

To Jim Kent and Glenn Winfree,

I just read your article, "Citizens Awakening: The Paradigm Shift," in the March/April 2019 issue of *Right of Way Magazine*. This is spot on! You nailed the futility of traditional corporate processes for trying to gain citizen support for proposed controversial projects. In 1986, I was hired by a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bechtel Corporation and then its successor, AMOCO Oil Company. They realized that the traditional corporate siting and permitting models didn't work in highly controversial projects. They attempted to site, permit, build and operate hazardous waste transfer, storage and treatment facilities, but citizen and community opposition were blocking their projects.

They first tried the slick "Madison Avenue" approach to convince communities that the project was the best thing since sliced bread. One citizen commented publicly, "I don't trust you because you're trying to convince us that your hazardous waste incinerator is cleaner than the Norelco Clean Air Machine." People just didn't trust the "suits" who came to town with the well-prepared information materials and open checkbooks.

When that approach didn't work, they tried the political route of trying to convince elected officials that the project would be wonderful for their community, county and state. It was easy to get politicians to sign on with promises of jobs and tax revenues, but as the hot winds of citizen opposition began to blow, their support evaporated quickly. I remember sitting in the Missouri governor's office informing him of the company's plans to build a facility in his state. He told me point blank that he would support the project for 30 days but if citizen opposition arose, he would back away from it. At least he was honest and forthright, and I appreciated it.

As proposed projects were blocked one by one, the company became desperate to find an approach that worked. That's why they hired me. I pitched them the Socially Responsive Management approach that Jim Kent developed for the Forest Service in the 1970s. They weren't quite sure what it was, but they decided to give it a try on a small \$15 million project in Louisiana in 1986. I was not an employee at that point, but they gave me a six-month contract and access to company resources to



see if the approach would work. Although there was some initial and understandable citizen opposition, we were able to work through it by doing the things you propose in your IRWA Social Ecology articles. The project (a hazardous waste incinerator) was permitted and built for one of the largest polyvinyl chloride (PVC) feedstock production facilities in the nation. With the project's success and the buyout by AMOCO Oil Company, I was offered the fulltime position of Director of Facilities Siting. Beginning in 1987, we used the approach for a \$100 million project in Nebraska that was also successfully permitted and built in 1995. It is still operating today with citizen support, and provides the community with 150 high paying jobs, while protecting the environment from hazardous hydrocarbon wastes.

Corporate policy established a legal contingency fund equal to 10 percent of the estimated cost of the proposed project, so for the Nebraska project, the company budgeted \$10 million for legal. However, because of the socially responsive management approach we used, the company didn't have to use it. This is the same approach that you proposed in your March/April article.

I'm glad that you provided solid financial data in the article regarding the costs of blocked projects. Those numbers are staggering. However, even those numbers do not consider the losses in company credibility, shareholder confidence, employee morale or lost market opportunities. Indeed, the paradigm has shifted regarding working with citizens to gain their support for proposed projects. Good job, Jim and Glenn, for bringing this shift to the forefront of project siting and permitting.

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