



HALTINGWINTER
MUNICIPAL SOLUTIONS

SETH WINTERHALTER

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Seth Winterhalter is a nationally recognized keynote speaker, storyteller, and host of *The HaltingWinter Podcast*, dedicated to championing the people and work of local government.

Through hundreds of conversations with city managers, county administrators, and municipal leaders across the country, Seth has developed a unique perspective on the leadership, culture, and people behind the communities we call home.

His work is built around a simple belief: **America Runs on Local Government.**

Drawing from his background as an orchestral conductor, executive leader, and leadership strategist, Seth brings compelling stories and practical insight to the stage, challenging public servants to rethink how they lead, how they work, and what it takes to thrive in the tension of municipal life.

Through his keynotes, podcast, and The HaltingWinter Tour, Seth is building a national storytelling platform that shines a brighter light on local government, encourages those serving today, and inspires the next generation to discover meaningful careers in public service.



Seth Winterhalter

360-528-9763 | seth@haltingwinter.com | www.haltingwinter.com

Title

Leading from the Podium

The Art of Influence Without Control

Description

Have you ever noticed that the most influential person in a symphony orchestra never makes a sound?

The conductor doesn't play the violin, strike the timpani, or blow the trumpet, yet every musician watches. Every entrance is shaped. Every tempo is set. And every performance rises or falls because of one person's ability to influence without control.

Municipal leadership is remarkably similar. The higher leaders rise in an organization, the greater their responsibility becomes, but the less direct control they actually have. Still, many leaders find themselves stepping off the podium to play every instrument themselves: solving every problem, answering every question, approving every decision, and rescuing every struggling section of the organization.

But that's not the conductor's role. And it isn't yours either.

In *Leading from the Podium*, Seth Winterhalter draws on his unique background as a professional orchestra conductor and more than 375 conversations with local government leaders across North America to reveal a different way to lead. Leadership in municipal organizations isn't about having more control; it's about cultivating greater influence.

Through the lens of the orchestra, participants discover three essential elements of conducting high-performing organizations:

- **The Score** — Aligning people around clear priorities so everyone is playing the same music instead of a different tune.
- **The Podium** — Understanding how a leader's presence, consistency, and emotional steadiness shape the confidence and performance of the entire organization.
- **The Baton** — Creating accountability, alignment, and trust without micromanaging.

Through compelling storytelling and memorable audience interaction, participants experience what it means to conduct rather than control. They'll leave with practical tools to build stronger teams, develop more confident leaders, and create organizations where people don't simply wait for direction; they take ownership of the performance.

Reference

Melissa White: Assistant Director, Educational Services (mwhite@memun.org)



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Title: Make It Make Sense

How Storytelling Helps Local Government Leaders Turn Complexity into Clarity and Clarity into Traction



Description

Local government leaders don't struggle because they lack good ideas. They struggle because the people they serve don't always understand those ideas.

And when people don't understand your work, they don't support it.

In this keynote, Seth Winterhalter shows why even the most experienced leaders often communicate in ways that create confusion instead of clarity. It's not intentional; it's the result of what's called "the curse of knowledge," and it means this: once you know something deeply, it becomes difficult to explain it simply.

The result? Projects stall. Meetings drag. Good work faces unnecessary resistance.

The solution isn't more information. It's better communication, specifically, communication that follows a simple story.

Through a simple, practical storytelling approach, Seth equips local government leaders with a repeatable way to turn complex ideas into clear, compelling communication. Leaders will learn how to stop centering themselves as the expert and instead position their audience as the hero, making their message easier to understand and far more likely to gain support.

Because when your message is clear, people trust you. And when people trust you, things move forward.

Key Takeaways

- **Clarity Drives Results:** If people don't understand your work, they won't support it, and without support, even the best ideas stall.
- **The Curse of Knowledge Creates Confusion:** Learn why expertise makes communication harder, not easier, and how to overcome it.
- **You Are Not the Hero:** Learn how shifting from expert to guide helps your audience engage, trust your message, and move with you instead of against you.
- **Simple Stories Create Understanding:** Use a simple, repeatable storytelling approach to communicate policies, projects, and priorities in a way people can quickly understand.
- **Turn Clarity into Traction:** Walk away with practical tools to build alignment, gain buy-in, and move critical work forward with greater confidence and less friction.

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Title: From Michelin Stars to Municipal Streets

Building Culture and Collaboration That Delivers Impact



Description

Municipal leaders are tired...tired of siloed teams that don't communicate, external partnerships that feel more like obligations than opportunities, and a service model that too often puts policies ahead of people. When departments pull in different directions and vendors or community partners aren't aligned with your mission, even the best intentions fall flat.

This keynote introduces a fresh and unexpected lens: What can the best restaurants—whether they're Michelin-starred or your favorite local diner—teach us about team alignment, culture, and the power of collaboration? **The answer: Everything.** Because at their core, great restaurants and great cities succeed for the same reason: they obsess over the experience of the people they serve.

Through engaging stories, humor, and practical strategies, this keynote will help you:

- Break down departmental silos and create a unified, citizen-first team culture
- Foster collaboration that strengthens internal trust and cross-functional execution
- Align with external partners in ways that multiply your impact
- Reignite purpose and pride in public service without needing more budget or staff

This is about more than service delivery.

It's about creating a municipal culture where both employees and residents feel seen, valued, and connected. When your internal teams are aligned and your external partners are engaged, your city doesn't just function...**it flourishes.** This keynote will leave your leaders inspired, equipped, and ready to build something far greater than operational efficiency: a community experience that earns trust, deepens pride, and delivers real, lasting impact.

Key Takeaway

Excellence in municipal leadership isn't about having more resources. It's about aligning your employees and partnerships to deliver a resident experience so strong, it builds trust, pride, and lasting impact across your entire community.

Reference

Amy Stout: Kentucky League of Cities Education Manager (astout@klc.org, (859) 977-3700)

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Title

Balance is Bullsh*t

How to Thrive in the Tension of Municipal Life & Leadership

Description

After almost 400 conversations with city/county managers and local government leaders across North America on *The HaltingWinter Podcast*, one truth has become impossible to ignore.

No one feels like they've mastered work-life balance. Not the most successful managers. Not the longest-serving leaders. Not even the people everyone else seems to admire.

Because balance isn't just difficult; it's impossible.

Municipal leadership was never designed to be balanced. Every day demands impossible choices between today's crisis and tomorrow's vision, council priorities and staff demands, organizational success and family presence, and public expectations and personal well-being.

Yet leaders continue judging themselves against an ideal that doesn't exist.

The result isn't balance. It's guilt.

In this thought-provoking keynote, Seth Winterhalter dismantles one of leadership's most celebrated myths and offers a healthier, more honest framework for leading and living. Drawing from hundreds of conversations with municipal executives, Seth explores why the pursuit of balance quietly produces shame, why trying to make everyone equally happy is an unwinnable game, and why meaningful leadership requires intentional tradeoffs instead of perfect equilibrium.

Through his practical *Rubber Band Framework*, leaders learn how to embrace tension without being consumed by it, make decisions that align with their deepest priorities, and give their attention, not just their time, to what matters most.

The goal isn't balance. The goal is living intentionally within the tension without snapping.

Because municipal leadership isn't about finding the perfect balance between work and life. It's about giving your best attention to what matters most, when it matters most.

References

Matt Fulton: ICMA Midwest Regional Director (mfulton@icma.org, (651) 242-2422)



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Title: The Strategic Pause

From Constant Crisis to Calculated Impact



Description

In municipal leadership, there is no "off switch." Emergency calls at 2 AM, weekend community events, and late-night council meetings aren't just part of the job—they are the job. Yet in this always-on environment, many local government leaders find themselves trapped in a cycle of diminishing returns, where constant availability masks declining effectiveness.

In this compelling keynote, Seth Winterhalter moves beyond acknowledging the challenges to implementing practical solutions. Drawing from his transition from pastoral ministry to municipal leadership coaching and consulting, Seth reveals how strategic pauses—from daily rituals to extended sabbaticals—can transform both professional impact and personal fulfillment.

Through powerful storytelling and evidence-based insights, participants will discover why the path to peak performance isn't found in pushing harder, but in pausing strategically. They'll learn how to recognize the warning signs of burnout, implement sustainable boundaries, and leverage different types of rest and reset for maximum impact.

Perfect for city managers, department heads, and municipal leaders who are ready to move from surviving to thriving, this session provides a practical framework for sustainable leadership in an always-on world.

Key Takeaways

- Recognizing the early warning signs of leadership depletion before they become critical
- Understanding the Triangle of Rest: Intentional Pauses for Maximum Impact
- Implementing strategic boundaries that protect both personal and professional effectiveness
- Creating a customized framework for sustainable leadership impact

References

Zach Walker: City Manager (zwalker@indepmo.org, (816) 325-7170)

Matt Fulton: ICMA Midwest Regional Director (mfulton@icma.org, (651) 242-2422)

Emily Koenigsfeld: Event Manager, Missouri Municipal League (573-635-9134)

Format

Duration: 60 minute Keynote, 90-minute to 3-hour Workshop

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Trusted by Municipal Leaders Nationwide

City managers, department heads, elected officials, and public sector organizations across North America.



I truly enjoyed working with Seth Winterhalter! From the moment he learned our conference theme, “Come to the Table,” he immediately embraced it and customized his keynote to fit perfectly. As a foodie himself, Seth connected naturally to the topic and drew from a leadership book on hospitality called “Unreasonable Hospitality” to shape a thoughtful, engaging message that really resonated with our audience.

What stood out most was his willingness to go above and beyond. In the weeks leading up to our event, Seth interviewed several of our KLC League members on his *HaltingWinter Podcast* —a wonderful tie-in as we were launching our own podcast, *KLC City Stories*, at the conference. He even continued those conversations live from our podcast stage during the event!

Seth was flexible, enthusiastic, and all-in from start to finish. His attitude of “I’ll be there, so put me to work!” made him a true partner in our success. My entire experience working with him was extremely positive, and I highly recommend him as a keynote speaker and collaborator.

Amy Stout, Member Education Manager
Kentucky League of Cities

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“Eye-opening. Sometimes we just need someone to remind us to pause and reevaluate how we’re really showing up as professionals and as people.”

Shawna Davis, City Administrator

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“Seth reframed ‘work-life balance’ in a way that actually works — tension instead of equilibrium. The rubber band illustration? Brilliant!”

Greg Camp, City Manager

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“He truly gets Public Works. This wasn’t a generic talk. It felt tailored to our mission and our challenges.”

Sameh Basta, Chief Public Works Engineer

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“Seth’s presentation was engaging, inspiring, and challenging.”

Daron Jordan, City Manager

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“Inspiring, thought-provoking, and highly relevant to where I’m at as a leader. I left hungry to grow.”

Cesar Roldan, Public Works Director

“

“Seth’s keynote helped me reflect deeply on my work-life tension and left me with practical steps to improve both.”

Matt Fulton, ICMA Regional Director

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Keynote & Workshop Pricing

Standard Fee: \$7,500

Includes all travel (airfare + ground transportation)

Hotel accommodations to be covered by host organization

What's Included

Customized Keynote or Workshop Presentation

Each session is tailored to your audience, event theme, and current leadership realities, drawing from actual municipal examples and practical frameworks for immediate relevance.

Pre-Event Collaboration Call

Includes a planning call with Seth to align on objectives, tailor messaging, and maximize impact.

Exclusive Digital Tools for Continued Growth

Attendees receive a downloadable toolkit to reinforce key insights and support continued reflection and application.

Event Promotion Across Established Channels

Your event is highlighted through established HaltingWinter channels, including:

- *The HaltingWinter Podcast* (375+ episodes)
- Seth's national LinkedIn network of engaged public sector professionals

Optional Podcast Visibility

Select leaders may be invited for a guest appearance on *The HaltingWinter Podcast*, sharing their story and building visibility for your upcoming event.

Post-Event Leadership Impact Debrief

A focused strategy conversation designed to help organizers and leadership teams translate the energy of the event into lasting impact.

Aligned Partnerships & Flexible Engagements

We understand the budget realities many local governments and associations are navigating. When there is strong alignment around impact, we're open to structuring engagements in a way that fits your budget without compromising the quality or experience.

