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Personal Branding for City and County Managers: Staying Apolitical in a Political World

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Why is Having an Apolitical Brand Important?

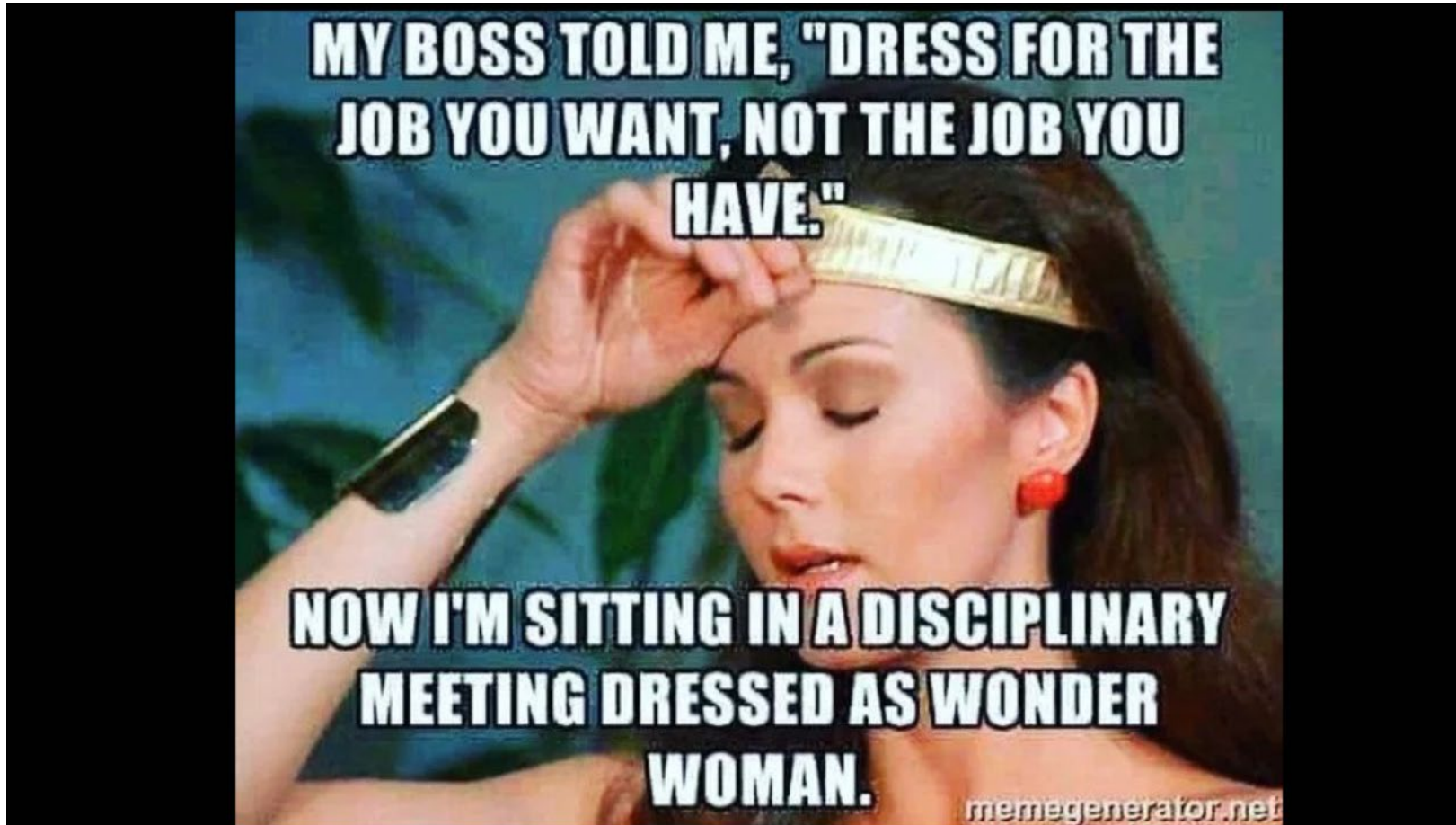




Challenges You May Be Facing

- You are 3-in-1
- Balancing the public persona & your personal beliefs
- Knowing how to respond when attacked
- Finding a way to communicate with the community
- People are reactive, not proactive
- You're expected to have a Comms Department
- Balancing transparency & privacy
- Handling miscommunication & crisis communications





Why Personal Branding Matters in Public Administration





- Trust & Credibility
- Leadership Effectiveness
- Decision-Making Authority
- Community Engagement
- Professional Development
- Project Implementation
- Crisis Management
- Resource Management
- Policy Innovation
- Legacy Building



Understanding Your Personal Brand in Public Service



Personal branding for city/county managers
**focuses on you as an individual leader
and public servant.**

*It's about how you're perceived as a
professional.*



GOVERNMENT WORKER



WHAT MY FRIENDS THINK I DO



WHAT MY PARENTS THINK I DO



WHAT I THINK I DO



WHAT POLITICANS THINK I DO



WHAT SOCIETY THINKS I DO



WHAT I REALLY DO

quickmeme.com



Distinctions of What Your Personal Brand IS





Builds Trust & Credibility



Affects Your Relationship with the Community



Reflects both personal and professional ethics in public service

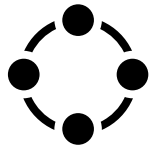




Is measured by community trust, project success, and government effectiveness



Communication style is more personal and transparent



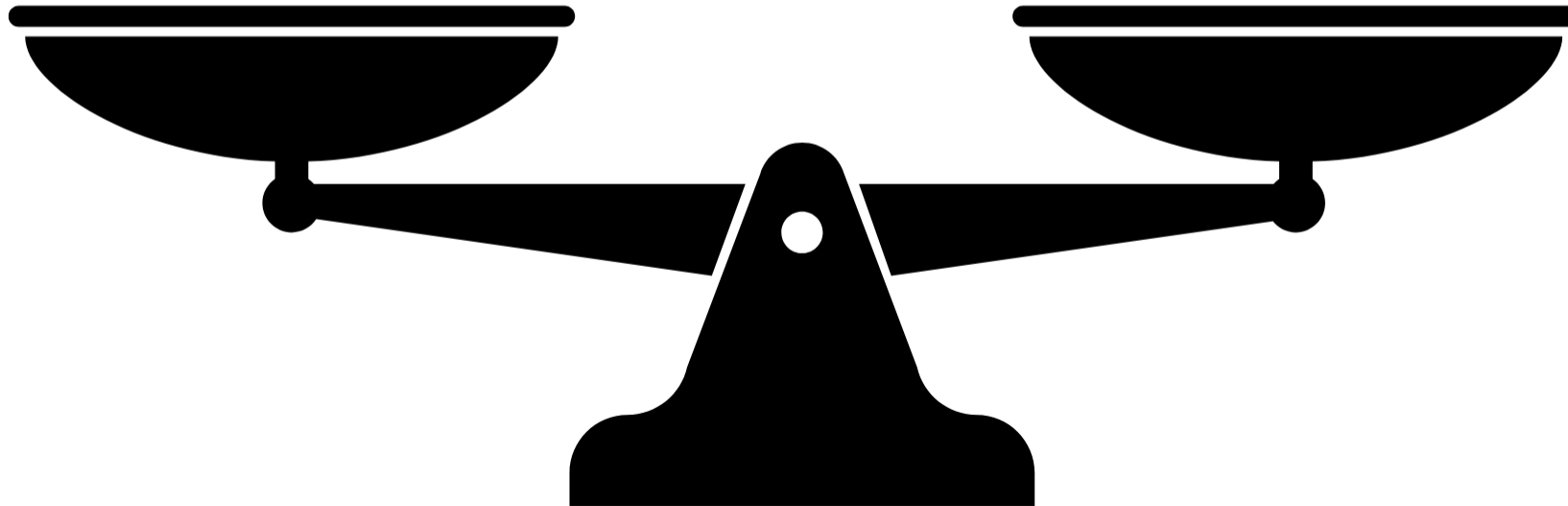
Must be consistent while adapting



Your personal branding requires a delicate balance.

PROFESSIONAL AUTHORITY
TECHNICAL EXPERTISE
PERSONAL AUTHENTICITY
INNOVATION
LEADERSHIP VISIBILITY

APPROACHABILITY
PLAIN-LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION
INSTITUTIONAL REPRESENTATION
STABILITY
BOUNDARIES



Your Impact of Your Personal Brand on Stakeholder Relationships

Elected Officials

Department Heads & Staff

Community

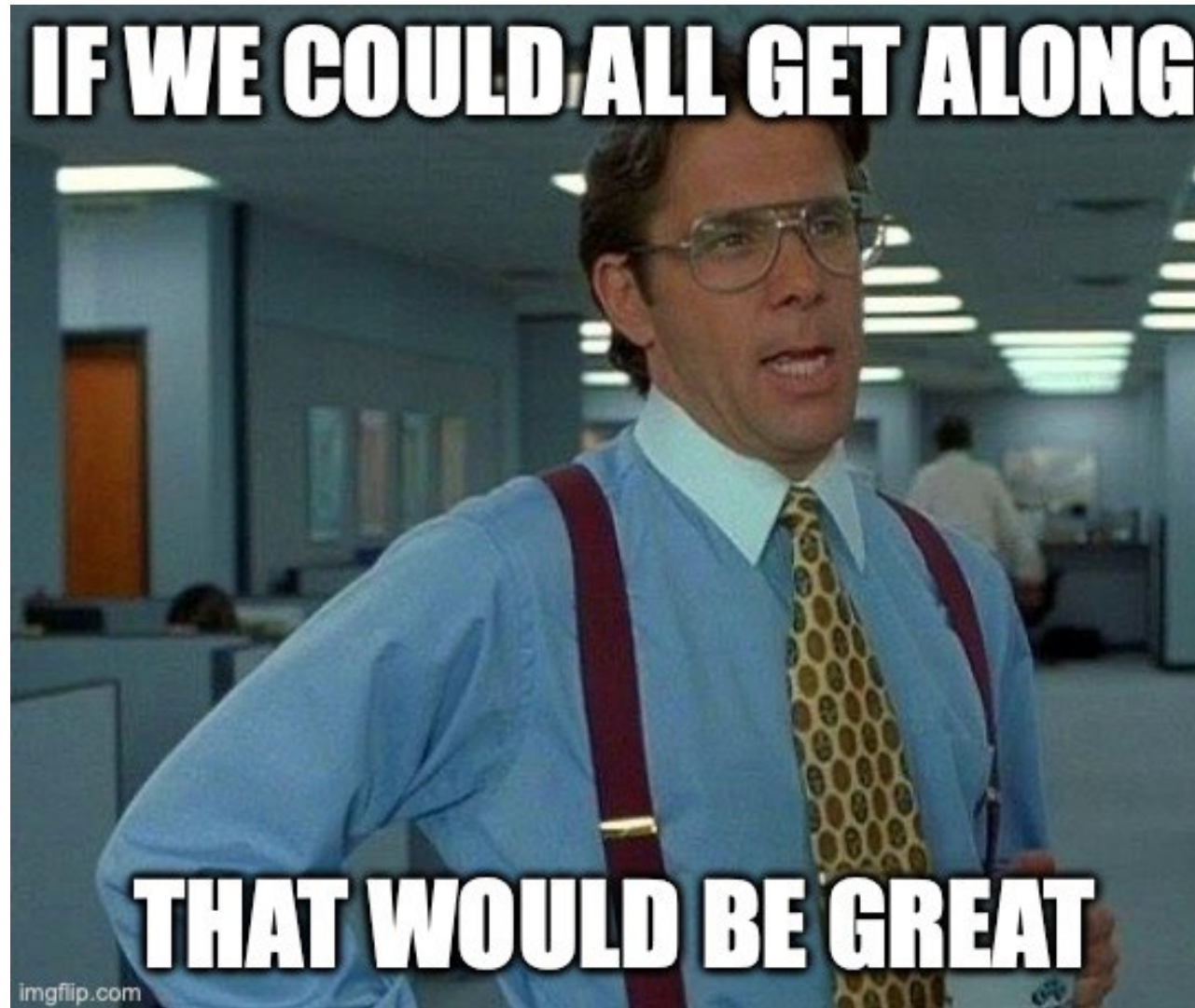
Business Community

Local Media

Other Government Agencies

Your Peers





How to be Apolitical and Proactive with Your Personal Brand



**Balancing Professional Visibility
with Public Safety**

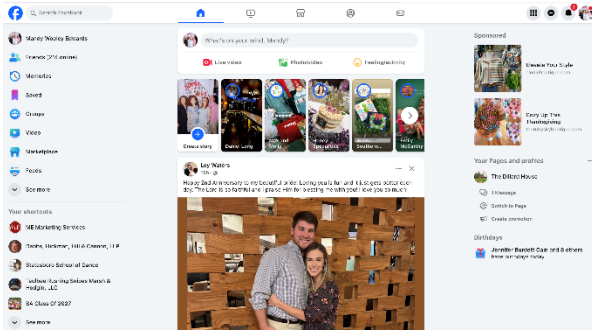
**Managing Public
in a Political**

**Maintaining Transparency
While Protecting Sensitive
Information**

**Perception
Merged**



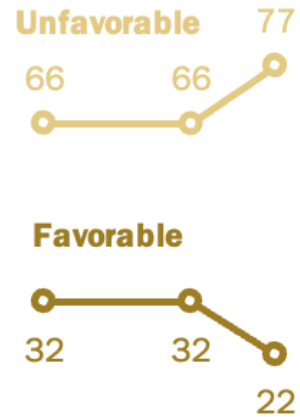
Why Stay Apolitical



Americans' opinions of federal, state and local government have grown more negative since 2019

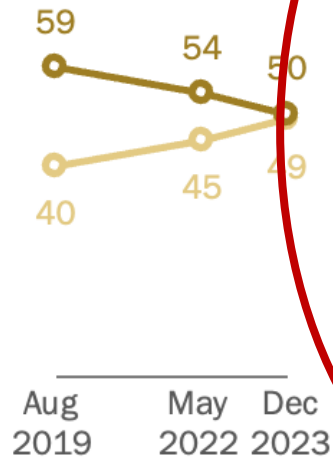
% who have a(n) ____ opinion of ...

The federal government in Washington



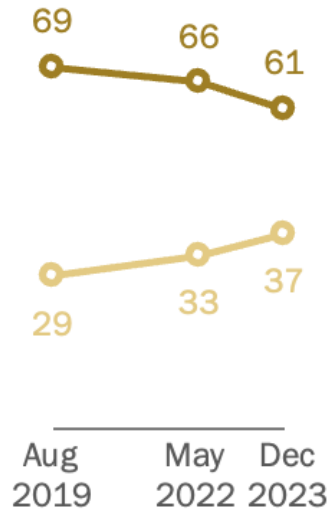
Aug 2019 May 2022 Dec 2023

Their state government



Aug 2019 May 2022 Dec 2023

Their local government



Aug 2019 May 2022 Dec 2023

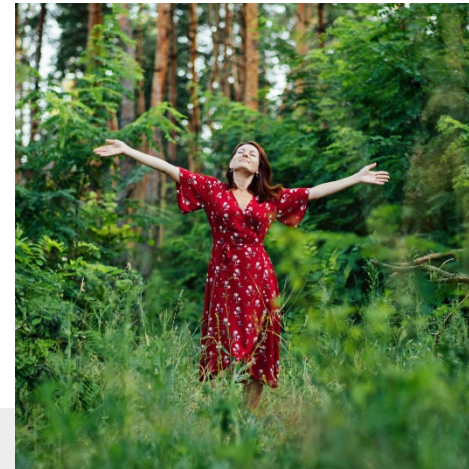
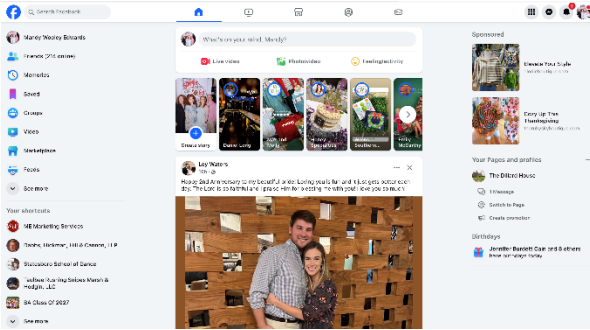
Note: No answer responses are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 3, 2023.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



Why Stay Apolitical





Questions to Ask Yourself

How does being an individual affect your other 2 personas? How can you separate them all?

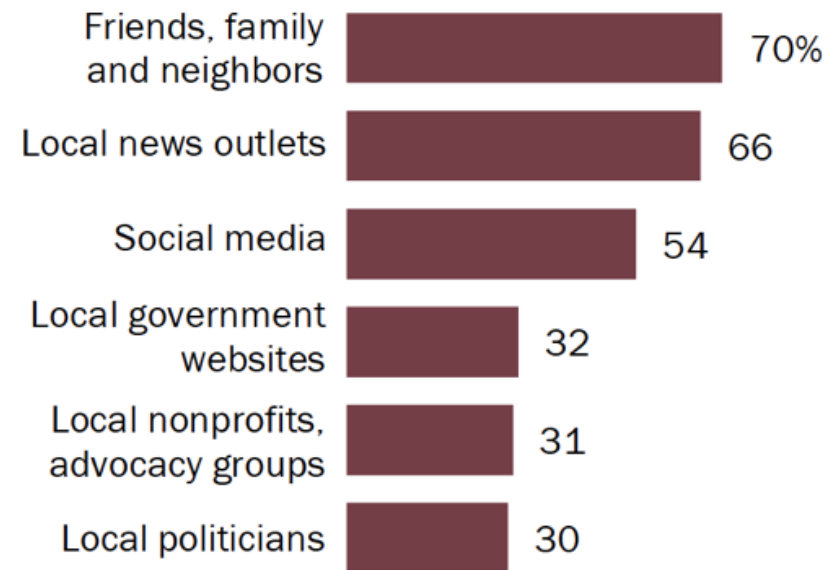
How can your personal politics affect your position?

Should your job role have a social media presence separate from your personal?



Friends and family, local news outlets, and social media are Americans' top sources for news about local politics

*% of U.S. adults who **often/sometimes** get local political news from ...*



Source: Pew Research Center survey of U.S. adults conducted Jan. 22-28, 2024.

"How Americans Get Local Political News"

PEW-KNIGHT INITIATIVE



How Can You Balance Your Public Persona and Your Personal Beliefs?

Be proactive.

Have a pre-planned strategy & messaging for situations.

Focus on non-political content.



How Can You Balance Your Public Persona and Your Personal Beliefs?

Address public concerns promptly.

Leverage social media effectively.

...so what should you not do?



3 Things **NOT** to Do...

Be reactive.

Speak from the hip.

Engage in debate.



How to Cope/Respond When Attacked?



Always take a breath and gather your thoughts first.

Sometimes it's not necessary to respond.

If you are going to respond, have several people (including legal) proof your response.

Set up Reputation Management for yourself and your role.



Reputation Management Tips:

- ☒ Set up (free) Google Alerts
- ☒ Subscribe to Brand24
- ☒ Keep an eye on public social media
- ☒ Document the negative



BRAND24



Questions?



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INFORM. INSPIRE. INNOVATE.



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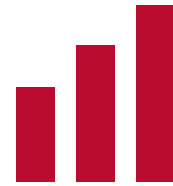
COMMUNITY BRANDING



GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)



DOWNTOWN
DEVELOPMENT



DATA ANALYTICS
& VISUALIZATION

CVIOG
DAWG
PROUD



FINANCE COURSES • GOVERNMENTAL PROFESSIONALS CERTIFICATION



STATE & LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

STRATEGIC  PLANNING



SCHOOL
LEADERSHIP

SURVEY RESEARCH & EVALUATION



ONLINE COURSES • LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT • ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

CUSTOM
APPLICATION
DEVELOPMENT



WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT



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PLANNING RETREATS AND CUSTOMIZED FACILITATION