



READY?



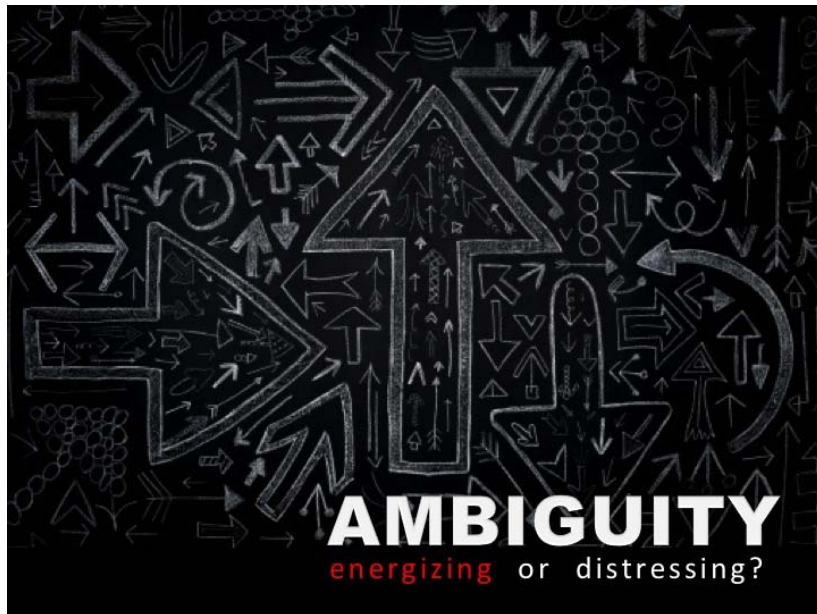
1) Why are you in the profession?

It all starts here. You need an authentic, unshakable reason for being in the profession. If you can't succinctly articulate why you are in the profession, the community, elected officials and staff will have no idea of where you are coming from, or hope to go. You'll founder, they'll founder, and pretty soon somebody will grow tired of foundering.

2) What is your pain tolerance?

It needs to be high. You'll be the target of attacks both just justified and not, and you can't take it personally, nor rely on standard issue self-intoxicants like alcohol or pride to ease the pain. Suck it up. Walk it off. Get back to work.



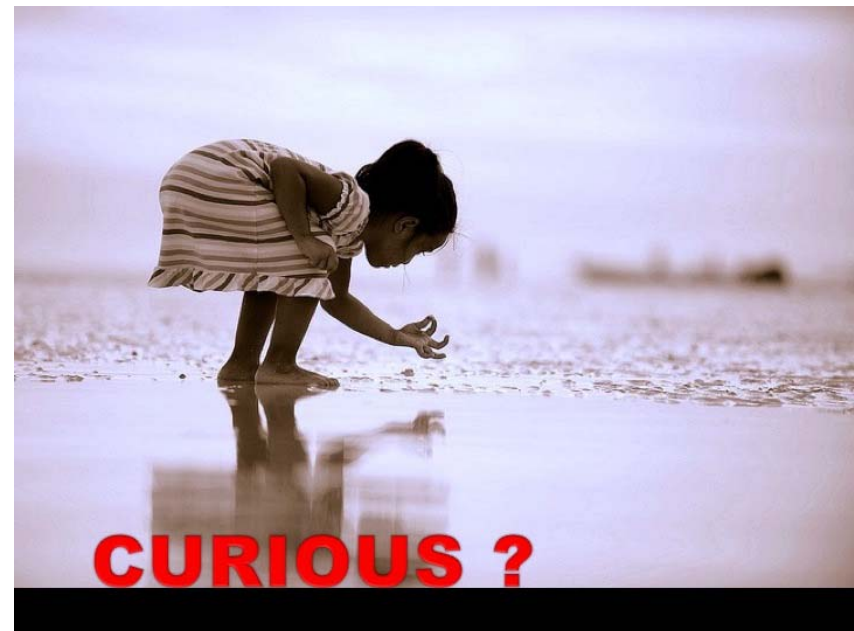


3) Ambiguity; friend or foe?

If you would like an ordered life, get a factory job (from a prior century). Local governance is anything but neatly ordered, and the manager's chair doesn't come with a user's guide. Your job is to find an inclusive and positive path through the fog, and help the team secure multiple opportunities in each challenge it faces.

4) Are you curious?

Do you think you learned all you needed to know when you received your MPA, or do you wake up each day enthusiastic about learning something new? While you were slogging through classes, the people who work for you were creating the community you are now responsible for. Ask them how and why they made it the way they did, and how they'd like to make it better.





5) Are you ok with people being curious about you and what you do?

Everything you say or don't say, do or don't do, will be scrutinized. Get used to it, be as clear as you can, and be microscopically honest.

6) Can you see and solve problems others can't see or can't solve?

You are Mr. or Ms. Fixit for the organization and community. That simple.

Here's a hint – don't be the only guy at a national disaster who hasn't rolled up his sleeves.





7) Can you lead a team?

Can you accept responsibility for every mistake and failure?
 Can you set a standard that is both aspirational and attainable? Can you be unfailingly reliable, resilient and positive?

8) Can you say “no” at least 50 different ways?

No one wants to hear “no”. But it has to be said. You get paid to say it, so say it resolutely, positively and creatively, until the team delivers the standard of excellence the community needs and expects.





9) Can you live without friends?

It's lonely at the top of other professions too. But this is a public one, with exceptional ethical standards. You can be friendly, but you can't have friends (in the jurisdiction you serve) until you're no longer CAO.

10) Do you have a solid support structure?

If you can't have friends, you better have a support structure. Family, faith, colleagues, and the ICMA Code of Ethics can help, as does exercise, fitness and hobbies. You must create and nurture a support structure to survive.





11) Is the town a good fit?

Ultimately, you work for your values. If your values are alien to the town you work for, that's not going to work.

12) What is your "Plan B"?

You must be fully committed to the organization and community you work for, so much so that continuing your paychecks matters less than community progress. What's your "Plan B" for when you have to speak truth to power, and keep the organization and community moving forward?

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