

Pacific Future Environment Leaders Forum

2 - 4 April 2007
Apia, Samoa



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Introduction

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Leadership in a rapidly changing world

“I have a dream!” Visioning

Project management

Time management

How to be a good time manager

The 10 commandments of a good meeting

Nailing that presentation: how not to put people to sleep

Communications

What is ‘communications’?

Developing a communications strategy

Engaging the media

Exploring dynamics

Group development

Facilitation skills

Managing group dynamics

References

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Contents

Introduction

The Pacific Future Environment Leaders Forum is a leadership programme for young people interested in sustainable development issues facing the Pacific, who are committed to play a role in driving youth related sustainability issues in their respective countries.

Funded by UNEP, the Future Leaders programme will be held from 2-4 April 2007 in Apia, Samoa and will focus on skills-based learning in the areas of leadership, sustainability issues, project management, community collaboration, critical thinking, regional environmental management and policies.

The Pacific Future Environment Leaders Forum is a joint initiative between SPREP, UNEP and the Pacific Youth Environment Network (PYEN) as a professional development initiative for young people (18-30 years old) working in the environment field in the Pacific.

The Forum was jointly coordinated by SPREP and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) of the Government of Samoa.

This Forum has been designed around three key themes: Information, Skills and Future thinking.

Day one: Information – this day will include presentations on regional and global environmental issues, presentations from participants, and a panel discussion on leadership.

Day two: Skills - project management, proposal writing, negotiation skills, critical thinking, and communications. This also includes developing a proposal for a Youth State of the Environment Report for the Pacific.

Day three: Future thinking - Developing a regional message for leaders, determining future activities for the Pacific Youth Environment Network, and partners.

Key collaborating partners



Fostering sustainability leadership: a four phase approach

The Forum is the first phase of a 12-month programme for young people working to promote environmental sustainability in the Pacific.

Phase one: Skills building

With funding from UNEP, SPREP with its key partners will facilitate the Pacific Future Environmental Leaders Forum from 2 – 4 April in Apia, Samoa. This skills based learning forum will cover topics such as leadership, sustainability issues, project management, community collaboration, critical thinking, regional environmental management and policies.

Phase two: Networking

The Pacific Youth Environment Network (PYEN) was established by UNEP to provide a mechanism for young people in the Pacific to engage in environmental issues in the Pacific. SPREP will work with USP, to support the expansion of the PYEN and to encourage increased engagement by young people across the region. The role of this network is to provide a mechanism for young people to expand existing skills, resources, and to access opportunities to strengthen leadership skills.

Phase three: Mentorship

A key element of this youth leadership programme is to provide opportunities for young people to establish connections with 'mentors' who can provide support in various areas. SPREP will work with USP, UNEP, PYEN and other regional agencies to connect young people to potential mentors.

Phase four: Internships/placements

Providing on the job training is a key method to reinforcing skills learning, and to access work experience opportunities. SPREP will work with key agencies to explore possibilities to provide workbased placements.

Leadership

in a rapidly changing world

Leadership is courage and spirit

“Leadership isn’t about being in a formal position. Rather, it’s about having the courage and spirit to move from whatever circumstances you’re in so as to make a significant difference.”
Kouzes & Posner

Leadership is about growing people

“The very essence of all power to influence lies in getting the other person to participate.” Harry A. Overstead

Leadership is getting the job done

“Effectiveness is proportionate to the strength of leadership.” John C. Maxwell

Leadership is strategy and character

“Leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character. But if you must be without one, be without strategy.” General H. Norman Schwarzkopf

Leadership is knowing the issues

The leader must have sound understanding of the fundamentals, of the basic functions of the organisation.

Leadership is influence

“The true meaning of leadership is influence – nothing more nothing less.” John C. Maxwell

Leadership is setting good examples

Leadership is taking responsibility for your actions. What impact are you having on the environment?

*This section adapted from:
Leaders Resource Book
Micronesia Leaders in Island Conservation
Network (MLIC)
Founding Members’ First Retreat
Black Coral Island, Pohnpei - FSM
September 16-19, 2002*

Traits of a good leader

A visionary and has the ability to anticipate future scenarios

The ability to analyse options and make rational decisions

The ability to understand and anticipate the subordinate's point of view

The ability to see other's reactions to the leader's behaviour

The willingness to do whatever is required to get the job done (even if it means extra work)

The ability to generate enthusiasm among subordinates

The willingness to accept responsibility

The ability to communicate

Flexible enough to adapt to challenges

Different styles of leadership

A good leader must be able to apply the right style at the right time and at the right situation

The Autocratic Leader

Leads others through their source of power

The Diplomatic Leader

Leads others through personal persuasion

The Democratic Leader

Leads by abiding by the group's decision whether arrived at unanimously or by a majority decision

The Consultative Leader

Leads much the same as the democratic leader but reserves the right to make the final decision

The five myths of leadership

The Management Myth

Leading and managing are not the same. Leadership is about influencing people to follow, while management focuses on maintaining systems and processes

The best way to test whether a person can lead rather than just manage is to ask them to create positive change. Managers can maintain directions, but they can't change it.

Entrepreneurial Myth

Frequently people assume that all salespeople and entrepreneurs are leaders. At best, they are able to persuade people for a moment, but they hold no long-term influence with them

The Knowledge Myth

Sir Francis Bacon said, "Knowledge is power". Most people, believing power is the essence of leadership, assume that those who possess knowledge and intelligence are leaders. But that isn't automatically true. Knowledge and IQ don't necessarily equate to leadership.

The Pioneer Myth

Being in front of the crowd isn't always the same as leading

To be a leader, a person has to not only be out front, but also have people intentionally coming behind them, following their lead, and acting on their vision.

"He who thinks he leads, but has no followers, is only taking a walk", Anonymous proverb.

The Position Myth

"It's not the position that makes the leader, it's the leader that makes the position". Stanley Huffy

The price and rewards of leadership

The higher you go, the longer it takes

You always start on the lowest level and begin to work yourself up the steps

The higher you go, the higher level of commitment

If the leader or followers are unwilling to make sacrifices a new level demands, influence will begin to decrease

The higher you go, the easier it is to lead

Each level climbed by the leader and the followers adds another reason why people will want to follow

The higher you go, the greater the growth

Growth can only occur when effective change takes place. As you rise, other people will allow and even assist you in making the needed changes.

You never leave the base level

Each level builds upon the previous one, and will crumble if the lower one is neglected

If you are leading a group of people, you will not be on the same level with everyone. Not every person will respond the same way to your leadership

For your influence to remain effective, it is essential that you take the other influences within the group with you to the higher levels

The collective influence of you and the other leaders will bring the rest along. If this does not happen, divided interest and loyalty will occur within the group

You must know what level you are on at this moment

Everyone is a leader because everyone influences someone. Not everyone will become a great leader, but everyone can become a better leader.

Successful leadership behaviour

Challenging the process

Inspiring a shared vision

Enabling others to act

Modelling the way

Encouraging the heart

Become disciplined: the first person you lead is you

Prioritise your life: success can be defined as the progressive realisation of a predetermined goal

Develop trust: trust is the foundation of leadership

Cast a vision: you can see only what you can see

Empower others: people under the influence of an empowering person are like paper in the hands of a talented artist. The act of empowering others changes lives.

Make your leadership last: a leader's lasting value is measured by succession.

Steps to lead

Identify people willing to support your leadership. Clearly, change may be resisted by some people or organisations, but if you can find enough support this resistance can be overcome. Note that the support of your team may not be enough if you do not have the support of authority or the physical/financial resources to accomplish your goals.

A crucial step is to empathise with others and assess their understanding of the situation. This will help you understand how to influence these people.

Now you should open a discussion with the members. Clearly, without open discussion some people may feel neglected or excluded. By getting everyone's views it is more likely that you will be able to alter them and get what you want. Now you must convince the others that your view is the one most likely to achieve a favourable outcome for everyone.

This may be easy if everyone shares the same goals, or it may be difficult. In the end some form of 'payment' may be required, such as a promise of a favour, to convince certain members. This is easy if you are in a position of power, if not, make sure the cost to yourself is not too high.

Having convinced the team of your leadership, encourage team communication to build a team identity. You should also try to motivate the team appropriately.

Plan and organise the team by setting realistic goals. However do not give too much or too little guidance, experienced workers may resent you treating them like new-recruits, and this can undermine your leadership.

When goals are achieved recognise and reward the team. Of course you may decide that the goals are unachievable or insufficient, but any re-definition of these goals should be done carefully and with team co-operation.

What is Sustainability Leadership?

We describe “sustainability leadership” as *conscious engagement in individual and collective actions that nurture and sustain the economic, environmental and social well-being of organizations and communities*. It means getting into the game, taking responsibility by tackling and understanding complex local and global issues that impact the lives of people today and in the future, and working side-by-side with others who are seeking to make a difference.

A “sustainability leader” can be described as *anyone who consciously chooses to engage in collaborative, transformative change aimed toward the goal of a sustainable future*.

The magnitude and complexity of sustainability challenges requires new thinking about the experience of leadership.

Traditional Leadership Model

Leaders are often thought of as those who inspire a shared vision, build consensus, provide direction, and initiate change to ensure successful outcomes. The assumption is that leaders are the “wise ones” and, therefore, have an enlightened view about what direction, outcomes, and ways of engaging are required for success. They often rely on their charismatic ability to persuade followers to engage in actions that serve to bring their visions to life. In turn, people tend to look to their leaders for direction, guidance and answers. They often are willing to defer to “those in charge” rather than act from a position of courage and self-authority that honors their own views in relation to others. This perspective of leadership, and assumed follower response, is deeply engrained in Western culture. However, things are changing.

Sustainability Leadership Model

In contrast to traditional assumptions about leadership, sustainability leaders focus on how members of the human community, individually and collectively, create changes that make sense for long-term prosperity and survivability. Developed from a deeper understanding of individual responsibility and conscious action/interaction within a network of individual who share a common identity (e.g. members of an organization or community who share common challenges), the model of sustainability leadership does not assume that any single individual has the answers or “knows the way”.

Instead, the model assumes that ordinary, everyday people—some in formal positions of power, others not—seek to expand their understanding of the challenges they see and share with others and develop a shared view of a viable pathway to create the future they want. They then generate and enact reasonable solutions that can work for them—all within the context of their ongoing interactions *with* each other as a community of responsible, active individuals.

Sustainability leadership is not prescriptive; leadership actions and the outcomes they produce emerge in the context of continually changing dynamics. This notion of leadership requires paying attention to what is going on in each particular situation, and then figuring out what to do next in the context of a holistic picture that is shared by others. Leaders who operate from this frame of reference seek to build individual and collective capacity (human capital) for dealing with complex challenges. They continually uncover and nurture the leadership potential within themselves and others around them, which is necessary to move toward a sustainable future.

www.sustainabilityleaders.org/leadership/

I have a dream.

Martin Luther King Jnr

Words of wisdom from Alice in Wonderland – Lewis Carroll

“Cheshire puss,” Alice began, “Would you please tell me which way I ought to go from here?”

“That depends on where you want to get to,” said the cat.

“I don’t care much where,” said Alice.

“Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the cat.

What’s your snapshot for the future?

How do you see the future? Where are you now and what are you doing? Where do you want to be? Through simple visioning exercises you can define where your community would like to be 20 years from now.

What is visioning?

Visioning helps you define your sense of space, heritage, culture and tradition, and puts ideas into action through mapping out what needs to be done to achieve your ideal vision.

A simple visioning exercise:

Step 1: Generate specific images and snapshots of success

Step 2: Cluster those that are similar together and name the clusters or themes

Step 3: Use those clusters to start creating some strategic directions

Cautions and caveats

Just because you have a nice vision doesn’t mean it is a viable vision.

Too much time spent on a vision leaves us hungry for practicalities. The best visions are those that serve as “jump-off points” or “stepping stones”. Visions need translation into specific plans and actions.

There is a very fine line between a vision and a hallucination.

The Tipping Point: How little things can make a big difference, Malcolm Gladwell, 2000

Visioning

Time management

Identify the time you control

No matter how busy your schedule, no matter how overwhelmed you are by your many tasks, you have some control over how you spend your time. Certainly, your life is constrained by outside demands. You probably plan your hours around other things in your life. Yet within work time, you have the responsibility of working out your priorities and deciding on which tasks need to be done.

Analyse your use of time

One way to get control of your time is to see where it's going. Too often we simply attack the task at hand, without looking ahead to see how we might plan our lives more efficiently. Keep a time log of where each hour in your day is spent, so you can get a clear picture of where you're being a good time manager, and where you can make vast improvements.

The tests of time: necessity, appropriateness and efficiency

Use the three tests of time when you're faced with a new task.

Necessity: "Does this *really* need to be done?, Does it need to be done right now?"

If the answer is yes, then apply the test of appropriateness. Are you the person who should be doing this task, or can it be done by somebody else?

Finally, apply the test of efficiency by seeing if there is a better way to carry out the task.

Your energy cycles

Are you a morning person, or a night owl? Different people have different times of the day when they're capable of their best work. Schedule your easy tasks for when your energy is lower, and save your most difficult work for when your energy is greatest.

But don't let working around your energy cycles become an excuse to procrastinate.

Ways to waste your time

Social

Telephone calls, friends dropping by, long conversations at morning tea or lunch.

Delaying work

Delaying work that you might find unpleasant by finding distractions which are less important or unproductive.

Changing activities

Time is often wasted in changing between activities. For this reason it is useful to group similar tasks together thus avoiding the start-up delay of each.

Doing the work of others

A major impact upon your work can be the tendency to help others with their's. Now, in the spirit of an open and harmonious work environment it is obviously desirable that you should be willing to help out - but check your work log and decide how much time you spend on your own work and how much you spend on others'.

For instance, if you spend a morning checking the grammar and spelling in the training material related to you last project, then that is waste.

Publications people should do the proof-reading, that is their job, they are better at it than you; you should deal at the technical level.

External Appointments

Your appointments constitute your interaction with other people; they are the agreed interface between your activities and those of others; they are determined by external obligation. They often fill the diary. Be ruthless and eliminate the unnecessary. There may be committees where you cannot productively contribute or where a subordinate might be (better) able to participate.

**Always allocate time to time management:
at least five minutes each day.**

How to become a good time manager

Focus on goals

“Always look ahead....focus on your goals and plan”

Always keep the final goal in mind. If you need to write yourself a note with exclamation points and stars, and pin it to the wall then do it! We often forget what we're really striving for and get caught up in minor problems and daily tasks. Know what you're trying to accomplish, and apply your time and energy towards that goal.

Establishing priorities

“Establish your priorities and stick to them”

Focus on your goals and priorities; those items on your lists and schedules and calendars that lead to the accomplishment of your goals. Keep your lists and calendars updated, use your ABCs to work out what's important, discipline yourself to stay on schedule, and reward yourself for good work and achievement.

Five ways to help you manage your day

Spend five minutes each day planning your time

1. Use a To-do list
2. Use the ABC system of priorities
3. Handle each piece of paper once
4. Finish what you start
5. Don't procrastinate

Delegate

“Don't try to do everything yourself...share and delegate.” Good time managers know to delegate tasks when appropriate. Always ask yourself if you need to do a certain task, and whether you're the best person for the job. Making use of each person's best skill is the sign of a good manager.

Personalise: use techniques that suit you
“Use techniques that you help you achieve your goals”.

As you become a better time manager, you'll find some skills and techniques are more useful to you than others. Use the ones you like and discard the others. The point is to save time, so do it the way you find most efficient. Even members of the same team can use different planning and scheduling techniques, if that proves most efficient overall

“It's easy as ABC!” A planning tool

ABC Prioritising is a simple tool to help you plan your work. Apply it to your To-Do list and other planning aids to help sort out the order in which tasks should be carried out.

As situations change, you can easily reassign priorities.

“A” Priority...Must do. The most important tasks. Items on which all else depends.

“B” Priority...Should do. Tasks not immediately essential. Can be moved aside for “A” items.

“C” Priority...Nice to do. But not necessarily. Can be easily postponed or eliminated.

The 10 commandments of good meetings

1 Every meeting should be organised to value the time of its participants

2 Every meeting should have a clear purpose

3 Every meeting should have an agenda designed to accomplish its purpose(s)

4 Every meeting agenda should have time limits which are agreed to as a group, honoured and altered as a group

“Our time is up for this item. Do you want to continue the discussion at the next meeting or take time now by reducing time allocated to another agenda item?”

5 Every meeting should focus on the primary actions first and review staff and reports at the end

“Reports should be put in writing and sent out in advance. Reports need then only be summarised at the meeting”.

6 Every meeting should have a facilitator who can enforce the agenda

“We are running out of time for this discussion. Are you ready to decide?”

7 Every meeting should make an effort to involve everyone, not just the loudest.

“Is there anyone who has not yet spoken who would like...”

8 Every meeting should establish clear accountability

At the end of each meeting, summarise the decisions made and who agree to do what and when. If the group meets again, repeat the summary at the beginning of the next meeting.

9 Every meeting should have some element of interest or fun.

10 Every meeting should appreciate what the organisation and members have accomplished not just worry about the problems to be solved.

How not to put people to sleep: nailing that presentation

Like all communications, a good presentation should incite people to think, feel or act differently. When you have an assembled group, you have an opportunity to promote your issue or cause. Here are some tips you help you prepare and deliver your message.

Starting tips

- Develop a presentation for your audience
- Understand the speaking environment – the physical surrounds, the technology you are using, the expectations and energy levels of the audience
- Good preparation is vital for a good presentation, so rehearse with notes
- Organize your presentation clearly
- Thoroughly research your presentation and include interesting facts or analogies where possible
- Get to know your speaking style, your presentation strengths and weaknesses
- Take charge of your environment and prepare for interruptions
- Good timing is essential for effective communication
- After your presentation, review your performance and look for ways to improve

What to say

Before you can prepare a presentation, or focus on your speaking skills, you have to have something valuable to say. You need a message. Assess what your listeners want to hear. What knowledge and misconceptions do they have on this topic? What problems do they face and what solutions have they tried? How can you save them time or money? What can you say to them that no one else could say as well?

Preparing your presentation

Analyze the situation to determine how long your talk should be. Consider what happens before and after you speak. What do you want people to leave your presentation with? A good association with the subject matter, or relief that the presentation is over! Thinking about this will help improve the efficiency of your presentation.

It's important to have the right speaker for the right message. Make an honest self-assessment about how you appear to audiences. Learn about your audience. Have you addressed this group before? What was their experience? How often does this group meet? Who spoke at their last meeting? Who's speaking in the future? How big will your audience be? What is their age range, ethnic and gender mix, educational background and area of expertise? Do they have any special problems or issues? Will there be any notable members in the audience, or notable absences? To involve your audience, use "you" statements, such as, "you can win by..." or "you know what will happen if." Invite audience members to write questions on cards, answer questions by a show of hands, involve the audience in your presentation as much as possible.

Good research improves any presentation. If you present statistics, make them more interesting by simplifying them and make them relevant to your audience. Make them concrete, such as "this would save you minutes a day" or "that's enough money to hire people".

Open with something strong and specific. Make your first point quickly. Don't open with a joke, because nothing is worse than a joke that falls flat. Closing is easier — most audiences welcome any wrap-up.

Humanise your information - refer to relevant anniversaries, historical references, cartoons, community issues, news stories, local legends and almost anything else that ties in with the subject, group, time or place of your talk. Audiences absorb information better and remember it if it's presented in story form.

Consider the complexity of your material and organize your presentation to allow time for people to understand the information you're presenting. Ensure your listeners understand how you've organized your material. Popular formats include problem solving, compare and contrast or some kind of logical order, be it geographic, numerical, alphabetical, chronological or by priority. Try to include some questions and quotations to break things up.

Prepare for the unexpected by having some "ad lib" one-liners prepared. Be ready to succeed: prepare for responses. Pause, acknowledge it and move on just as it starts to subside.

Audiences appreciate handouts, but ensure there are plenty for everyone and leave time to distribute them. Distribute at the end of your presentation so people aren't skipping ahead of your presentation.

Audio-visual support is popular but often counterproductive. Consider skipping the slides or film. If you use them, don't use too many, and keep the words and numbers on the slides to a minimum.

The slides should complement your talk, not repeat it. Control your presentation as much as possible, it's distracting to keep saying, 'next slide'. Open and close without audio-visual support to keep the focus on you.

Props can help give the audience something to look at and can give you something to do with your hands, but don't give them too much attention. After the presentation, stay professional. Don't start chatting while the event is going on. Your presentation does not end when the audience applauds.

To improve your presentation skills, be sure to practice out loud. Make your words, paragraphs and sentences short; they'll be easier to deliver.

Delivering your presentation

Before the presentation

Proofread all your materials very carefully, including slides. Rehearse thoroughly and carefully. Rehearse in the actual presentation room if you can. If you have time before the presentation day, try and record your presentation and focus on controlling your pitch, tone and speed.

Dress for success

Choose clothes that fit comfortably and complement the occasion. Avoid fabrics that wrinkle easily. If possible, check your appearance before your presentation.

Preparing the room

Prepare the room. Check the temperature, the lectern, the seating and the room size. Close off doors and windows as needed. Speaking outdoors is especially difficult. Consider plans for bad weather. Make sure there's enough seating. How will you get the audience's attention? Will there be an amplifier? Beware of background noise. Make sure all the equipment is set up before your audience arrives. Practise using the equipment if you are unfamiliar with it.

Strong opening

Act confident and you'll actually learn to be more confident. You'll probably be nervous at the outset. Make your opening lines clear and crisp to help you settle down.

If possible, memorise your introduction so you feel confident about your opening which will lead you into the rest of your presentation. Some people can ad lib in their introduction but it might be worth having your opening sentences written down in case you lose your confidence at the last minute.

Stand with purpose – body language

Stand tall and straight stage right of the screen. Stand at a slight angle to the audience. Never read what's on the screen. Gesture with your full arm and match the gesture to the mood and language naturally. Use an open hand; don't make a fist. Smile.

Make eye contact with as many individuals in the audience as possible. This builds trust and reinforces your key points. It will also make you more confident and less nervous. Go without a microphone if you can. Listen to the other speakers to hear how the sound system is working.

If you misspeak, as everyone does, offer a short, clean correction.

Managing your presentation

Timing is everything. Consider the time of day you'll be speaking. Will your listeners be tired? Hungry? Eager to leave? Will they need a coffee or a bathroom break?

You can speak with or without notes, or use an outline or full manuscript. Accomplished speakers often do well without notes, though you may be likelier to be nervous if you don't have them. Don't read your notes – use them as a reference only.

Carefully time your presentation. A full manuscript gives you the advantage of knowing exactly how long your presentation is and assures you of being thorough and using precise, powerful wording.

Plan for interruptions, including cell phones or people who are late.

Halt for a few seconds if you feel overwhelmed. Take a few deep breathes while looking at your notes, or the screen to give the impression that you are thinking about your next point. This will also give your audience an opportunity to digest the information you are providing.

Don't be thrown off if you see people drift away. Stay focused on your content. There might be another reason that people look tired or disinterested. Believe in yourself and your content and maintain your confidence. People will notice if your presentation fades.

Emergencies arise, and sometimes you have to find someone to serve as a substitute speaker when you cannot appear.

Above all HAVE FUN! Your audience will enjoy your presentation more if you look like you're having fun!

Some food for thought

"Don't skimp on the thought process that goes into a good outline."

"Speakers never get a second chance. The audience either 'gets it' the first time or they don't get it at all."

"The more experienced you get at giving presentations, the less you will rely on statistics, and the more you will use other options."

"In proofreading, a touch of paranoia can prove to be a career asset."

"The more you say, the less people remember."

"The best ad libs are the ones you've planned."

"Find out who you're talking to and what they want to hear from you. Don't make assumptions about what they need: ask."

Thank you to Howard Gardner, The Art and Science of Changing Our Own and Other People's Minds, Harvard Business School Press.

What is 'communications'?

Communications can be broadly described as “using the right tool, product or approach to deliver the right message to the right people, at the right time”. The foundation for effective communications is clarity – understanding the issues, target audiences, and the roles of the various tools, are critical to communicating effectively.

Communications is often used to describe the use of tools, media, website, posters, as well as approaches, awareness raising days, information sessions, advocacy and public dialogues.

A communications strategy describes the process of articulating objectives, identifying target audiences, developing clear and concise messages, and identifying how, when and where tools/approaches are used to achieve the identified objectives. An effective communications strategy reflects an organization's mission, goals and objectives, is well integrated into daily operations, and strongly supported by management and staff members. A communication strategy also consists of ongoing feedback between planning and evaluation.

Strategic communication extends beyond information dissemination, education or awareness raising, but strives for behavior change. While the former are necessary ingredients of communication, they are not sufficient for getting people to change long-established practices or behaviors.

Research supports the assertion that changing knowledge and attitudes does not necessarily translate into behavior change. In order to effect behavior change, it is necessary to understand why people do what they do and understand the barriers to change or adopting new practices.

Communications

Communications 101

While the role of communication is increasingly being recognised as a key element in project implementation, strategic communications is far from being systematically applied.

Here are some points to keep in mind when developing communications activities:

Communication as a process not a one time event

Communication is a process – coordinating awareness days does not necessarily guarantee that the message we are trying to convey reaches the right people. Strategic communications places an emphasis on using the *right* tools at the *right* time.

Effective communication programmes rely on planning

We have to remember that education is lifelong, and while we hope that our communications activities might have an impact, their effectiveness depends on careful planning and thinking about the key messages we are trying to convey.

Successful communication focuses on changing behaviour

Information alone is not enough. The biggest gap in human behaviour exists between what people know and what they practise.

Effective communication focuses on understanding your audience, and what factors will influence their behaviour. Fostering behaviour change depends on offering incentives and removing the barriers (real or perceived) to adopting a certain behaviour.

Communications needs to be integrated with other strategic tools

For years, education was seen as an activity that followed the central planning processes. However, the benefit of *integrating* education and communications into project planning supports the achievement of key aims and objectives through reinforcing consistent messages, and streamlining activities.

What is the purpose of strategic communications planning?

To define strategic, actionable goals, and an implementation approach and plan, to guide communicators and others in designing, preparing and executing communications.

Tips for preparing your strategy

Decide on the team who will be developing the strategy and ensure that all participants have meaningful roles.

When developing your strategy, you might want to limit your planning meeting to a small group of people. While involving many representatives from different groups might be more inclusive, it may limit the potential of the group to develop an effective, targeted and focused strategy.

Ensure you distribute your energy evenly throughout the development of the strategy. The key components are actually in developing the communications plans, so don't burn out trying to come up with that perfect goal!

Consider your timeframe: a three year timeline may provide the adequate timing to implement initiatives within a changing environment. This period can then be divided into annual work plans.

Developing a Communications Strategy

Basic structure

Here is a basic structure to help you develop your strategy. You may choose to add or remove some of these sections. The important thing to remember is that you need to develop a structure that suits your work, is clear for you, and others who may read the strategy.

1. Background
2. Situational Analysis
3. Goal and Objectives
4. Target Audiences
5. Key messages
6. Communication tools/approaches
7. Monitoring and evaluation
8. Timeline and role of staff
9. Funding and budget

Engaging the media

The role of the media

One of the most cost effective ways to reach your target audiences is through the media. The media gives people a way to communicate, providing invaluable information, opinions, news stories and entertainment. Many of us assume that media is a free medium to raise awareness of our issue. However, engaging the media in your topic often depends on a clear strategy and relationships with various media members. When a media release you prepare does not generate the desired article, remember that the role of the media is to present information that is accurate, objective, and fair. The media is under no obligation to promote your issue unless it involves a regular column a Letter to the Editor.

Here are some points to keep in mind when developing media releases:

Currency

Look for a news “peg” (an issue that is currently in the news) to tie your information into current events.

General interest

Make your news as relevant to the general community as possible. Connect the information to a common situation that people encounter.

Local angle

People want to know how the big story relates to them. Alternatively, people may not be too concerned with a global issue, thinking that it doesn't really relate to their lives. The challenge with the climate change issue is that the impacts of sea level rise and rising greenhouse gas emissions rides on a time factor – the proven cause-and-effect on a community may be visible over time. Therefore, you may want to approach your story from another angle, for instance – what is Samoa doing to adapt to climate change?

Human interest

Provide a human face to your story.

Novelty

People pay attention to new ideas, or stories. Use the novelty of a policy, meeting etc as the hook of your story.

Timeliness

Newspaper and television reporters work on tight deadlines everyday. To have your story on the news team's roster for a given day, you need to factor time into your submission. Be aware of the risks involved if you do send your news release late in the afternoon to your local television or newspaper. Newspaper and television deadlines may differ so it's good practice to talk to your media representatives about their expectations from you.

Radio is the most immediate medium of mainstream media communication. Some radio stations broadcast news on the hour or according to a certain agreed schedule.

How to write a media release

The media release is the most common channel to get your message out, but you are competing with other individuals or entities for news coverage. Politics and business are two sectors that tend to get the media on their feet so the onus is on you to create a media release that will stand out. A journalist works on a deadline and the submission of your press release at 3pm when the reporter is wrapping up his or her stories for the day, may result in your press release sent to the To-Do-Later tray.

1. Write an eye-catching headline

This can make all the difference! You can write your headline last or first. Journalists may use it or may write their own.

2. Use the inverted pyramid writing principle

Sum up the key message in the first paragraph. Remember the 5Ws and 1H (What, When, Where, Why, Who and How).

Write further paragraphs of the media release in descending order of importance.

The easiest way to edit a newspaper story or magazine article is to cut the last few paragraphs, so put the main aspects of the story near the beginning.

3. Use plain language writing techniques

Keep your sentences short. Use everyday words — cut any jargon. Don't use acronyms in the first instance – write it out in full with the acronym in brackets and use the acronym on second reference.

4. Include plenty of quotes

Facts are dull; people are interesting. What people say or think is newsworthy. Include quotes in your draft media release, and then get the agreement of the person you're quoting. To avoid liability, contentious comments must always be attributed.

If your release is on a global or regional event, ensure you keep it relevant by providing a local example.

5. Keep the media release to a page or a page and a half at the most

Look at the length of your media release from the reader's point of view. If journalists want more information, they'll contact you.

6. Follow up

Ring journalists after you have sent out the release to ensure they have received it.

If you want to provide more information, write a separate background sheet, using a question and answer format.

7. Include your contact details at the end of the release

Include your contact telephone numbers and email address. Make it easy for journalists to contact you.

8. Thank the journalist

If your media release does result in some publicity, drop the journalist/editor a quick thank you note to let them know that you appreciate their interest.

Building and maintaining a good working relationship with the media will support your communications strategy. Compile a media database with right spellings of names, contact details and any information that might help determine who to send your media releases to.

Think about pre-briefing sessions with media about certain issues, make sure you get information to the media when you promise, and regularly contact the media to let them know what you are working on.

How to write a media advisory

A Media Advisory alerts the media to an upcoming event.

EXAMPLE:

Media Advisory

Healthville Cancer Coalition introduces skin care prevention campaign

The Healthville Cancer Coalition comprised of representatives from 10 local organisations, will introduce its new campaign to prevent skin cancer on 5 May 2006. The campaign includes television and radio advertisements as well as a school districtwide children's contest to design the campaign's poster. The most recent data on local skin cancer rates also will be announced at the event.

Participants: Susan McCall
Chairperson,
Healthville Cancer Coalition

Dr Patricia Smith
Chief of Dermatology
Healthville
General Hospital

Date: Tuesday 5 May 2006

Time: 11am

Place: Healthville General Hospital
Auditorium
123 Main Street, Healthville

Contact: David Solomon
Healthville Cancer Coalition
(12) 34567

How to write a letter to the editor

A letter to the editor can be used in many ways – to respond to an article of editorial that you disagree with, to agree with a piece and provide supporting facts, or to comment on an issue relevant to your community that has not necessarily been covered by the publication. To increase the likelihood of your letter being published, keep the following in mind:

- Be brief and to the point. A good length for a letter to the editor is approximately 100 words.
- Do not personally attack the author of an article. Provide a rational, well thought out response to the points with which you disagree.
- Include your name, address, and phone number with the letter. An anonymous letter probably will not be published and the editor might need to call to confirm that you are the author before printing it.
- Your letter is likely to be edited or shortened to fit the space available so try to edit the letter and keep it simple and to the point. Include the name of your organisation in the letter or below your signature.
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How to write an op-ed

Op-eds provide your point of view on a particular issue. Use them to bring a community-wide discussion on a particular topic or to weigh in with your side's arguments in an ongoing debate. To make your op-ed as effective as possible, keep the following in mind:

- Present your opinion clearly and without ambiguity. Every sentence in the op-ed should bolster your case.
- Support your premise with facts and figures. Make statistics relevant to the people reading the article.
- Offer solutions. Do not just write the fact that a problem exists.
- Keep the op-ed brief. It should be no longer than 800 words.
- Time the submission of the op-ed with a holiday or other event such as the kickoff of your campaign to make it more newsworthy.
- Have a recognised expert or someone with credentials related to the topic sign his or her name on the op-ed. This will increase the chances that the article will be printed and lend it more credibility.
- Send the op-ed to the editorial page editor.

Why a group?

Groups are particularly good at combining talents and providing innovative solutions to possible unfamiliar problems; in cases where there is no well established approach/procedure, the wider skill and knowledge set of the group has a distinct advantage over that of the individual.

A group can be seen as a self managing unit. The range of skills provided by its members and the self monitoring which each group performs makes it a reasonably safe recipient for delegated responsibility. Even if a problem could be decided by a single person, there are two main benefits in involving the people who will carry out the decision. Firstly, the motivational aspect of participating in the decision will clearly enhance its implementation. Secondly, there may well be factors which the implementer understands better than the single person who could supposedly have decided alone.

From the individual's point of view, there is the added incentive that through belonging to a group each can participate in achievements well beyond his/her own individual potential. Less idealistically, the group provides an environment where the individual's self-perceived level of responsibility and authority is enhanced, in an environment where accountability is shared: thus providing a perfect motivator through enhanced self-esteem coupled with low stress.

Group development

There are four common stages to group development:

Forming

Storming

Norming

Performing

Forming

Forming is the stage when the group first comes together. Everybody is very polite. Since the grouping is new, the individuals will be guarded in their own opinions and generally reserved. This is particularly so in terms of the more nervous and/or subordinate members who may never recover. The group tends to defer to a large extent to those who emerge as leaders.

Storming

Storming is the next stage. Factions form, personalities clash, no-one concedes a single point without first fighting tooth and nail. Most importantly, very little communication occurs since no one is listening and some are still unwilling to talk openly. This stage is important for brainstorming ideas, and for creating dialogue about a certain topic.

Norming

At this stage the sub-groups begin to recognize the merits of working together and the in-fighting subsides. Since a new spirit of co-operation is evident, every member begins to feel secure in expressing their own view points and these are discussed openly with the whole group. The most significant improvement is that people start to listen to each other. Work methods become established and recognized by the group as a whole.

Performing

This is the culmination, when the group has settled on a system which allows free and frank exchange of views and a high degree of support by the group for each other and its own decisions.

Facilitation

To facilitate is

‘to free from difficulties or obstacles’, ‘to make easy or easier’

or

‘to carry out a set of functions or activities before, during and after a meeting to help the group achieve its own objectives’

The role of the facilitator

The facilitator must be a neutral to the discussion, taking a pragmatic view of all points raised. This frees the facilitator to concentrate on the group rather than the content of the discussion and hence they can ask pertinent and stimulating questions.

The facilitator has three different roles:

1. LEADERSHIP

Focus

To provide a focus for the group when the leader fails to fulfil their role.

Stimulate

To encourage constructive debate between group members.

Support

To bring out information from introverted members of the group and to allow new ideas to be submitted.

Participate

When the group is interacting poorly or in the wrong direction the facilitator must be willing to promote new discussion.

2. NEUTRAL

Pragmatic

To take a detached look at the discussion viewing each point on its merits.

Encourage feedback

To promote discussion of each point raised, by all members of the group.

3. REFEREE

Regulation

To maintain order of the group discussion, discouraging participants from talking at the same time, or dominating the floor.

Protect members

To ensure that all contributions to the discussion are treated equally and that no-one is rebuffed for their input.

Manage group dynamics

To manage dynamics within the group allowing everyone to participate freely.

Timekeeper

To adhere to the meeting timetable thus ensuring completion of the agenda.

How to be a good facilitator

To be effective in the role of a facilitator the person needs to be effective as a manager, requiring several skills and qualities to be able to guide the meeting smoothly.

Communication

The ability to put over points using all the techniques available both verbal and non verbal, receptive listening is also an important tool.

Planning

To arrange the venue for the meeting and to set it up in such a way that all barriers are removed between facilitator and audience. The time allocation to the meeting has to include time for discussions and feedback sessions.

Leadership

To forge a team from a group of individuals through motivation and empowerment of the individuals. Delegation of tasks is essential to being a good leader also knowing when to stand back and let the team have its head and when to take the initiative.

Training

Based upon knowing what the team needs to ensure that it becomes an efficient and effective unit. This is achieved through evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the individual members.

Consulting

The facilitator can not just stand up and give a formal lecture to the audience. They need to involve the audience and let them know what is going to be on the agenda. To get the audience to participate they need to be a catalyst for discussion and where necessary reform points made and feed it back to the audience to think about.

Personal skills and qualities

Flexibility

The ability to fulfil different group roles; leader, supporter, inquisitor etc. in order to keep the group process fluid and maximise potential.

Confidence

To instil confidence in the group by appearing purposeful and in control, therefore subduing group insecurities.

Authenticity

To be consistent in approach to the task, not moving the goal posts, becoming trustworthy to the group.

Patience/Perseverance

To appreciate the difficulties of group working and have the determination to see a task finished.

Leadership (Presence)

To have the respect of the group to become the surrogate leader if and when required.

Integrity

To be an example to the group of how to conduct oneself at work.

Initiating

To be able to start the group working on the task or when a problem is discovered/developed to find an alternative way around it to maintain the working.

Respectable

To have the admiration of the group as being a person whom they can trust the judgement of.

Perceptive

To have the capability to recognise undertones in the group; using the positive ones to the group's advantage and countering the negative ones to diminish them.

Using questions

There are certain skills that can help a facilitator conduct more effective meetings. First, be a good listener and observer. Next become skilled in the art of asking the right questions in the right way at the right time.

Your role as facilitator is to help people think, discover and make decisions by themselves. Your role is not to give the answer yourself but to bring the answers out of the group.

Some questions could include:

How do you feel about...?

What is your idea about...? What do you think?

Lin, what do you think?

Thuba, that's an interesting idea. Can you explain a little more?

Ok, we've spent quite a bit of time on that question. How do you feel about moving on? That is one way of looking at it. Let's look at the other side. What would happen if you...?

Tips for managing group dynamics

Try to get know group members as much as possible

Agree on, and refer to, group norms

Encourage the group to remind or challenge each other

Monitor group roles

In case groups get stuck, diagnose the problem with the group and look for solutions collectively

Develop sensitivity in the group and share responsibility within the group

Give constructive feedback to group members about their behaviour

Model norms of appropriate and expected behaviour yourself

Counsel individuals outside the group if necessary

Types of group roles

Initiator

Suggests new or different ideas for discussion and approaches for problems

Opinion giver

States relevant beliefs about discussions and offers other suggestions

Builder

Builds on suggestions of others

Clarifier

Gives relevant examples, offers reasons, looks for meaning and understanding, restates problems

Tester

Raises questions to 'test' whether the group is ready to come to a decision

Summariser

Reviews discussion and pulls it together

Devil's advocate

Challenges the group to think critically about their ideas.

Tension reliever

Uses humour or calls for a break at appropriate times

Compromiser

Gives in when necessary for progress

Harmoniser

Helps keep the peace

Encourager

Praises and supports others, friendly and encouraging

Gate keeper

Keeps communication open, encourages participation.

Facilitating change

When attempting to facilitate change, it is important to consider the attitudes of the people who you will be working with to implement the change. Here are some examples:

Survivor

Don't realise they are undermining change. Just trying to soldier on doing the job in the way they know how!

Saboteur

Undermines change while pretending to support it. Verbally supports it but better do nothing so it goes away!

Protestor

Believe their proposal to change makes a positive contribution to the organisation. Likes to point out the failures of change! Likes to protect tradition and discourage rashness. Positively, they are easier to handle as they will discuss openly and rationally.

Zombie

So conditioned to act in a certain way that they seem unable to change. Neither the ability of the will to make the change.

Managing group dynamics

Group dynamics can make or break a workshop or meeting. It is important to recognise that people's personalities, attitudes or approach to a meeting can contribute to the development of great ideas. However, when facilitating a group it is critical to identify the group roles quickly and be prepared for the group development.

Here are some tips for managing group personalities

Silent or shy

Reward any contribution. Encourage them outside the group. Give feedback one to one. Give notice of a topic so there is time to prepare. Share time. Give time. Be patient. Invite to speak or check understanding from time to time. Place in a supportive group.

The blocker

Check out reasons. Give feedback. Set and remind group norms. Give responsibility in the group. Confront the behaviour when it happens. Support/reinforce other behaviours. Give time out to the group.

Aggressor

Seek causes and remove them if possible. Give feedback. Change group. Remind of group norms. Confront behaviour when it happens and reinforce other behaviour when it happens. Model non-aggressive alternatives. Discuss effect with whole group.

Dominator

Share time. Give feedback. Record contribution levels. Place with other similar types. Place in same group as facilitator. Shut out. Invite to become responsible for other contributions. Develop assertiveness in others.

Withdrawer

Check out reasons. Allow a role in choosing task. Offer optional work. Reinforce, encourage, support contribution. Give responsibility. Challenge if appropriate. Place with motivated peers. Accept and be patient. Constant search for involvement.

Joker

Group discussion on the use and misuse of humour. Confront behaviour. Give feedback – allow time to change. Encourage other behaviour.

Misfit-loner

Model acceptance. Give feedback if appropriate. Give special encouragement. Allocate special role or responsibility. Support – create opportunity for achievement.

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