

# Neupauer stresses strategic public relations in Crawford

Crowd of 90 benefits from insight, organizer says

July 14, 2017

(Conneaut Lake, PA) Butler County Community College President Dr. Nick Neupauer, the keynote speaker at the inaugural Crawford Area Transportation Authority retreat, stressed the importance of strategic public relations to a crowd of 90 that included county commissioners, elected officials, state Department of Transportation representatives and regional business leaders.

The half-day event, according to Timothy Geibel, general manager of CATA, was intended to educate elected officials, community and business leaders and other key stakeholders about addressing the value of public transportation in Crawford and Venango counties.

“In agencies such as ours, and in smaller communities, businesses don’t always have the necessary personnel to properly handle strategic communications and crisis communications,” Geibel said. “I thought it would be beneficial to provide education on how to handle communication of that manner when agencies face that situation.”

Neupauer’s expertise in communication was recognized in 2013 by the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations’ District 1 as its prestigious Pacesetter Award winner. He earned a Doctorate in Education in communication and instruction from West Virginia University, a Master of Science in communication from Clarion University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Arts degree in print journalism from Penn State University.

“There are a lot of nonprofits that struggle with the concept of strategic public relations, and the significance of those larger strategies and tactics,” Neupauer said. “This is not something that should be outsourced. It’s something that should be part of any organization.”

## Crisis management, positive media relations significant

Among those in attendance were state Sen. Scott Hutchinson, R-21, whose district includes part of Butler County; state Rep. Brad Roae, R-6; Vicki Leap from the office of state Rep. Park Wentling, R-17, whose district includes parts of Lawrence and Mercer counties; and commissioners Francis Weiderspahn and John Amata from Crawford County and Chip Abramovic from Venango County.

Neupauer also talked about the significance of crisis management and positive media relations for those representing nonprofit organizations, and asked audience members if they could identify their stakeholders.

“Some nonprofits are very flat organizations that have very little expertise or personnel dedicated to these areas,” Neupauer said.

Neupauer’s concept of identifying one’s publics and champions, and how to communicate the same message differently to other people, likely resonated most with his audience, Geibel said.

“The way you communicate with a board chairman who is on board with your plans is different from how you communicate with an elected official or a member of the community who may be critical of what you are doing,” Geibel said. “I think identifying who your audience is and tailoring your message to the specific individuals is probably the best takeaway.”

Geibel “understands that there is a need for strategic communication, understanding public relations and strategic public relations,” Neupauer said. “It is not just writing press releases or putting together a newsletter. There is a larger strategy to it.”

CATA in June marked the first anniversary of its regional partnership with the Venango County Transportation program to operate as a two-county transit provider, according to Geibel, who was among other speakers that included PennDOT’s Toby Fauver, deputy secretary for multimodal transportation; and Danielle Spila, director of its Bureau of Public Transportation.