



Change? Communicate, Engage - Prosper!

It is a truism that the only constant is change! For the higher education sector that is never truer than it is now. Many universities are immersed in programs of organisational reform – institution-wide or tightly focused, targeted change. A few of these initiatives may largely fail in their objective of achieving organisational improvement. Some may muddle through and achieve half-baked success. How many will achieve the kind of inspirational step-change that will launch them onto a higher stage of organizational and cultural effectiveness?

Communication is at the core of successful change management. And, it is one of the toughest areas to get right.

This interactive presentation will explore that premise through these key propositions:

- Effective engagement and communication with staff is the key element which can make the difference between transformative – or just middling - change.
- People – everywhere, not just in universities - react more positively when they are talked with, rather than at. That characteristic is even more pronounced in the collegiate environment of higher education. That necessitates a style of communication and engagement which responds to, and engages with, that particular (and at times peculiar) organizational character.

The presentation will explore four key elements of successful change communications.

- Developing a strategic approach to change communications. Anyone can develop a PowerPoint presentation, plan a talk for either a “town hall” or a small group meeting, write an update bulletin or an all-staff email. Only a few do it well. Even fewer do it with effective strategic intent and impact. What looks easy is not. Tactics live and die in the shadow of strategy.
- Trading the "loud hailer" approach ("yell loudly enough and often, surely everyone will hear the messages...") for the subtler approach of two-way, multi-faceted, genuine and respectful communication.
- Getting the timing right. If the rumour mill is doing your job for you, then you are too late... Start early, start sooner than early, and continue long after you think your audience has stopped listening.
- The “digital lens” provides both new opportunities and new challenges. Digital communication brings a capacity to develop innovative approaches and to be timely,

responsive and inclusive. It also brings new challenges. Managers working to achieve change need to be a part of – not swamped by - the digital wave.

This will be an experiential session – we practice what we preach! Participants will discover and learn through examples and exercises, drawn from the presenters' extensive experience as change and communications practitioners in the higher education sector.

These experiences and observations – of both good and bad change communication practice – will enable participants to take away strategies, along with practical tips and tricks, to apply to the challenges of change and engagement in their own organizations.