

# City of Bothell

Online Council Packet Program

*'Providing Effective Online Tools  
For Council'*

# In This Presentation

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- It Begins
- Planning - Brainstorming
- Getting Staff 'On Board'
- Presenting The Idea to Council
- Policies and Procedures
- IT Processes ... *Technically Speaking*
- Considerations
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# Bothell's Approach

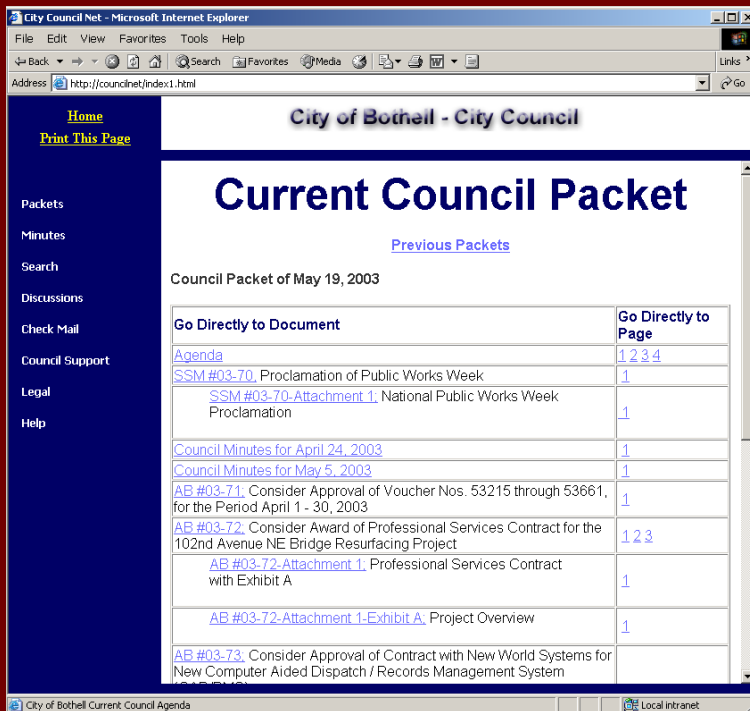
- Our 'Easier Said than Done' 15 Step Program
  - As a Department, brainstormed.
  - Met with staff involved in current process.
  - Met with CM's Office - understanding of the ultimate goal.
  - Asked Management, Legal, and City Clerk staff for content ideas.
  - Visited City Attorney - *legal stamp*.
  - Went to Council Meetings.
  - Reviewed past Council packets.
  - Created the first packet.
  - Installed Laptops; 'locked down'.
  - Trained key staff and Management *'Dry run for Council'*.
  - Presented idea/solution to Council and provided training.
  - Took feedback from Council.
  - Cross trained I.T. staff .
  - Worked with CM to develop policies.
  - Took a few days off and relaxed!



Dramatization. No I.T. Staff *actually* got to go to the beach and relax.

# Bothell's Approach

"We created the product first.  
The policies and processes  
surrounding it came naturally."



- Documents Received From Clerk
  - Documents are due to I.T. for posting each Thursday (7 business days prior to Council Meetings).
  - Documents must follow 'website posting guidelines'.
- HTML
  - All documents are converted into HTML.
  - Anchors on all literal page breaks are created for quick access.
  - All documents are linked from the Agenda.
  - Packets are posted to City's internal website (CobNet).
  - Agenda and linked documents are posted to the City Website.
  - Online Council Packets require only a browser.
- Laptops
  - Are always in the Council Chambers for use during meetings (Viewing Online Council Packets).

# Bothell's Approach

## ■ Our Own 'twist' On Online Council Packets

- **O**nline Council Site is burned to CD each week for Council use at home.
- **T**ools included: Protocol Manual, Goals, Municipal Codes, minutes (approved), agenda actions, etc.
- **CD** operates just like Council Site for consistency and ease of use.
- **E**ach week, a different Bothell employee or special event is featured to help Council become introduced to staff and understand each employee's role in the City. It's been well received by Council and Staff.

"Our existing Council, who have been accustomed to the old method, have adjusted quite nicely. Now that the process is in place, incoming Council members will know only the new way. We have reduced printing from 32 full packets down to just minimal copies."

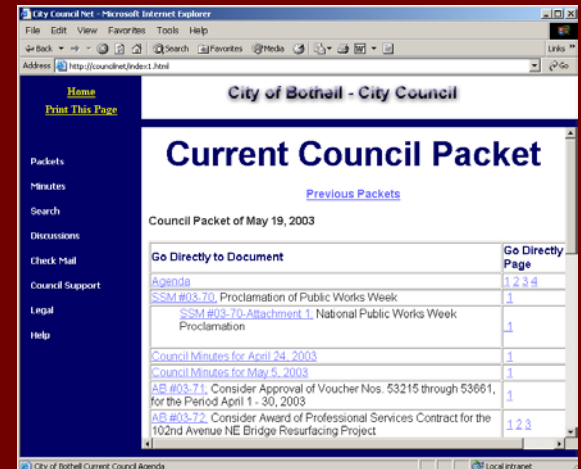
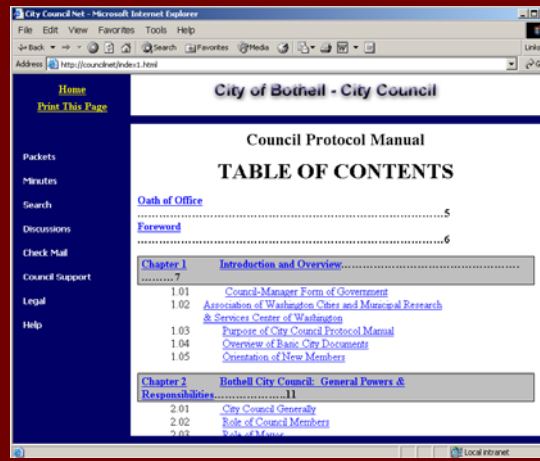
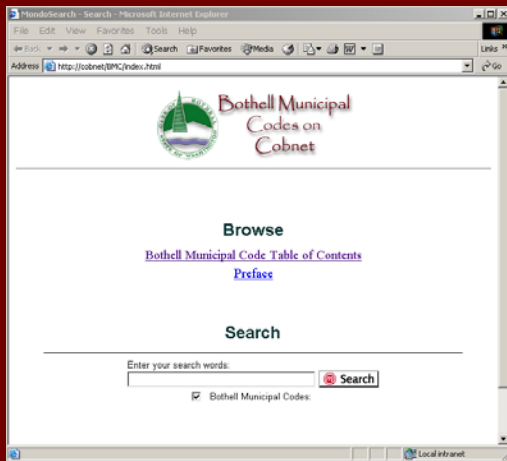


Michele,  
City of Bothell



# Bothell's Approach

- Management and City Council no longer receive Council Packets on paper.
- Packets are available on the City's Internal Website for City Staff.
- Agendas are available on City website for Citizens and the Press.



Weekly I.T. Staff time investment ... *6-13 hours*

Investment in CDs and CD labels ... *approx. \$500 annually*

Reducing printing costs and staff time creating paper Council packets ... *huge*

No more Council frustration when a Citizen cites a municipal code and it's not handy ... *priceless!*

# It Begins

City Manager: 'A growing number of Cities are talking about Online Council Packets. We need to get 'in on it' on the ground floor. Can you put something together that we can present to Council next week?'

I.T.: 'Uh...*sure.*'



Kevin, City of Bothell

# Planning - Brainstorming

“Once we got over the initial shock, we saw this as a rare opportunity to become familiar with Council and better yet ... Council would become more familiar with I.T. and it’s people.

It was a incredible opportunity to stick a nice big feather in our I.T. cap!”

## ■ How Are We Going To Do This?!

### ■ How and Why

- How can this save the City and it’s Citizens money?
- How can we help improve productivity during meetings?
- What can I.T. realistically handle and can it be done in-house?
- Does I.T. have sufficient staff?
- Can related duties be spread to other Departments?
- Where does the \$\$ come from when it’s not been budgeted?

### ■ What format

- Text, Word, scans, html, pdf, **BLT**, **PB&J**, **FBI**?

### ■ What venue

- Burn it to CD, post to Intranet, post to Internet?



Joe, City of Bothell

# Planning - Brainstorming

- **Council Involvement**
  - **H**ow do we get council 'on board' and excited about the new method?
- **Key Staff**
  - **I**dentifying key staff.
  - **G**etting them involved.
- **Give Them What They Can't Get With Paper**
  - **A**dding upcoming events or latest news to electronic packets.
  - **A**dding helpful documents to electronic packets that will help Council do their job more effectively.
- **Banking Ideas**
  - **D**uring brainstorming, write down everyone's ideas - whether planning to implement them 'off the bat' or not.



John and Kevin, City of Bothell

# Getting Key Staff and CM Involved

## ■ Identify Key Staff Early

### – City Manager's Office

- Asking questions, request suggestions and feedback.
- Getting help to fine tune the process relating to technical support to Council.
- Starting the buzz

### – City Clerk's Office

- Finding out how council packets are created and provided to council currently.
- Determining how a new process can make the Clerk's job easier. This person plays a key role with Council.
- Understanding that this new process, Online Council Packets, will change the relationship between I.T. and the City Clerk's Office.
- Continuing the buzz

### – City Attorney

- Communicating with City Attorney about presentation of packets, minutes, and agenda actions. *"Remember, your City Attorney is your Friend".*
- Continuing the buzz

### – Upper Management

- Requesting input to make management feel like they are part of the process.
- Effects on Upper Management
- More buzz

# Presenting The Idea to Council

## ■ Presenting a Finished Product

- 'Selling It'
  - Explaining to Council how the new process will assist them.
    - Consistent and readily available information during meetings.
    - More information available than ever before.
    - Council Agendas can be emailed to Citizens or posted to City website for Citizen access.
  - Explaining any cost savings to the City.
    - Reduced printing costs.
    - Reduced paper costs.
    - Reduced staff time in City Clerk's Office.
    - Council Packet Information more easily accessible to staff, freeing up staff time and resources.
- Clean and sharp.
  - Show them a product that is pleasing to the eye and easy to use.
- Present only 100% completed work.
  - If additions and features are not ready, save them and WOW them again later. Avoid presenting an unfinished product.

# Presenting The Idea to Council

## ■ Providing Council With Instructions And Lessons

- **T**rainning is KEY, but keep instructions short and sweet.
- **U**se Screen shots for easy to follow lessons (use staff to test your training materials to ensure they are perfect).
- **T**ake the time to train the Council ourselves- before a meeting is ideal for Council member's schedules.

## ■ Get Support

- **K**eep the City Manager informed and educated about the online Council Packet product. He/She can be our biggest advocate while we present the idea to your City Council.
- **S**ell it to Management before showing it to Council. Get as many key staff on board and excited. *This will show.*

## ■ Be Ready For Anything

- **K**now the possibilities and limitations because they may ask for the world.
- **B**e prepared for those hard hitting questions.



Michele, City of Bothell

# Presenting The Idea to Council

- Provide Council With The Tools They Will Need.
  - Contact Information
    - Giving Council an effective means of requesting assistance.
  - Training
    - New ideas are less welcome if they are not understood.
  - Laptops
    - Getting those unbudgeted funds.
    - Limited access or take home equipment.

“The more we showed people what we could achieve, the easier the resources were to obtain.”

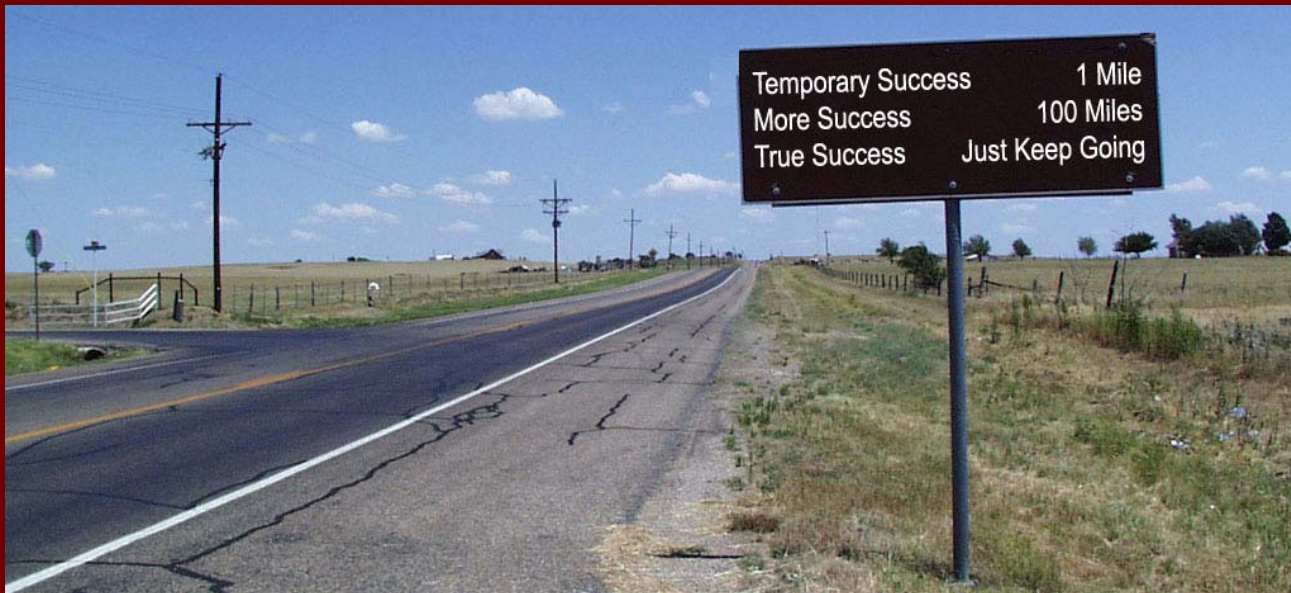


# Presenting Your Idea to Council

## ■ Wow Them!

- **P**ut a unique twist on the product.
- **C**ome with fresh ideas on how to build on the product.
- **B**efore presenting: go through those notes made during brainstorming and consider if any ideas can be implemented later. Determine if you want to share any or all of those ideas with Council.

“We did it and  
we ROCKED!  
Now What?”



# Policies and Procedures

## ■ Develop Policies And Procedures Early

- **T**ake note of issues that arise during the planning stage. These will help develop official policies later.
- **C**lue staff in *early* of what processes may have to change.

## ■ Policies Should Surround I.T. Procedures

- **S**et clear deadlines for submitting documents. Getting the documents from the City Clerk's office, in time to put them in an electronic format, is crucial.
- **D**efine clearly to staff what format all documents must be submitted in.

"At first, staff treated the Online Council Packets like they were an addition to the paper packets and would create more work.

It took some time to get that attitude to change.

We just kept reminding them that the tables had turned, that *paper* would be an addition to the *online packets*. It would be *paper* that would just create more work."

# IT Processes...Technically Speaking

- **Once Created, Online Council Packets Become Critical**
  - **Cross train** – make certain more than one staff person can effectively create the council packets.
  - **Documentation** – Create TIDs outlining process to reduce errors or inconsistencies.
  - **Stick to policies** – Because Online Council Packets can be time consuming, help staff develop good habits for submitting content.



I can't go on vacation because I'm the only one that can do these darned Online Council Packets!!

Laura, City of Bothell

# Considerations

## ■ Considerations

- **A**ttachments - Documents that are provided by contractors or outside agencies
  - Can they be obtained electronically?
  - How do we handle documents that cannot be obtained electronically?
- **I**f posting on Internet, there may be legal issues surrounding Council related documents - signatures, etc
- **I**f using Word, PDF or scanned images, would it perform quickly enough to be effective during a meeting?
- **S**hould Council be able to search the documents?
- **I**n order to get the packets out on time, when will all the documents have to be submitted?
- **H**ow are we going to make the Online Council Packets available to Council?
- **W**ho's going to do the work each week?
- **H**OW-oh-HOW will we get Departments to get AB and SSM documents in on time?
- **H**ow do we handle those documents that still don't get in on time?

# Monster Gotchas!

- **From Fab to Fizzle**
  - Bank good ideas so we can WOW them later - *don't let it get stale.*
- **Ahh...Who Needs 'Um**
  - Keep Staff in the loop. Ask questions about the current process or that monster might bite us later.
  - Keep key staff knowledgeable and involved. We want them on your side.
  - Train key staff on how to use the Online Council Packets. *Makes for a Good 'dry run'.*
- **Not So Positive**
  - Don't *'not do it'* because you don't have the resources...use it as an opportunity to shine and *get* more resources.
- **Policy Shmolisy**
  - Online Council Packets take time. Stick to those policies to keep processes streamlined.
- **Don't Spend a lot of Time on Documentation**
  - 'It's the finished product that counts.' True, but presentation is everything.
  - Take the time to create professional and easy to understand training materials.
- **Hmm....I Wonder...**
  - Make it clear that the project is *'Council Packets'*; I.T. may be approached with packets for Boards and Commissions.
- **You Said You Could**
  - Consider all ideas offered by Staff and Council but avoid making promises.



One Eyed, One Horned, Flying Purple People Eater.  
Not employed with the City of Bothell