



# Bridging the Divide:

*Enhancing Communication  
Between Field Crew and Office Staff*



**Josh Hawley**



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# WHO'S THIS GUY?

- 2017 Indiana Rural Water Operator of the Year
- 7 years of Utility Management experience
- Repaired over 500 leaks
- Spearheaded a \$2.5 million project at a small utility
  - Replaced 3.5 miles of A-C pipe
  - Changed out 1,300 water meters to AMI
  - Water tank refurbishing
  - SCADA
  - Water leak detection devices
- Water Loss Validator
- Rock N Plow Express ❄️
- Promoted to Conservancy Manager after COVID





# WHO'S THIS GUY?

- Started with Ziptility in 2021 as a potential product for my current utility
- Sales → Customer Success → Utility Advocate
- Presented at dozens of conferences around the country
- Met and spoke with 100s of operators & managers around the country
- A special place in my heart for rural water







# Rules of Engagement

- Honesty is the best policy
- Don't be afraid to communicate/ ask questions

Don't tell anyone if I talk about them today 😊



# Tale of the Tape

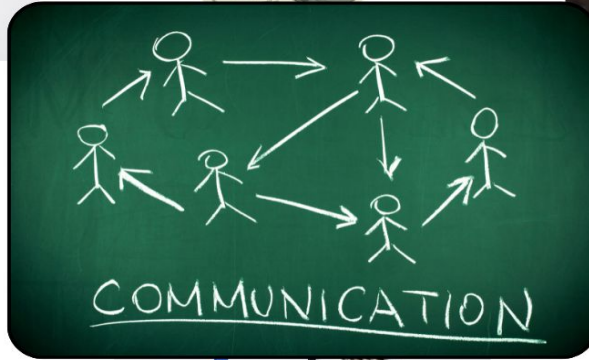


Customer Service-Minded  
Numbers People  
Hold onto the Money Strings  
Most contact with board/council  
Stuck inside all day  
Very little exercise



Work Order-Minded  
Mechanical People  
Spend a lot of Money  
Not exactly people-persons  
Stuck outside all day  
Exhaustive work

# OFFICE WORKERS



# OFFICE WORKERS

## What They Know:

- How to de-escalate irate customers
- How to use outdated technology to send out correct water bills every month
- How to communicate with the board/council
- How to communicate with customers
- Which customers are difficult
- How much money is in each account
- How to use social media
- How the organization is set-up
- Financial & accounting standards/regulations





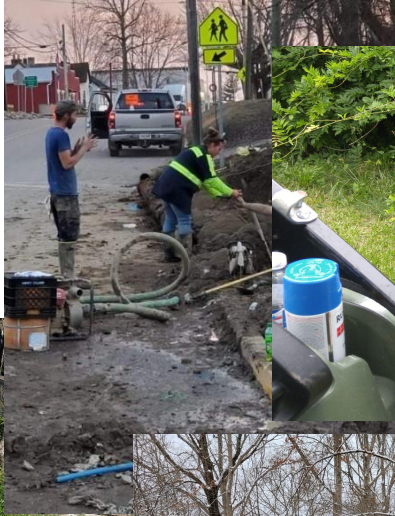
# OFFICE WORKERS

## What They Don't Know:

- What the field crew actually does other than work orders
- Water/Wastewater regulations
- How to repair leaks
- What kind of mood everyone is in
- What is on the field crew's plates
- How much it really costs to run things correctly (I didn't say within compliance)
- Certifications & labor issues (turnover, retirement, lack of skilled workers)



# FIELD CREW



# FIELD CREW

## What They Know:

- How to deliver safe drinking water and treat wastewater
- What supplies they need to keep on the shelves
- What tools and equipment it takes to do the job
- Standard operating procedures for 100s of tasks
- How to stay safe in dangerous situations
- How to respond to emergencies
- How to remain compliant
- How to maintain millions of dollars worth of assets



# FIELD CREW

## What They Don't Know:

- How to deal with frustrated customers
- How much money is left in the budget
- All of the work it takes the office to keep things running smoothly
- How annoying a continually ringing phone can be while trying to get work done
- How to best communicate to customers
- How to best communicate to boards/councils
- Financials





**Why can't we all just get along?**



# Why Can't We All Get Along?

## Miscommunication

*Money*

*Work Orders*

*Lack of empathy*



*Rules  
Interpretations*

*Power/ Pay Grades*

*Stereotypes*



# Your Therapist... Mr. Hawley



# Step 1...

## Be Honest About the Situation

- Leaders need to step up
- Understand that the problem is likely a 2-way problem, not a one-way road
- Understand there is a way out
- Understand that the business will function SO much better with everyone on the same page and rowing in the same direction





# Step 2...

## Elect Communicators/ Friendlies

- The most effective communicators aren't always the leaders
- Who can keep a calm demeanor?
- Who can take the temperature of a room?
- Who is generally liked by both sides?
- This is a DAILY battle



# Step 3...

## Speak the Same Language

- What do we have & where is it at?
- What needs to be done (& what is being done)?
- Who is doing what today? Tomorrow?
- What have we accomplished this month? Year?
- How much does “stuff” cost?
- Who used how much water and what should we charge them?

**ZIPTILITY**

**GIS** ✓  
**MOBILE WORK DISPATCH** ✓  
**ASSET MANAGEMENT** ✓  
**DIGITAL INVENTORY CONTROL** ✓

Going Beyond Dots on a Map

The graphic features the Ziptility logo at the top. Below it are four service categories, each with a red checkmark and a small icon: GIS (map icon), Mobile Work Dispatch (checkmark icon), Asset Management (checkmark icon), and Digital Inventory Control (map icon). In the center is a circular photo of five staff members in uniform. Below the photo is the slogan 'Going Beyond Dots on a Map'. To the left and right of the central photo are two rectangular photos of staff members in uniform.

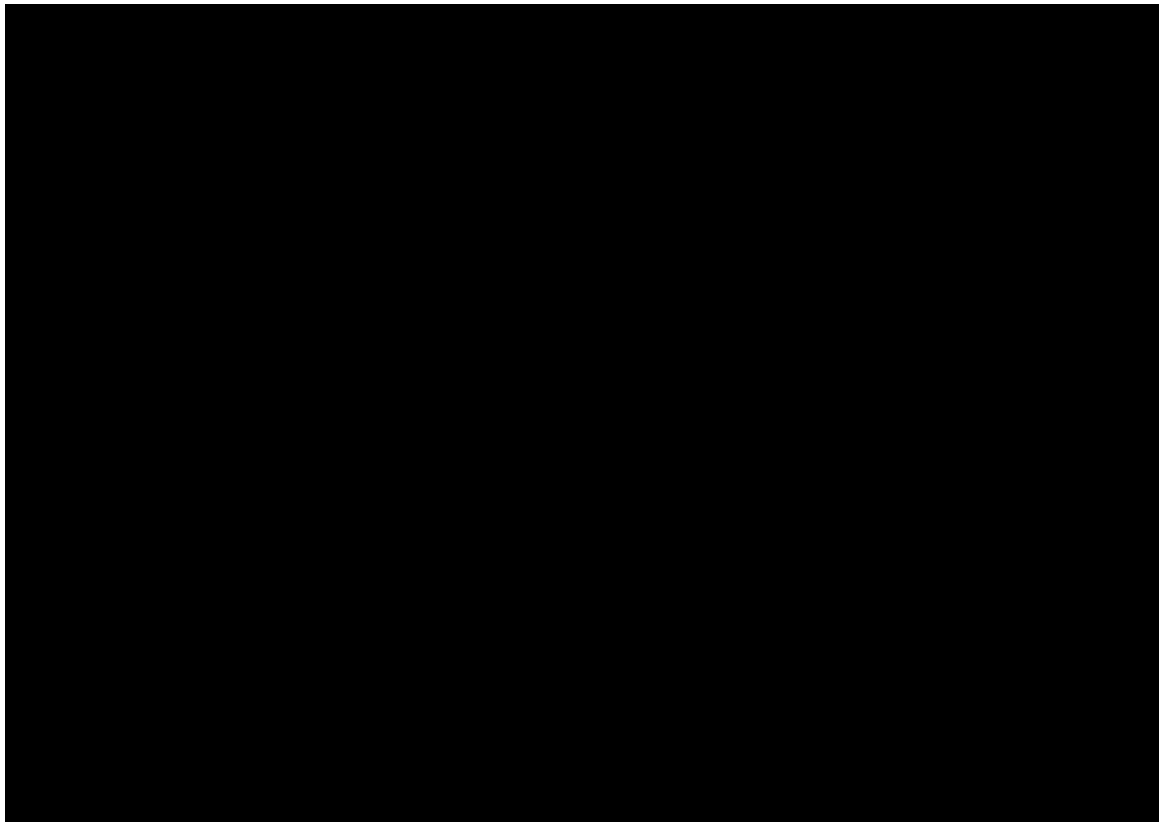




# What do we have & where is it at?

## GIS | THE FOUNDATION **An Operator's Billing System**

- Central Repository of Truth
- Readily Accessible by Anyone
- Details & Photos
- Address/ Customer Searches
- Cost & Condition Information
- Accurate Underground Locations
- View Up-to-Date Information
  - Outages
  - Leaks





Answer customer questions  
quickly & accurately



Real-time updates on  
outages & leaks



Asset information at  
your fingertips



Know what you have,  
where it's at, and what  
needs to be done to it



Single source of truth  
for asset management



Invaluable amount of  
information & data

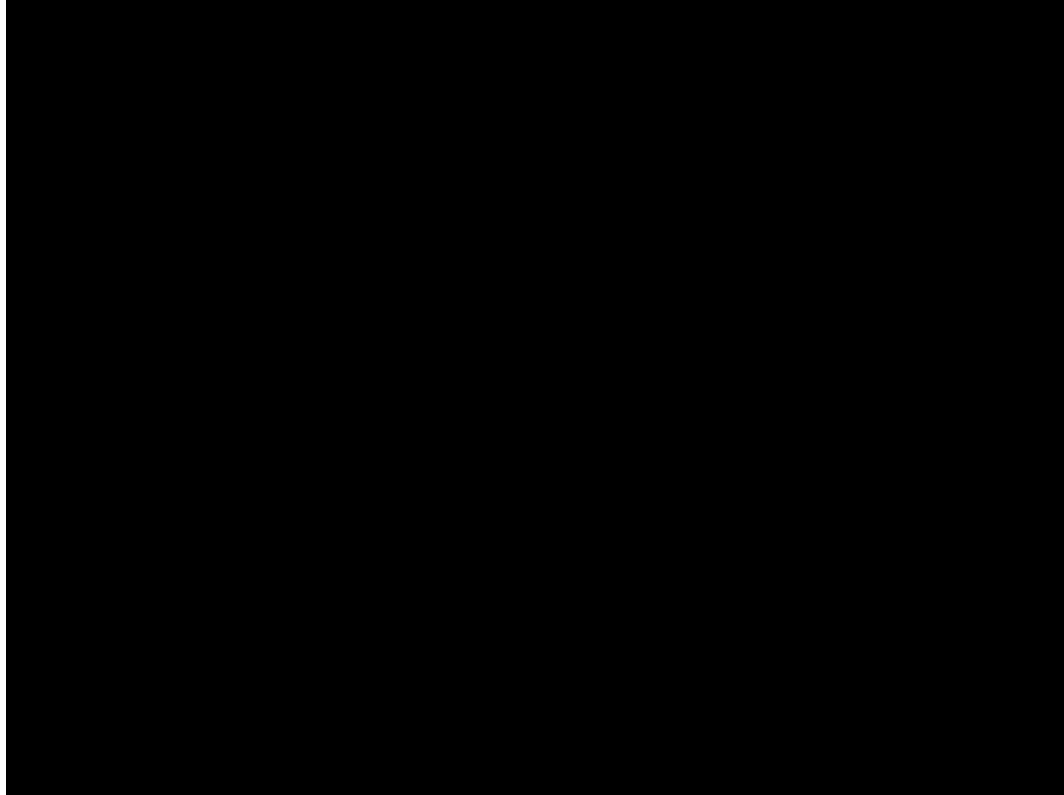




## CMMS | WORK ORDERS

### Organization for the Organization

- Get everyone on the same page about work that needs to be/ or has been done
- Know who is doing what & when
- Sync priorities
- Photos for evidence!
- Nothing falls through the cracks
- Saves valuable time & money





Get the information you need,  
the way you need it



Better understand how work  
is prioritized & completed



Faster customer service  
requests with mobile  
dispatching



#### Overdue (4)

tap. 510 Orchard Hill. All fees have been paid.

📅 4 days ago

**RW** R. Willey

#### General Work Order Nashville Customer

• 556 ORCHARD HILL DRIVE

Customer states that sewer alarm is going off.

Customer Phone # (317) 695-3635

📅 yesterday

**RW** R. Watters

#### Due today (3)

#### Water Stations Potable Water Facilities 1

📅 today

**CS** C. Stucker

#### General Work Order Nashville Customer

• 195 W GOULD STREET

Customer would like his water shut off at 9 am tomorrow morning. Please give him a call on your way there. Cust Phone #: (812) 447-0738 He will be waiting outside.

📅 today

**BB** B. Bond

#### General Work Order Nashville Customer

• 379 DOGWOOD LANE

Customer complains that there is still a sewer smell coming from her yard after an issue was resolved.



Operations at your  
fingertips



Scheduler, prioritizer,  
organizer, reminder



Accountability for your  
crew & operations  
(Reports)





Store Standard Operating Procedures



Automatically Schedule Tasks (Routines)



Forever log of maintenance activities on assets



Enable crew to create work from the field



Understand what's in front of you at all times



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Become more proactive



Track time & materials



Alert multiple crew members for urgent work



Use data to justify pay raises



Key to Asset Management





# POTENTIAL PROJECTS









## Billing | Meter System

### The Cash Register & POS

- Without this, we don't exist
- What should a Superintendent have access to?
- An extra set of eyes for usage audits
- Work together to set parameters for customer notifications

MUNIBILLING®



AMPSTUN  
Utility Billing Software



# Step 3...

## Speak the Same Language

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- What have we accomplished this month? Year?
- How much does “stuff” cost?
- Who used how much water and what should we charge them?



# Step 4...

## Come Together

- It's easier to work together than to work separately or against each other
- Everyone has bad days; not everyone has a team that can help them through it
- There are a lot of forces against all of you, as a team you can defeat them all





**Step 1: Be Honest About the Situation**

**Step 2: Elect Communicators/ Friendlies**

**Step 3: Speak the Same Language**

**Step 4: Come Together**





# A Few Parting Suggestions

*Lunches*

*Pitch-Ins*

*Conferences*

*Morning Meetings*

*Ride - Alongs*





# Your **Operations** at Your Fingertips



Going **Beyond** Dots  
on a Map...

**DIGITAL MAPPING • WORK ORDERS • INVENTORY • ASSET MANAGEMENT**

## Josh Hawley

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**Proud Member:**

