**

**For today we will refer to these people as "executives"**
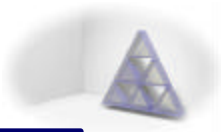
This is a very common funding/approval situation

Many people who are in a position to approve or reject your requests are in the situation of "Executive":

- **Don't understand the full details of your portion of the business**

- **Don't understand, or not aware, of the details of the business problem you are trying to address**

- **Are not experts on the technology proposed**

- **Have limited resources and need to allocate them among many worthy competing uses**
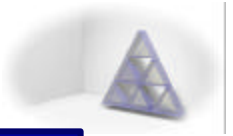
Assumption(s) 2

Desirable Characteristics of "Executive" Decision Making

- **What executives often want**

  - **To feel they have a handle on the situation**

  - **To feel they have made an *informed choice***

 - **To be able to explain/justify their decision**

- **What executives often don't want (or can't afford)**

  - **To be sold;**

  - **To be forced to rely on trust;**

  - **To take the time to get educated on all the details;**
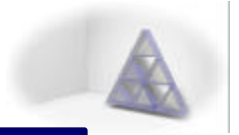
Understanding How Good Decision Makers Would Like to Decide – A Framework

1. Decision makers would like to go through a process of making a series of small decisions.

2. Advanced Strategies' approach is to represent each of these decisions as a gate; and you have to get through each gate, one at a time, to gain approval.

3. If any single gate shuts, you are done; the decision is made in the negative - no matter how well you pass the others.

4. If you get through all of the gates, then you are in the running to compete for the available resources.

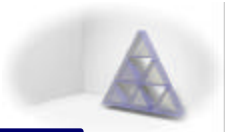Note: There are some common gates, but each situation is unique.
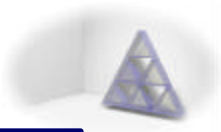
Framework

Gate 1

Gate 2

Gate 3

Gate 4

Four Common Gates
(from a Legislator's/Board Member's Perspective)

- **Gate 1: Business Purpose**
  - **Do I believe in the Business' (Agency's) purpose and value?**

- **Gate 2: Business Problem/Opportunity**
  - **Do I believe that the Problem or Opportunity is real and should be addressed?**

- **Gate 3: Appropriateness of the Solution**
  - **Do I believe the solution will work and is viable?**

- **Gate 4: Credibility**
  - **Do I believe that the requesting organization can successfully deliver the solution?**

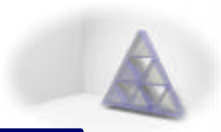# How do We Open the Gates?
(or keep the gates from closing)

Business Purpose _____

Business Problem _____

Appropriate Solution _____

Credibility _____
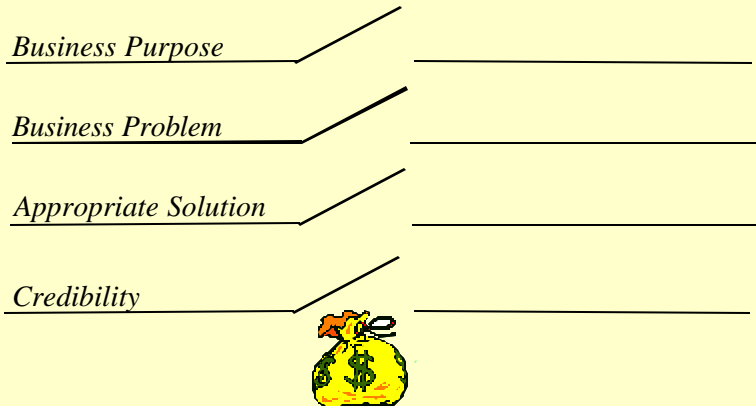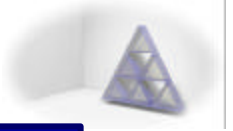
How do We Open the Gates?
(or keep the gates from closing)

By closing the gap between what your executive knows and what they need to know in order to make an informed judgment about each gate

Business Purpose

Business Problem

Appropriate Solution

Credibility

Note: Be very careful about your assumptions – people know *less* and *more* than you might think
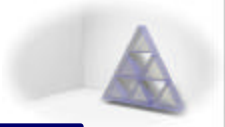
Gate 1: Business Purpose
(Closing the Gap)

Enable the Executive to:

➢ **Understand what the business does**

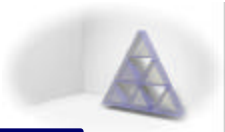➢ **Believe the business purpose is worthwhile**

15

Gate 1: Business Purpose
(Closing the Gap)

Enable the Executive to:

➢ **Understand what the business does**

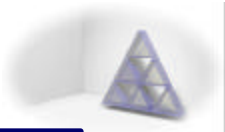➢ **Believe the business purpose is worthwhile**

By:

➢ **Focusing on *why* we do things, not *what* we do**

➢ **Emphasizing the results of our actions**

➢ **Describing the world if this business (function) did not exist**

➢ **...**

as appropriate.

Gate 2: Business Problem/Opportunity
(Closing the Gap)

Enable the Executive to:

➢ **Understand the business problem**

➢ **Believe that it is a legitimate problem**

➢ **Believe that solving the problem will further the business purpose**

Gate 2: Business Problem/Opportunity
(Closing the Gap)

Enable the Executive to:

➢**Understand the business problem**

➢**Believe that it is a legitimate problem**

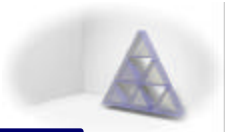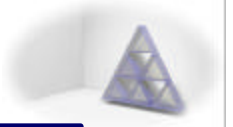➢**Believe that solving the problem will further the business purpose**

By:

➢**Explaining the situation in terms of the problem – not in terms of the solution**

➢**Discussing the situation in business terms, not technology terms**

➢**Presenting the consequences of not taking action at this time**

➢**…**

Gate 3: Appropriateness of the Solution
(Closing the Gap)

Enable the Executive to:

➢ **Understand what the solution is**

➢ **Believe that the solution will have an impact**

➢ **Believe that the impact will be sufficient to address the problem**

➢ **Have comfort in that you have considered alternatives**

Gate 3: Appropriateness of the Solution
(Closing the Gap)

Enable the Executive to:

➢ **Understand what the solution is**

➢ **Believe that the solution will have an impact**

➢ **Believe that the impact will be sufficient to address the problem**

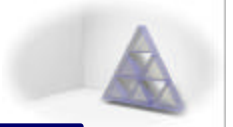➢ **Have comfort in that you have considered alternatives**

By:

➢ **Acknowledging the audiences "technology literacy" level; and presenting appropriately**

➢ **Presenting examples from other industries/locations/… where this is being done successfully**

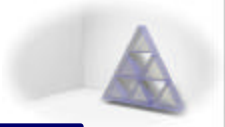➢ **Showing multiple options and explaining why this solution is preferred**

➢ **…**

Gate 4: Credibility
(Closing the Gap)

Enable the Executive to:

➤ Believe that your team can effectively deliver the solution

➤ Have confidence you have done the due diligence

➤ Believe that they understand the risks and potential downsides

Gate 4: Credibility
(Closing the Gap)

Enable the Executive to:

➢ Believe that your team can effectively deliver the solution

➢ Have confidence you have done the due diligence

➢ Believe that they understand the risks and potential downsides

By:

➢ Showing that you are following a professional process

➢ Highlighting past successes

➢ Presenting what could go wrong as well as what could go right

➢ Providing options

➢ …
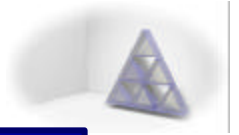
Additional Gates

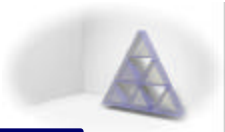For example:

- Haven't we done this before?
  - How is this different from a similar project we did in the past?

- Do we really need all this?
  - Is this really a big / complicated deal?
    - (One worthy of this type of investment)

- The Executive's Personal Risk
  - Will my constituents be upset?
 - Can I be embarrassed (or fired)?
- …
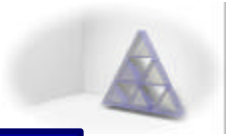
Putting it Into Practice

- **Identify your target audience(s)**
- **Assess the various members of your audience to determine the showstopper gates**
- **Identify what they would need to *know* to approve going through the Gates**
- **Identify what they would need to *feel* to approve going through the Gates**
- **Determine how to address each Gate**
- **Draft a presentation and other courses of action (e.g. pre-meetings, demonstrations) that address the gaps**
- **Test the presentation strategy Gate by Gate**

Testing Your Gates

1. Write the $$$ amount on the top of a flip chart;

   - **On the left: Write the gates**
   - **On the right: Write your messages**

2. Ask yourself for each gate:

   - "Realizing we are asking for $X,000,…, if I were
     <myself/the beneficiaries/*each* approving executive>
     and this is all I knew, would this gate be open or closed?
   - If after adjusting you are not able to open all the gates, consider:
     Should we really be requesting this?

3. Finalize your presentation and strategy and rehearse

4. Cross your fingers; after all there is still a substantial amount of luck involved, things beyond our control.
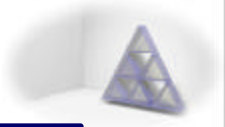
What Happens Once I've made it Through the Gates?

You enter the pool with other projects who made it through the gates.

From this pool funds are allocated based on their understanding of, and belief in, your project and:

- Amount of the request
- Available funds
- Competing efforts
- Political considerations
- Personal preferences of the decision makers
- Opinions of trusted advisors and peers who "should know"
- …
- Luck
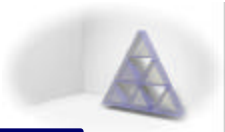
What about Politics?

Politics Does Not Invalidate the Gates

It does increase the audiences to be considered to include constituencies

- **We need to explain the reasons for going through the gates in terms of the interest of the constituencies**

We may need to provide cover when unpopular decisions need to be made

As well as opportunities for positive exposure if things go well
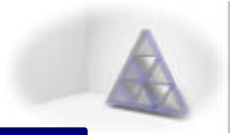
A Note on Extensibility
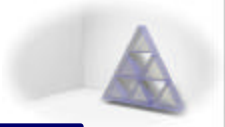
Who's support is needed for a successful project?

A Final Note from Our Sponsor

Biggest Complaints from Past Sessions:

- At the end, I didn't have a sense of what the key messages were

- It didn't provide me with the information I need to move forward: resources, contacts, action steps

Review of Key Messages

✓ *ENABLE AN INFORMED CHOICE*

✓ *FOCUS ON THE BUSINESS FIRST*

✓ *TALK THE LANGUAGE OF BUSINESS*

✓ *IDENTIFY GATES*

✓ *CREATE MESSAGES*

✓ *REMEMBER, IF ANY SINGLE GATE CLOSES - THE ANSWER IS "NO"*

✓ *EVERY SITUATION IS UNIQUE*

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RELY ON TRUST
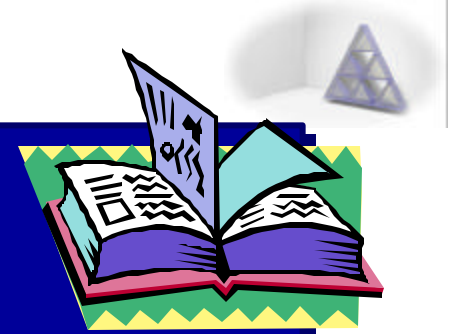
TALK TECHNICAL

APPLY BLINDLY
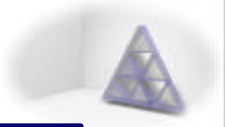
Techniques for Developing Skills

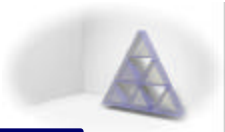**Life Application - Practice at Home**

Volunteer Organizations - Practice off the Job

"You can manage employees as though they were volunteers; BUT You can't manage volunteers as though they were employees!

Recommended Reading

- **Cherry, Colin. On Human Communication, Second Edition. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1966).**

- **Decker, Bert. You've Got to be Believed to be Heard. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992).**

- **Kepner, Charles H. and Benjamin B. Tregoe. The Rational Manager. (New York: McGraw Hill, 1965).**

- **Leavitt, Harold J. Managerial Psychology, Fourth Edition. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978).**

- **"Project Promotion: Creating and Communicating Your Project Vision" - www.AdvancedStrategiesInc.com (under Project Management Center)**

Finally…

…May an *informed choice* bring you the *appropriate funding* your project needs!