

Public Relations Strategy for the Next Generation: Inheritance of Culture of Drinking Tap Water from Faucets

INTRODUCTION

- The Bureau of Waterworks, Tokyo Metropolitan Government (Tokyo Waterworks) is engaged in various efforts such as advanced water purification and planned pipeline renewal in order to supply safe and high quality tap water to customers. In particular, the Tokyo Waterworks have engaged actively in public relations activities to make customers realize the great taste of tap water. As a result, customers' satisfaction increased from 28.1% to 55.8% in 12 years.
- There are few countries in the world where you can drink water directly from a faucet like in Japan and this is a culture that Japan can be proud of worldwide. Promoting understanding of waterworks to children is extremely important in order to inherit this culture in the future, raise trust in the water supply business, and make our waterworks sustainable in the future. This is because children become main water users who will support the water supply business in the future. Public relations activities to promote understanding of the water supply business among tap water users in the next generation are of vital importance to water business entities all over the world.

Public Relations Activities for Children and Their Effects

1 Questionnaire survey regarding water supply

- The Tokyo Waterworks has conducted questionnaire surveys of customers regarding water supply since 1999. Through these surveys, we grasp customers' requests and evaluations for waterworks business and measure customers' satisfaction level and awareness about waterworks.
- According to the latest results of the survey in 2015, customers who "drink tap water" accounted for 79.3% in total, and there can be seen a custom of drinking tap water directly in Tokyo. Except for customers in their 30s, the older they are, the more they drink tap water (Figure 1). As the youngest generation was in their 20s in that survey, we conducted another survey for children (10 years old). This survey is a questionnaire conducted when doing on-site lessons at elementary schools, and has been conducted since 2002.
- The results show that children who "drink tap water" accounted for 39.7% only; this figure was lower than adults (Figure 2). These results indicate that the generation of the parents (30s) of those children does not choose tap water.
- Customers who were "Satisfied" with the quality of drinking water accounted for 55.8% in total, but the younger generation was less satisfied (Figure 3). Dissatisfaction with tap water among young generation can be due to factors other than water quality. Less than 20% of customers in all generations felt that they got information on activities such as tap water and efforts of Tokyo Waterworks. Thus, our efforts were not fully conveyed to customers (Figure 4).

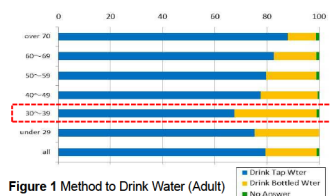


Figure 1 Method to Drink Water (Adult)

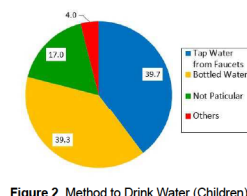


Figure 2 Method to Drink Water (Children)

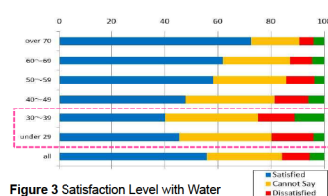


Figure 3 Satisfaction Level with Water Quality as Drinking Water (Adult)

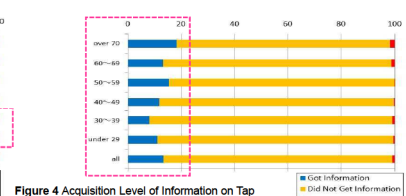


Figure 4 Acquisition Level of Information on Tap Water and Efforts of Tokyo Waterworks (Adult)

2 Waterworks Caravan (Waterworks Caravan Project)

- The Tokyo Waterworks have been carrying out on-site lessons at elementary schools service since 2006. These PR activities are called "Waterworks Caravan".
- The Waterworks Caravan incorporates video, skits, and experiments, so that children can understand and learn easily (Picture 5).
- The results of the questionnaire survey after lessons show that 98.6% of children understood the safety and taste of tap water in general children were talking about what they learned to their families after learning.
- However, their behavior of drinking water at home did not change even after learning. This indicates that their parents' generation does not choose tap water at home.
- We started public relations activities expanding the target to include the generation of the children's parents from 2013. In the activities, we introduce contents useful for daily life such as safety and economic efficiency of tap water, and 98.2% of the participants said that they were useful.



Picture 5 Contents of Waterworks Caravan

3 Other efforts

- The Tokyo Waterworks also prepare learning materials for fourth graders at elementary schools in Tokyo and distribute them to schools. These learning materials are tools for children to think about the importance of water and learn about waterworks, and are used in class. Elementary school teachers also participate in editing these learning materials.
- Aside from this, the Tokyo Waterworks is also conducting a variety of public relations activities such as poster competition, operation of waterworks PR facilities, and creation of a website for children.

Future Strategy for Public Relations

1 Basic principles of the Tokyo Waterworks public relations strategy

- It has been around 10 years since PR activities for children were started. They have been conducted continuously and are steadily achieving results.
 - In order to carry on the culture of drinking water straight from the tap, it is necessary to not simply continue PR activities, but conduct PR activities effectively targeted at different life stages in order to improve their appeal.
 - The basic principles for the PR strategy formulated in 2018 are as follows (Figure 6).
- (1) Set key messages which we would like to convey to customers (high quality, stable supply);
 - (2) Set target groups (children, students, families with children, seniors) that respond to messages;
 - (3) Set a message for each group and choose the best public relations means for such target groups.
- Waterworks are deeply tied to everyday life, so understanding of waterworks will be earned from customers long term by sending messages that match their life stages.
 - The greatest degree of understanding and sympathy will be earned from customers by imprinting messages through the selection of the best public relations means for each target.

2 Specific Methods of Implementation

- Introduce the PDCA cycle when implementing PR activities.
 - After conducting PR activities based on an implementation plan, measure and verify the effect with customer questionnaires. Reflect this on the implementation plan for the next fiscal year to improve PR activities.
 - Set priority PR themes and do PR as a whole organization
 - 2018 Theme "IWA World Congress" "In-the-field skills cultivated over a 120-year history"
 - Do this taking into account the 5 perspectives that support public relations strategies
- (1) Wise spending
 - (2) Establishment of messages
 - (3) Use of ICT
 - (4) Timely public relations
 - (5) Cooperation with customers

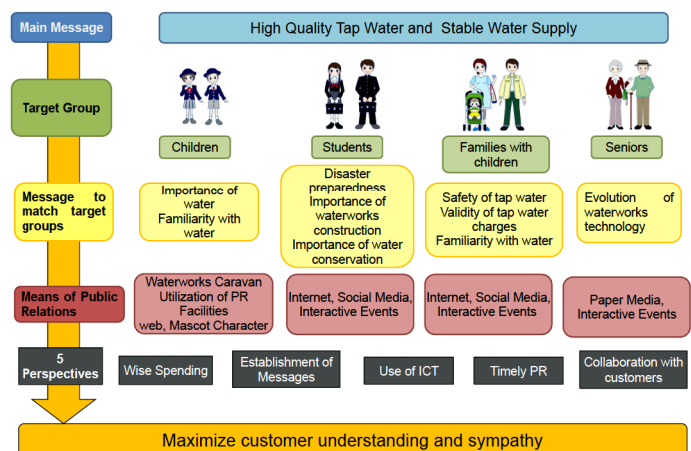


Figure 6 Public Relations Strategy (Image)

Conclusion

- The Tokyo Waterworks has conducted PR activities for children for over 10 years, steadily improving understanding of waterworks among children.
- In the future, the Tokyo Waterworks will develop public relations activities to attract the interests of children in a timely manner by utilizing quickly developing ICT.
- In addition, the Tokyo Waterworks will work to transmit the culture of drinking water straight from the tap to children by conducting a full package of public relations measures that allow people to experience the delicious flavor of tap water first hand, such as installing tap water drinking fountains in schools, promoting the spread of bottle dispense type water faucets, conducting tap water taste tests at events.