

Implementing a successful stakeholder consultation

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Introduction

1. The seven key principles to a successful stakeholder consultation
2. Managing communications and maintaining momentum
3. The role of thought leaders
4. Collecting and sharing ideas and data. The early analysis.
5. Considering a newsroom and community media
6. Progressive reporting
7. Monitoring the political environment

The seven key principles

In 2006 the Australian Government adopted a whole-of-government policy on community consultation. It is based on seven best-practice principles. Although not unique – with similar and equally useful models in use around the world – this is a good check list for planning and keeping track of progress with a consultation project.

- Continuity
- Targeting
- Timeliness
- Accessibility
- Transparency
- Consistency and flexibility
- Evaluation and review

Continuity

“Consultation should be a continuous process that starts early in the policy development process.”

Regardless of whether the outcome is a policy or a specific course of action, continuity is essential.

Continuity requires ongoing dialogue with stakeholders. Dialogue should take place pre-consultation, during a formal consultation period and post-consultation.

Targeting

“Consultation should be widely based to ensure it captures the diversity of stakeholders affected by the proposed changes.”

Targeting within the context of different types of consultations. The type of targeting required varies from one consultation scenario to another.

If there is diversity among the people or groups affected by the decisions that will follow a consultation process then there should to be specific efforts to include them in the consultation. Be wary of alienating groups by treating them differently.

Timeliness

“Consultation should start when policy objectives and options are being identified. Throughout the consultation process, stakeholders should be given sufficient time to provide considered responses.”

Monitor activist groups.

Use engagement techniques to plan the formal consultation and the follow up.

It takes more than time: making sure information sharing is effective and making the most of open discourse.

Accessibility

“Stakeholder groups should be informed of proposed consultation, and be provided with information about proposals, via a range of means appropriate to those groups.”

Make use of research: issues, community and media. Research contributes to communications planning and managing ‘accessibility’.

Issues research includes mapping of stakeholder interests. This should be correlated with research into media handling of key issues.

Community research may include profiling and segmentation.

Transparency

“Policy agencies need to explain clearly the objectives of the consultation process, the regulation policy framework within which consultations will take place and provide feedback on how they have taken consultation responses into consideration.”

Management of transparency begins with early clarification of the **purpose of the consultation** and the **type of consultation**.

Transparency

Transparency is supported by **‘preparing a statement of intent that leaves no doubt about the purpose of the consultation and what can be achieved by taking part’**.

Transparency is critical for building community trust and strengthening opportunities for future consultations.

Consistency and flexibility

“Consistent consultation procedures can make it easier for stakeholders to participate. However, this must be balanced with the need for consultation arrangements to be designed to suit the circumstances of the particular proposal under consideration.”

There is an ongoing change in the consultation landscape and ‘consistency’ should not be used as an excuse for lingering in the past.

Build ongoing consistency around techniques and processes that facilitate better information sharing.

Evaluation and review

“Policy agencies should evaluate consultation processes and continue to examine ways of making them more effective.”

Evaluation is not just at the end of a consultation. It should be cyclical and ongoing.

Evaluation requires robust decisions about criteria and clarity of thought about who will take part in the evaluation and for whom it is intended.

Consider involving stakeholders in planning the evaluation process.

Managing communications and maintaining momentum

Plan a sequence of events and activities.
Develop a communications plan to match.

Plan for and promote a cycle of activity.
Think beyond the formal consultation process.

Ensure there are regular updates to key stakeholders
and organisations.

Mail vs email vs fax vs SMS etc... Social media as
part of the mix.

Make the most of free media.

The role of thought leaders

Explanation of the term ‘thought leader’ courtesy of Wikipedia.

1. “***Thought leader*** is business jargon for an entity that is recognized by peers for having innovative ideas. Thought leaders often publish articles and blog posts on trends and topics influencing an industry.”
2. “In public relations, the term *thought leader* has been used for community leaders such as presidents of service clubs, officers of veterans' organizations, of civic organizations, of women's clubs, lodges, regional officials and insurance executives.”



The role of thought leaders

When it comes to community consultations, thought leaders are:

1. People who have reviewed a field of knowledge and can draw insights or lessons
2. People who put forward new, innovative ideas
3. People who, through their power of persuasion, can sell an idea
4. People who are champions for a particular point of view

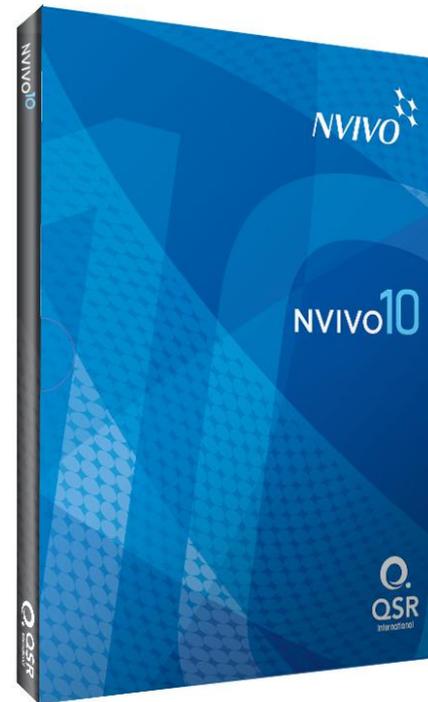
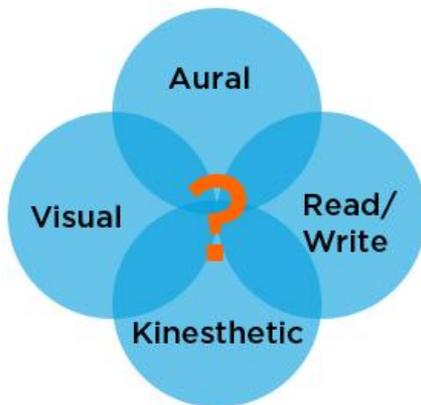
Collecting and sharing ideas and data. Early analysis.

Revisiting the VARK model.

Make early use of NVIVO.

Move quickly to correct misinformation and misunderstanding.

Make use of 'visualizers'.



Consider a newsroom and community media

There are limits to what can be achieved with free media. A web-based newsroom can fill the void.

Clarifying 'community media'.

Community media can be powerful. It gives communities an effective voice.

There are resource limitations with community media. Contemporary technology and online resources can assist.



Progressive reporting

Consider staged outcomes.

Don't forget corporate annual reports and obligations to provide annual reporting to government.

- Keep records of all details of the consultation. Make them progressively during the consultation and report on them throughout the consultation.
- Keep records of complaints and feedback about a consultation, during the actual consultation.

Keep and publish records of commitments made for further consultation and other specific actions to follow the formal consultation period.

Monitoring the political environment

Once a consultation project is launched and issues are raised in the public domain, people can become nervous. Beware of stakeholders who get “cold feet”. Tackle the hot issues directly:

- Widen the scope of discussion around the issues.
- Defer selected issues to expert panels or break out groups.
- Create follow-up consultations to address difficult issues

Pressure to curtail or change the direction of a consultation can create transparency and credibility problems.

More information

- NVivo Community Consultation Center
<http://www.qsrinternational.com/en/nvivo-community-consultation-center/>
- Free trial NVivo today
http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_free-trial-software.aspx
- NVivo eDemos
http://www.qsrinternational.com/training-and-events_calendar_listing.aspx?eventtypeid=3&
- More about NVivo
http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo.aspx

Next eSeminar

- Leveraging the post-consultation environment
http://www.qsrinternational.com/news_what-new_detail.aspx?view=602
- For information on upcoming eSeminars, or to view a previous eSeminar
http://www.qsrinternational.com/training-and-events_calendar_listing.aspx?eventtypeid=9&

Thanks for attending

Contact Kevin:
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