

engaging people

specialists in engaging people

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Celebrating twenty years of change

BY VIVIEN TWYFORD

If you'd told me that the business I opened as Vivien Twyford Communication in 1998 would still be growing and changing in 2008, I'm not sure I would have believed you. If I had thought it possible, I wouldn't have had any idea of the structure, skills and strategic direction that is the newly named Twyfords today.

Prediction isn't my game, not then, not now. However celebrating is and twenty years in business is certainly a cause for celebration ... for me and for all those who have been part of our journey.

Perhaps the journey started in earnest when, in October 1988, my staff of 3 moved our files and computer (we only had one) from my home in Mt Kembla to our first office in Wollongong. We were a generalist communications company without a particular focus. We were one of the first Wollongong based commercial training companies. We had experience in fundraising and events management and, together with strategic partners, we offered a full brochure production service. In a recent clear out of our storeroom, we found bundles of brochures going back 15 years, and I was

something that made sense. Done well it offered benefits to organisations and communities and made a real difference to people. I joined a US based association called the International Association for Public Participation in 1997 and with 8 colleagues started an Australian chapter the following year. We haven't looked back.



VIVIEN TWYFORD

I, and the business, found energy and ideas from the people who passed through and of course from our very varied client organisations and suppliers. I got better at identifying and hiring consultants whose skills and energies were complementary to mine. Max Hardy's passion and expertise in deliberative processes stretched us. John Dengate's local knowledge and organisational skills from his years at BHP, Stuart Waters' experience of his family's business and then Dr Vicki's academic rigour, have stretched us some more. Bringing them into my business as partners two years ago was my stroke of genius. Now its time for me to let them lead.



pretty impressed by what we produced. We advised on fundraising, we trained office staff, salespeople, retail assistants and supervisors in a broad range of people skills and best of all, we survived!

In 1992 I discovered, by chance, a new discipline known then as community consultation and I was immediately hooked. It was

As I step back I see a company working in all states in Australia, planning an office in New Zealand, with skills increasingly in demand as societies recognise the real benefits that come from successfully connecting people with decision-making in a genuine way. Cause for celebration? ... Definitely!

Changing our corporate look

BY DR VICKI VAARTJES

In June 2006, Twyford Consulting experienced a significant change. Vivien, the founder and owner of the company invited four of her colleagues including myself, to become part of the ownership structure, to put our money where our commitment was and to become equal partners. This we did, with very little hesitation. Vivien had created a company that was purpose driven, people and outcomes focused, so the four new directors, John, Max, Stuart and myself, found the decision to invest relatively easy.



Now 2 years on, we are launching a new “look” for our company, one that reflects who we are and represents our collective sense of purpose. Our logo, the symbol of our new company, was developed by local company, Wisdom Advertising and Design after much discussion with us. It represents two important shifts.

The first concerns the change of name from “Twyford Consulting” to “Twyfords”. The new name is inclusive, honours our past and retains our market identity. Many people already refer to us as “Twyfords” and dropping the word “consulting” demonstrates that we offer much more than consulting as a mode of intervention. We are skilled facilitators, program designers, organisational and community developers, coaches and mentors as well as consultants.

The second shift is the change of image. Our Twyford Consulting logo focused on what happens between people – communication, interaction, discussion, resolution. While this still represents much of the work we do, through coaching, mentoring and training, we wanted an image that was more driven toward outcomes.

The “arrow” image:

- is directional, driven and outcome focused;
- represents a “decision” diamond;
- has three key parts representing our three key areas of expertise:
 - leader capability,
 - organisational engagement and
 - community engagement.

These three areas of work inform our strategic approach. We help organisations and leaders build their capability to engage their people, their stakeholders and communities to generate outcomes that are of value to all.

We are on the brink of change that is both symbolic and important for us. Our journey has been fascinating so far and perhaps one we will write a book about some time! We look to the future with anticipation. We are forever grateful to our wonderful staff, past and present, and to our many clients and colleagues who have supported us so far. Here is to a great future!



DR VICKI VAARTJES

Changing Faces

BY STUART WATERS

It's Monday morning in the office. Everyone is a little nervous because today a new person is joining the team. A vacant workstation waits in readiness, no sticky notes hanging off the computer screen, and no piles of paper strewn around. What will this new person be like? How will they be different from the person we worked with for so many years? Will they be able to put up with us?

At Twyfords we have lived this scenario a number of times in the past year. Early in 2007 Allison Whitecross, our long-time Office Manager and keeper of the knowledge retired. Luckily, our recruitment process identified Janelle Mousley as someone with values that matched ours and the skills we needed and

she very quickly became part of the team. Janelle had to fill the shoes of someone who had been here since the beginning. A year down the track and we can't imagine how we ever managed without her.

The scenario replayed itself at the beginning of 2008, when Alison Garvie, our terrific Project Officer, left us for greener pastures and a more relaxed lifestyle. Alison's capacity for work, her sense of humour and her love of music added something special to the workplace. Luckily for us, at around the same time, Lenore Hardy (daughter of Max) came to our attention and we gratefully



STUART WATERS

Changing Direction

BY MAX HARDY

It's been quite a journey for me. Nearly 11 years at Twyfords. So hard to believe. I gladly report that I have never been bored and that, not only is the work fascinating, but I have been able to work with a great team at Twyfords and learn from some fantastic people around the globe.

But in what way has the work changed in that time? I recall that one of my first jobs was working with Vivien in Port Macquarie, engaging the community about their Effluent Management Strategy. Then there was something similar in the Blue Mountains and also in the northern towns of the Illawarra. There was a lot of 'doing' community engagement including writing material, meeting with clients and facilitating meetings with community members.

When I reflect on the work we are doing now we are much more focused on helping others to engage. We are building capacity and capability. We are providing services in particular aspects of engagement such as evaluation, reviews of community engagement plans and mentoring community engagement 'champions' who are the key change agents within their organizations.

We are working on an amazing range of projects. I personally am working with:

- a Water Authority to help them develop an evaluation framework for the purpose of assessing the level of incentive payments payable to their contractors for their community engagement performance

- a central government agency in New Zealand to develop a community engagement strategy around a 20 year community renewal project
- the University of Wollongong, helping its Graduate School of Medicine better connect their students to their communities during their 40 week placements in rural NSW.



MAX HARDY

We are being stretched, challenged and probably travelling more than ever. John and I just spent a week in Port Hedland with one of the mining companies where we delivered the IAP2 Certificate. Vivien has recently worked in Romania, South Africa and Singapore.

The clients we work with are changing too. They now ask better questions and understand how their internal engagement issues influence their ability to engage with external stakeholders.

The practitioners we train also want to be stretched. This has led to us developing a Community Engagement Masterclass, the subject of John and Vicki's article. The Masterclass is proving to be a wonderful opportunity for experienced practitioners to explore the more challenging aspects of their work.

What will I be getting up to in another ten years' time? Our world is changing so fast it is very hard to know. I am very confident our work will continue to evolve in exciting ways. What fun!

welcomed her into the fold. Lenore is just out of school and is saving hard before heading overseas. We will be sorry to see her go, having come to rely on her for so many things.

In preparing for Lenore's departure we sought a new team member. It wasn't long before we realised that we already knew the perfect person. A few phone calls, a get-to-know-you session, a handshake, and we welcomed Aleisha Jaffrey – our newest team member. Aleisha comes to us from the Department of Local Government and is bringing a new skill set to the role of Project Officer.

While the scenario has played out a number of times for us lately, it seems that change has been good for us. When people leave us they



Janelle Mousley



Lenore Hardy



Aleisha Jaffrey

take the spirit of Twyfords with them. When new people join us, they each bring something unique that adds to what we have already.

New Approaches – 2 new tools for diagnosis and change

Organisational Readiness Diagnostic

BY DR VICKI VAARTJES

We recommend a process of engagement where members of the organisation participate in the diagnosis, exploration, solution shaping and decision making processes. We co-design this process with the client to ensure a good contextual fit.

As experienced consultants and practitioners, we have observed our clients struggling to create effective and sustainable change with limited time and resources as well as competing priorities. They come to us with varying levels of energy for change. We, unsurprisingly, recommend processes that both engage people and are founded on a number of beliefs about change.

The first is our belief in the value of self discovery and self diagnosis using the appreciative model. We help clients focus on the things that are going right. We support them when they ask: how can we get more of that? Any process that engages people in self discovery in a respectful way, and links clearly to the strategic intent of the organisation, will lead to greater commitment to change. The word "diagnosis" tends to conjure images of the medical model (of being broken and needing to be fixed). However, we use the term "diagnostic" to describe a rigorous process where key people inside the organisation explore what is working well and identify ways to get more of those desired outcomes.

Our second belief is that adults are more likely to commit to something that they have helped create. Adults often resist imposed change. However, if they have had some involvement in the

diagnosis, discussion, solution shaping and decision making, they are more likely to commit the time and energy needed to implement the change.

Our third belief is that the process of self discovery and diagnosis is a key part of finding a wise solution. Effective diagnostic processes encourage self analysis, raise individual and collective awareness, encourage debate, reflection and dialogue, and "ready" the organisation for change.

We have recently developed a diagnostic tool that focuses on the capacity of the organisation to engage external stakeholders and communities, the Organisational Readiness Diagnostic (ORD).

We have drawn on our collective experience to develop the Organisational Readiness Diagnostic (ORD). The key areas that are explored include:

- values and strategy
- leader capability
- policy and procedures
- culture and practice
- management process and
- employee capability.

For more information on our diagnostic tools and processes, please contact us.



DR VICKI VAARTJES

Employee Engagement Review - EER

BY DR STEPHEN SMITH

The Employee Engagement Review or EER is a diagnostic tool that can be used on-line and in workshops to help organisations measure the factors that contribute most to creating an environment that supports employee engagement. The EER results in a rich report outlining where the organisations can target development to improve performance.

Work can be an engaging pursuit - most of us have experienced it at times. The feeling when you wake up in the morning with energy and look forward to throwing yourself into the day ahead. When your work is something to be savoured and appreciated. But for most people this is now a rare occurrence. Far too many employees find their work draining, demotivating and dissatisfying. And this impacts outcomes like client service, employee retention, productivity, safety performance, shareholder return and external stakeholder and community engagement.

One of the findings of an international research study reveals that only about one-in-five employees are actively engaged with their work. Meanwhile around 60% of employees are coasting along (passively disengaged) and the final 20% are actively disengaged (cynical and disconnected).

With more than 20 years' experience as specialists in engaging people Twyfords is a major contributor to the collection, analysis and application of this global research. Dr Stephen Smith and Dr Vicki Vaartjes have worked in conjunction with the University of Sydney (Faculty of Health Science) using data collected by 30 universities around the world from 2000 work sites and using around 250,000 participants.

For more information contact Stephen Smith or Vicki Vaartjes.



DR STEPHEN SMITH



Our changes also include a new website that you can visit at www.twyfords.com.au



Our first Masterclass in Community Engagement

BY JOHN DENGATE

Clear Mountain Lodge is a truly stunning venue with a panorama overlooking Brisbane. It was a fitting venue for sixteen enthusiastic professional people to engage in deep learning and new relationships.

Our Advanced Community Engagement Practitioner Masterclass resulted in change for participants and facilitators alike – change in perspective, change in knowledge, change in understanding and change in capability. As I reflect on the dynamics of change over the two days of the program, some significant shifts come to mind:

Change in relationships – the group was engaged to create their own mini social system. This became so visible that one of the three guest speakers noticed and commented on this just after he arrived by saying that the group was obviously a “community”. He had observed in an instant the subtle yet powerful dynamics of a community working together on issues of importance and relevance to them.

Change in expectations – the same guest also thought he was in the wrong place when he stepped into the room - it looked so different from what he expected from a “training course”. Perhaps this was something to do with the circle of chairs, the information plastered over the walls and the energetic contributions of the group.

Change in assumptions – the participants examined many aspects of community engagement, and worked with new and challenging perspectives. For example, they explored the tensions between community engagement based on a robust, documented process, versus a ‘see the need and just do it’ challenge from the decision maker guest. Similarly the group experienced a strong reaction to one of the guest speaker’s comments that community engagement involves “manipulation”. When the participants explored what this meant, their own assumptions were challenged and they built new frameworks for their work.

Change in the way others are viewed – a major theme selected by the group was how to influence decision makers. Participants saw decision-makers as potential problems and wanted to understand their drivers, however over the 2 days their focus shifted toward their own attitudes and approach to a realization of “it’s much more about me than them”. This realisation seemed to free up what they had previously seen as a challenge.

Change in perspective - “I’ve never experienced a course like it – it’s taken me up a notch, and refocused me on my passion!” was a participant’s reaction at the end of the program. New and deep insights were obtained about how to achieve better outcomes inside their organisations as well as outside with stakeholders and communities. And they experienced strong confirmation in their own resourcefulness to do this important work.

For me as a facilitator, it was a great experience of how engagement can deliver powerful outcomes, often exceeding the expectations of the organisers!



JOHN DENGATE



Councillor Lew Brennan challenging the group



Working outside



The inaugural Masterclass



specialists in
engaging people

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