

2025 Strategic Communications: H2O Workshop

Speaker Profiles

AJ Axtell

Director of Community Relations
Western Lake Superior Sanitary District
Duluth, MN

Joining the Western Lake Superior Sanitary District (WLSSD) in 2006, **AJ Axtell** works to establish mutually beneficial relationships in the region to ensure WLSSD achieves its clean water and landfill abatement goals. She is responsible for the development, planning, management, and execution of strategies for all aspects of public and legislative affairs for WLSSD. Additionally, she leads the daily operation and development of WLSSD's environmental programs related to pollution prevention, recycling and waste reduction, composting, hazardous waste management, biosolids management program development and education, and water quality programs. She also oversees the organization's Administrative Team, responsible for various internal and external support activities, including support for WLSSD's Board of Directors.

Ms. Axtell holds a BS degree in Biology and an MS degree in Microbiology, both from Central Michigan University. She serves on the Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors and the Leadership Duluth Steering Committee, and formerly served on the Fuse Duluth Leadership Council. She is also a long-time member of Business Networking International.



Emily Barnett

Communications and Government Relations Manager
Central Contra Costa Sanitary District
Martinez, CA



Brantley Bissette

Community Education and Outreach Specialist
Hampton Roads Sanitation District
Virginia Beach, VA

Brantley Bissette is the Community Education and Outreach Specialist at Hampton Roads Sanitation District (HRSD). The newest member of the HRSD's communications department, Mr.

Bissette works to promote the value of the wastewater utility to citizens throughout the service area, encompassing roughly 5,000 square miles of southeastern Virginia and serving nearly 2 million residents. He leads tours of HRSD's SWIFT Research Center, engages in public outreach and education, assists with strategic and internal communications, helps foster partnerships with scientific and nonprofit groups, and oversees the HRSD Ambassador program.

Previously, Mr. Bissette worked in the environmental nonprofit, research and ecotourism fields. He has a BS in Marine Science with a Minor in Journalism and Mass Communications from the University of South Carolina and is currently pursuing a Master of Natural Resources at Virginia Tech.



Mack Bradley

President
StandPoint Public Affairs
St. Louis, MO

Mack Bradley has built a reputation as a thoughtful strategic partner who can help envision and defend one's StandPoint. He focuses on strategic communications, crisis management, public affairs and media relations, and he's a broadly trusted ally and sounding board to clients and colleagues alike. He's worked for corporate clients large and small, local and regional government agencies, charitable foundations, not-for-profits and religious institutions. His expertise ranges from billion-dollar real estate development projects to large festivals (keep an eye out for him at Mardi Gras!), to complex public policy issues.

A frequent trainer and speaker, Mr. Bradley has conducted media and/or crisis training for hundreds of participants in North America and Europe in various industries, including emergency risk communications training related to chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear threats. Part of this curriculum, sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, focuses on the psychology of risk communications in a public crisis.

Mr. Bradley is an active member of the community. He currently serves on the St. Patrick Center Board of Trustees and is president of the Mardi Gras Foundation. He is past president of AmeriCorps St. Louis, and a past member of Mid-America Transplant Services Board, the Cardinal Glennon Foundation Development Board and the Mayor's Commission on Violent Crime. He has served as an adjunct professor in the Brown School of Social Work at Washington University, teaching a graduate-level course on Social, Economic and Political Environment.

Mr. Bradley earned a BA in Political Science from Illinois Wesleyan University and an MA in International Affairs from Washington University in St. Louis. He was a National Security Forum participant at the Air War College, and a Coro Public Affairs Fellow.



Holly Bomba

Education & Outreach Associate
Pittsburgh Water
Pittsburgh, PA

Holly Bomba is part of Pittsburgh Water's Public Affairs team, through which she manages Pittsburgh Water's K-12 Scholastic Outreach Program and works to build public awareness around the many Pittsburgh Water initiatives underway to provide the communities we serve with safe, reliable water services. She's responsible for working directly with our community members to educate about water quality, our drinking water treatment process, stormwater management, and our city's sewer system.

With a background in environmental science and a keen interest in history, Ms. Bomba loves the process of taking a big, technical topic, breaking it down into its essential parts, and bringing it "home" by incorporating shared experiences and local stories to increase relatability.

In her free time, Ms. Bomba is a geology-enthusiast and always up for a good adventure outdoors backpacking, hiking, kayaking, mountaineering or canyoneering!



Leneyde Chavez

Engagement and Public Affairs Manager
Carollo Engineers
Los Angeles, CA

Leny Chavez is a fervent advocate for the built environment and for economic development. As the daughter of a civil engineer and a junior high teacher in a developing country, from a young age Mrs. Chavez understood the opportunities this could afford disadvantaged communities. Today, she represents Carollo Engineers—a premier design firm specializing in water projects and handles the community engagement and government relation initiatives for Carollo in the Los Angeles region.

At the age of 16, Ms. Chavez moved to Los Angeles from Honduras, Central America. Like many recent immigrants in the Latino Community who start from humble beginnings, she lived in the garage of her extended family's home while finishing up high school. She became a mother at a young age but remained committed to her education and earned a BA in Political Science and an MA in Urban Planning both from the University of California, Los Angeles. Mrs. Chavez is the mother to three young men: Eduardo (25), Benjamin (14), and Marcus (11).

Mrs. Chavez is an avid supporter of corporate social responsibility and has worked with Pacoima Beautiful for the last 6 years. She is experienced in contract management and

economic development professional. She has participated in a multitude of community engagement efforts including education and outreach, non-profit management, government relations, and ordinance compliance. Today, she is Pacoima Beautiful's functioning Chair supporting the organization in its mission as a grassroots environmental justice organization providing education, impacting local policy, and supporting the Arts to promote a healthy San Fernando Valley. She is committed to environmental justice and to promoting collaboration among strategic partners to develop a sustainable future for Los Angeles. She is committed to environmental justice and to promoting collaboration among strategic partners to develop a sustainable future for Los Angeles.



Erin Collar

Public Affairs & Education Specialist
NEW Water
Green Bay, WI



Chantel Dominguez

Community Campaigns and Engagement Director
American Rivers
Reno, NV

Prior to joining American Rivers, **Chantel Dominguez** was the Programs and Events Director at Truckee Meadows Parks Foundation. She has extensive experience in project management, program development, community advocacy, and environmental stewardship. She began her environmental justice career through AmeriCorps VISTA, serving as Community Engagement Coordinator, and has experience in service industry management from her time as General Manager at Dark Matter Coffee in Chicago. She is passionate about intersectional environmentalism and strives to empower marginalized and underserved communities through collaborative-driven initiatives, both in the work she does professionally and personally.

**Alyssa Downs**

Manager of Communications
California Association of Sanitation Agencies
Sacramento, CA

Alyssa Downs is the Manager of Communications for the California Association of Sanitation Agencies (CASA) providing timely, relevant information to both members and legislators on clean water and beneficial reuse issues. Her responsibilities include developing CASA's communication strategies, producing the CASA Connects newsletter, developing content for traditional and social media, and handling graphic design and outreach materials that support CASA's statewide advocacy efforts. Ms. Downs holds a BA in Communication Studies from California State University, Stanislaus.

**Sinjin Eberle**

Managing Director
American Rivers Action Fund
Durango, CO

Sinjin Eberle serves as the Managing Director of the American Rivers Action Fund, the 501(c)(4) affiliate of American Rivers, the nation's leading advocacy organization for the protection and restoration of rivers. He also holds the role of Southwest Communications Director for American Rivers, where he leads regional communications strategies and community engagement initiatives.

With a deep commitment to conserving natural landscapes and protecting free-flowing rivers, Mr. Eberle works to elevate the visibility and impact of both organizations through strategic outreach, coalition building, and policy advocacy. His work includes advancing ballot initiatives, securing public funding for water infrastructure, and promoting sustainable water management across the Southwest.

Mr. Eberle holds a bachelor's degree in environmental science from Ball State University and brings a broad background in fitness and the outdoors, including mountain biking, mountaineering, and mountain rescue, and holds a Level 1 CrossFit coach certificate. In addition to his advocacy work, he is an accomplished writer, photographer, and filmmaker whose creative projects focus on environmental storytelling and water issues across the American West.

He is particularly engaged in conservation efforts within the Colorado River Basin, with a focus on sustainable water supply, policy innovation, and ecosystem protection throughout the region.



Tricia Garrison

Public Affairs & Education Manager
NEW Water
Green Bay, WI

Tricia Garrison is the public affairs and education manager for NEW Water, the brand of the Green Bay Metropolitan Sewerage District.

She launched her career as a journalist, eventually segueing into communications and public relations for organizations, including Habitat for Humanity International and as a Hollywood film publicist.

Ms. Garrison has a bachelor's degree in journalism from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a master's degree in sustainable management from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and is accredited in public relations with the Public Relations Society of America.

She serves on the Green Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve Site Evaluation Committee and volunteers for the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Green Bay.



Daniel Gold

Management Professional – Watershed & Systems Planning
Great Lakes Water Authority
Detroit, MI

Daniel Gold is a Michigan native with nearly 20 years of environmental management experience spanning the private, public, and non-profit sectors. He began his career leading trail crews in national parks and then spent several years carrying out subsurface investigations as a consultant. Prior to his current role, he served as the Senior Water Quality Specialist for the Great Lakes Commission where he managed collaborative policy and planning initiatives related to source water protection, agricultural runoff, environmental markets, and urban water infrastructure. He currently manages the Member Services Program at Great Lakes Water Authority where he engages representatives of over 100 local communities to increase coordination and transparency across the regional system and advance collaborative water quality and infrastructure planning initiatives. While his resume demonstrates a strong background in environmental science, his current work speaks to a belief that clear communication and a sense of trust among stakeholders are equally important to the success of technical initiatives as engineering specs. Mr. Gold holds a BS degree in Geology from the University of Michigan and a Master of Environmental Science and Management degree with a focus on Water Resources Management from the University of California, Santa Barbara.



Heather Haskell
Senior Consultant
EMA, Inc.
Grand Rapids, MI

Heather Haskell brings more than 21 years of utility industry experience working with municipalities and utilities to optimize business processes and implement asset management tools and strategies. Her expertise includes integrating geographic information systems (GIS) spatial data with enterprise asset management systems (EAMS) and customer information systems (CIS). Ms. Haskell is experienced with data conversion and system implementations for water production and distribution, wastewater treatment and collection, stormwater collection, transportation, and facilities management using a variety of EAM solutions. Ms. Haskell has led the development of key performance indicators (KPIs), metrics, and dashboards to improve organizational effectiveness, data visualization, and to identify assets needing repair or rehabilitation. Ms. Haskell is a skilled facilitator with solid written and verbal communication skills and excellent listening skills for individual interactions and in group settings.



Melia Howard
Deputy Mayor of Detroit
City of Detroit
Detroit, MI

Melia Howard, a lifelong Detroiter, serves as the Deputy Mayor of Detroit.

Ms. Howard is Detroit's second woman to serve as Deputy Mayor in the city's history. Nettie Seabrooks was the first woman to hold the position from 1994-1997 under Mayor Dennis Archer.

Before becoming Deputy Mayor, Ms. Howard served as the mayor's Director of Community Engagement, where she has played a key role in building community support for many of the city's marquee development projects by making sure they had a voice in the process and a role in shaping each project's community benefits agreement. Prior to that, she was Director of Special Projects and also served as Department of Neighborhoods manager for District 5.

Prior to becoming Director of Community Relations, Ms. Howard was the Mayor's Special Projects Manager, where she began serving as advisor to Mayor Duggan on large-scale development projects, a role she will continue as Deputy Mayor. Ms. Howard has also worked as a District 5 Manager for the Department of Neighborhoods for more than three years, where she managed community relationships and helped residents with their daily concerns.

Ms. Howard also spearheaded the Saturdays in the D program, which provides Detroit youths and adults on-campus educational activities at the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor. The program, which is partnership with UM and Ally Financial, gives 100 high school students and 100 adults each year access to educational and experiential opportunities at UM in fields like robotics and climate change.

In her role, Ms. Howard also continues the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) work. Over the first three quarters, the “Shotstoppers” initiative has resulted in dramatic reductions in homicides and non-fatal shootings in most of the six areas served by CVI community organizations.

Her passion for Detroit’s future, combined with her professional expertise, makes Ms. Howard a vital force in the city’s ongoing transformation.



David Kennedy
Marketing Manager
Pittsburgh Water
Pittsburgh, PA

David Kennedy joined Pittsburgh Water’s Public Affairs team in 2024, bringing a dynamic perspective to the utility’s communication strategies and processes. Prior to joining Pittsburgh Water, Mr. Kennedy spent more than a decade developing his digital marketing and communication skills while working with live event organizations and tech start-ups. As Marketing Manager for Pittsburgh Water, Mr. Kennedy’s background and experience uniquely equip him to help the utility navigate the evolving landscape of strategic communications. A lifelong Pittsburgh resident, Mr. Kennedy understands the value of building and strengthening a trusting relationship between this public utility and its ratepayers, particularly when it comes to highlighting major water quality and infrastructure achievements. Through initiatives like enhancing Pittsburgh Water’s digital presence, optimizing content creation processes, and strategizing more effective communication campaigns, Mr. Kennedy’s primary focus is on building stronger connections between Pittsburgh Water and the communities it serves.



Courtney Kubu
Strategic Communications Specialist
AECOM
Virginia Beach, VA

Courtney Kubu is a strategic communications specialist with five years of experience at AECOM. She is part of the firm’s Strategic Communications Services group, which functions like a public

relations agency within the infrastructure firm, moving projects forward and supporting communities through strategic communications.

Ms. Kubu supports the public relations, marketing, and content development needs of our water clients. She has led the planning of numerous in-person and virtual meetings, helping her clients deliver effective and engaging live and online presentations. Her work consistently aims to connect clients with their stakeholders, enhance project visibility, and drive meaningful outcomes for clients and communities.



Karyn Le Blanc
Chief Executive Officer
KGL Communications
Washington, DC

Karyn Le Blanc is the Chief Executive Officer and founder of KGL Communications, a full-service, woman-owned public relations firm she founded in 2019. KGL is based in DC but serves clients regionally and nationally with a special focus on government and transit. She spent nearly a decade leading high profile communication and public relation efforts for the District of Columbia Department of Transportation and as the Director of Communications with the DowntownDC Business Improvement District. While there she helped elevate the profile of both organizations with creativity, responsiveness and attention to detail.

Ms. Le Blanc brings more than 20 years of experience in public relations, creative and marketing strategies and brand influence in both the public and private sectors to the KGL team. Her specialty remains transportation, infrastructure and economic development in urban centers, where she is widely considered an expert in the field. She is a 2019 graduate of Leadership Montgomery and serves on the board of directors for the National Cherry Blossom Festival.



Jason Matthews
Public Affairs Specialist
Great Lakes Water Authority
Detroit, MI

Jason Matthews is a Management Professional on the Great Lakes Water Authority's (GLWA) award-winning Creative Services team. His responsibilities include serving as the producer for a variety of video projects and acting as the project manager for all Creative Services initiatives. Prior to joining GLWA in 2019, Mr. Matthews worked for Ford Motor Company's Communications Department and spent nearly 15 years working in TV News, both in front of and behind the camera. He is a five-time *Emmy Award* winner and two-

time *Edward R. Murrow Award* winner. Jason holds a BA in Telecommunications from Ball State University. He is married to his wife, Beth. Together they have a son, Landon.



Bess McCoy

Co-Chair, Communications and Public Affairs Committee
Public Affairs Manager
Metropolitan St. Louis Regional Sewer District
St. Louis, MO

Bess McCoy serves as the Manager of Public Affairs at Metropolitan St. Louis Regional Sewer District (MSD) Project Clear in St. Louis, MO, where she leads communication and outreach initiatives to protect our most vital resource – water. With a focus on strategic communication, stakeholder engagement, and media relations, Ms. McCoy effectively engages over 1,000 employees and 1.3 million customers in MSD's clean water initiatives. As a dedicated advocate for clean water, she is honored to be the Co-Chair of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies Communications and Public Affairs Committee.

Before joining MSD, Ms. McCoy was the Public Information Officer for the City of Creve Coeur in St. Louis County. She also spent four years in the advertising industry, specializing in online marketing and strategic research. In addition to her professional roles, Ms. McCoy actively contributes to her community as the public relations lead and spokesperson for St. Louis Mardi Gras. A proud St. Louis native, Ms. McCoy earned a BA in Communication from Saint Louis University.



Brett McDonald

Public Affairs Specialist
Great Lakes Water Authority
Detroit, MI

Brett McDonald is a Public Affairs Specialist on the Great Lakes Water Authority's (GLWA) award-winning Creative Services team. His responsibilities include photo/video shooting, editing, equipment prep and management. Combining these elements to tell GLWA's stories and Public messaging within the water sector. Prior to joining GLWA in 2022, Mr. McDonald ran his current website bmc-photo.com specializing in event photo and video production throughout the United States. Mr. McDonald was a part of the GLWA's *EMMY award winning* campaign "TAP IN" behind the camera. He received a Bachelors Degree in Film from Full Sail University in Orlando, FL.



Mike McGill
Principal
WaterPIO
Hampstead, NC



Navid Mehram
Chief Operating Officer, Wastewater Operating Services
Great Lakes Water Authority
Detroit, MI

Navid Mehram is the Chief Operating Officer of Wastewater Operating Services at the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA), bringing over 25 years of leadership and technical experience in water and wastewater systems. Mr. Mehram oversees a wastewater system that serves over 2.3 million residents, approximately 30% of MI's population. Under his leadership, GLWA has built a high-performing team recognized across the water sector for operational excellence and innovation.

Through strategic planning and vigilant management, Mr. Mehram has guided the organization through complex challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the impacts of historic inflation, while optimizing operations, improving reliability and leading to over \$600 million in infrastructure investments. He has spearheaded the development of a \$2 billion, 10-year Capital Improvement Plan, while maintaining fiscal responsibility with an average annual revenue increase of only 1.7% over the past nine years.

Before joining GLWA, Mr. Mehram served as Chief Engineer for the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's Office. There, he led the transition of the City of Pontiac's water and wastewater operations from private contract management to county-run operations. He also provided strategic oversight across a wide range of departments and facilities, including three treatment plants, over 200 pump stations, community wells, and retention basins.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Mehram was a consulting engineer specializing in the design and construction of wastewater treatment, recovery, and pumping systems. He is a licensed Professional Engineer in the State of Michigan and holds a BS in Civil Engineering from Wayne State University.



Braxton Payne

Senior Strategist, Director of Research & Digital Communications
The Kelley Group
St. Louis, MO

Braxton Payne is a seasoned professional specializing in research, digital communications, and strategy. With a keen eye for data-driven solutions and innovative approaches, he has a proven track record of crafting impactful campaigns and delivering measurable results. His expertise lies in blending strategic insights with creative execution to drive engagement and achieve organizational goals.

Mr. Payne also specializes in communications, direct mail, press, and fundraising strategy among other areas for his clients. He has earned recognition from The Missouri Times' list "30 under 30 in Missouri Politics" and "Top 100 List in Missouri Politics."

Mr. Payne earned a degree in Applied Sociology with five minors from Fontbonne University



Bryan Peckinpaugh

Public Affairs Director
Detroit Water & Sewerage Department
Detroit, MI

Bryan Peckinpaugh is the Public Affairs Director for the Detroit Water & Sewerage Department overseeing media relations, customer education, marketing, and government affairs. At the department since January 2016, he built out a robust customer education strategy, established collaborative relationships with local and national reporters, and was the architect behind the department's extensive community outreach effort specific to the Lead Service Line Replacement Program. He brings nearly three decades of experience in public relations, including 15 years in the government and political sector, leading communication and campaigns for nine Detroit and Wayne County government leaders and political committees.



Kenetta Ridgell

Director of Communications and Community Engagement
Little Rock Water Reclamation Authority
Little Rock, AR

Kenetta Ridgell has worked in public relations and communications for 25 years, with experience in the public, private, and non-profit sectors. She has been part of the team at Little Rock Water Reclamation Authority for 10 years and was promoted to her current

role as Director of Communications and Community Engagement in June 2024. Ms. Ridgell serves on the Advisory Council for the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium (APAC) and the Volunteers in Public Schools Board of Directors. She serves as board secretary of the D'Andre Seals Suicide Prevention Outreach Project and is a member of the Public Relations Society of America and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. She holds a MA in Communications from Webster University and a BA in Journalism from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. She also earned a Certified Public Manager certification and a Wastewater I operator's license. She is a 2024 graduate of Leadership Greater Little Rock Class XXXIX.

Melissa Reeves

Community Relationship Manager
Johnson County Wastewater
Johnson County, KS



Katie Shea

Communications Specialist
Springfield Water and Sewer Commission
Springfield, MA

Katie Shea is the Educational Outreach Manager for the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission (Commission), overseeing educational and workforce development initiatives, connecting residents to their drinking water, and supporting public communications, media relations, outreach, and community events.

In 2023, Ms. Shea helped launch the Commission's Pipeline Program – a work-based learning paid summer internship program for high school students in Springfield. The program utilizes a rotational model, giving interns the opportunity to explore a variety of career opportunities in the water sector.

In addition to the Pipeline Program, Ms. Shea manages the Commission's other educational outreach and workforce development efforts including facility tours and programming for school groups and coordinating the Commission's Scholarship Program which helps aspiring water professionals complete coursework and earn licenses as they work to further establish a water sector career. Ms. Shea is also involved in local and regional educational and workforce development initiatives and is a member of the Massachusetts Water Works Association Education Committee.

Prior to joining the Commission, Ms. Shea worked in education and program development, managing educational programs and supporting high school students in planning for college and careers in Springfield Public Schools.

Ms. Shea has a bachelor's degree in communication from the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a master's in education from Springfield College.



Kierra Smith

Public Affairs Specialist
Detroit Water Sewerage Department
Detroit, MI

Kierra Smith is a strategic communicator, social media strategist/content creator and copy writer. Within the City of Detroit, Ms. Smith serves as the Media Relations and Digital Media Specialist for the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD), strategically utilizing both traditional and digital communications to proactively educate customers and coordinate reactive and episodic media requests collaborating with the assigned spokespersons. In this role, she also formulates internal communications for DWSD employees. Prior to joining DWSD, Ms. Smith worked within the private sector of the automotive industry facilitating digital stories and internal communications for a global audience. Ms. Smith is a proud Detroiter, a Central Michigan University and American University Alumni and the active chair of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) Detroit Chapter Diversity Committee.



Karen Thomas

Marketing Manager
City of Dayton Department of Water
Dayton, OH

Karen Thomas is the Marketing Account Management Representative with the City of Dayton, Department of Water. Ms. Thomas has been with the City of Dayton for 19 years. In this position, she is the Department's lead for marketing, communications, and branding of the department's services and value proposition. Ms. Thomas is responsible for telling the Department of Water's story through education, outreach, and awareness of Dayton's great-tasting, high-quality water, services, and expert staff.

In addition, she collaborates with Economic Development to market the Department's capacity for business expansion and relocation using Dayton's 1.5 trillion gallons of water as one of the key economic drivers.

Ms. Thomas works in the community to develop synergies, collaborations, sponsorships, and partnerships with other municipalities, water advocates/agencies, Dayton's local businesses, community organizations, schools, colleges, and universities for workforce development and marketing opportunities.

Ms. Thomas graduated from the University of Maryland in College Park, MD, with a BA in Business Administration. She has a master's degree in urban studies from the University of Akron in Akron, OH. Ms. Thomas attended Harvard Kennedy School of Executive Education Program: Kennedy School of Government Executive Education in State and Local Governments. Ms. Thomas is a proud member of Leadership Dayton's 2010 class. She received the City of Dayton's prestigious *Joseph T. Cline Award*, which honors current City of Dayton personnel who display excellence and dedication as City employees.



Josh Weinstein

President & Creative Director
Creative Co-op
Exeter, NH

With 30 years of experience directing communications and building brands, **Josh Weinstein** is a firm believer in the power of the big idea. As President and Creative Director of Creative Co-op, he helps raise awareness, create new relationships, transform reputations and build trust for the agency's clients.

Born and raised in upstate NY, Mr. Weinstein graduated from Union College where he studied both engineering and English. He worked for advertising agencies in New England as a copywriter and creative director before founding Creative Co-op in 2001. Over the past 23 years, the company has built a reputation for excellence and effective communications while serving as a dedicated, astute, and valuable asset to the organizations it serves.

Mr. Weinstein started the agency based on the belief that the most successful strategic, conceptual and creative work is developed from a partnership perspective. The agency has grown over time and today provides a wide range of services, ranging from planning and consulting to advocacy communications, brand development, integrated marketing, digital communications, video, photography, website design, app development, and more.

When he's not at the office or on the road meeting with clients, you'll probably find him in the mountains, at the beach or on the water.



Matt Wittern

Senior Consultant
Raftelis
Denver, CO

Matt Wittern has a 20+ year public relations career serving clients and customers in the public utility, engineering and construction sectors. He excels at designing and implementing strategic

communications campaigns that incorporate stakeholder input to inform, advocate and achieve behavior change. His specialty is successfully translating complex subjects and concepts into messages that are easily understood by target audiences. At Raftelis, he manages strategic communications planning and implementation, as well as stakeholder engagement initiatives. Prior to joining Raftelis, Mr. Wittern managed a variety of public affairs efforts at Denver Water, which included designing the public engagement and public information strategies for nearly a billion dollars' worth of infrastructure projects, spearheading the public process for the utility's policy decision regarding Community Water Fluoridation, and led development of processes to gain stakeholder support for preventative maintenance on critical infrastructure. He earned a BA in journalism, is Accredited in Public Relations (APR) from the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) and achieved status as a Project Management Professional (PMP) from the Project Management Institute. Mr. Wittern has presented at national conferences including the American Water Works Association's ACE and the City-County Communications and Marketing Association's (3CMA) Annual Conference. Mr. Wittern's work has earned prestigious Gold Pick Awards from the Colorado Chapter of PRSA and SAVVY Awards from 3CMA.



Lara Wyss

President
Responsible Flushing Alliance
Seattle, WA

Lara Wyss have been a public relations and corporate communications professional for over 20 years, with a focus on consumer products, environmental affairs, reputation management, and crisis communications. As the President of Responsible Flushing Alliance, a nonprofit organization that educates consumers about smart flushing practices, Ms. Wyss created and launched the association with the support of a coalition of CPG companies. Ms. Wyss also serve as the primary spokesperson and lead the campaign work with their PR agency, member companies, and stakeholders.

In addition, Ms. Wyss am the President of LaraPR LLC, a public relations consultancy that provides strategy and marketing communications services to clients in various sectors, such as finance, technology, health, and education. She leverages her expertise and network of consultants to craft compelling stories and deliver results that align with her client's goals and values. Ms. Wyss is passionate about using her skills and experience to make a positive difference in the world.



Aubrey Ziems

Public Affairs Specialist
Detroit Water and Sewerage Department
Detroit, MI

Aubrey Ziems is a creative professional specializing in branding, graphic design, communications, and public affairs. At the City of Detroit Water & Sewerage Department (DWSD), she led the integration of the City's new branding within all DWSD collateral, stationary and signage, and handles the day-to-day design of impactful marketing, educational and episodic materials, such as billboards, print ads, fliers, door hangers and other publications, intended to reach Detroit residents and businesses. Ms. Ziems is an integral team member within the public affairs division at DWSD, not only creating marketing materials but also advising other divisions on how the materials will be utilized. She also serves as a board member and designer for SON International, a non-profit focused on access to clean water, hygiene and sanitation education efforts. With over 10 years in the industry, Ms. Ziems is known for her strong design skills, brand consistency, and ability to deliver effective, clear, audience-focused communication.