

Andrew Huffer

Facilitating sound decision making throughout Western Australia and beyond!



What lies within..

- *Facilitation* - Focusing your team on what really matters
- *Community engagement* - Three basics you should always stick with
- *Building your team* - Improving team performance
- *Effective promotion* - We need recognition

Got news?

Need answers?..

If you have any special requests for topics you want covered or questions you need answered, just drop me a line:

andrew@andrewhuffer.com.au and we'll make it a learning opportunity for everyone.



NEWS TO USE

- Facilitation
- Community engagement
- Building your team
- Effective promotion

Welcome back!

Well done on again making the commitment to improve your skills. This brief newsletter is designed to give you *practical tips* from my own experience to take away and *apply*. Simple as that!

As a quick reminder, I've had my own consultancy business for right on 12 years (as of today!) I focus on delivering value and practical results for clients needing help in the areas listed above.

In the six months since the first newsletter I've been working on some really interesting projects. Here's a sample:

- Promoted, convened & assisted the design and delivery of the Australasian Facilitation Conference
- Identified how to measure social impacts of a major oil & gas project
- Reviewed community engagement processes around major road infrastructure projects
- Facilitated 10 strategic planning workshops for farm businesses

And I'm still a partner in a cafe and catering business with my wife Georgie www.foodforme.com.au This continues to give me practical experience in working with staff, attracting and retaining clients and promoting and marketing a real business.

Following are some insights from the last six months....

Facilitation

How to Help Your Team to Focus on What Really Matters

In the first edition of this newsletter you will have read about my love for The Sandman, one of Australia's greatest philosophers. To recap, I discussed the importance of knowing what the client wants from a facilitated workshop - as opposed to Sandman's philosophy of 'Failure requires no preparation.'



Well the two hour 'fact finding' meeting with my client and his senior management team was invaluable. As mentioned it helped me to understand:

- The pressure the team was under
- The state of the relationships within the team
- The issues I'd face when facilitating a workshop with their colleagues
- What we really needed to focus on during the workshop

The workshop revealed that the team was feeling a fair bit of pressure - and was often reacting to ad-hoc requests from 'executive management.' To put things into perspective we worked through a list of challenges that they'd faced over the previous two years (the group identified and placed these on a timeline.) Then we went through each challenge and rated them using an adaptation of Covey's Circle of Influence.

I drew up three large concentric circles on the board. The inner most was labelled 'Control'. The next one was labelled 'Influence'. The outer circle was labelled 'Concern'.

The challenges that they were able to resolve themselves were placed in the 'Circle of Control.' Those that they needed some outside assistance with were placed in the 'Circle of Influence'. Those that they couldn't do much about were placed in the 'Circle of Concern.'

We ended up with 25% of the challenges within the circle of Control; 50% within the circle of Influence and only 25% sitting within Concern. This helped the team to see (literally) that their worklife was not as reactionary as they initially thought. When put to the test, it showed they were able to deal with a significant number of challenges either on their own or with some outside assistance.



To paraphrase Covey, it helped them to see what they *could* do, rather than focusing on what worried or concerned them.

This helped to build some confidence to identify issues that they wanted to address and goals to achieve over the next three years.

Community Engagement

Three Basics You Should Always Stick With

I've been involved in community engagement activities for several years. More recently this has included assisting with

- Community forums on Water Allocation Plans in South Australia
- Facilitation of Stakeholder Reference Groups for mining companies
- Community forums & workshops on Coastal Planning Strategies
- Community information forums on the World Heritage listing of the Ningaloo Coast

Here are a few key tips I've picked up along the way.

Stay neutral

Sounds pretty basic doesn't it? The facilitator should always maintain a neutral stance. It's a mantra that's hummed across the land. We know it's a core value, but how do we maintain it?

And remember, in most community engagement processes, things can become a tad passionate and people may even ask 'where you stand' on the issue. This is a really good question to ask yourself before entering the fray as a facilitator in any community engagement process. What situation might you end up in? What would be your *open and honest* response?

If it's an issue that really fires you up, then perhaps a colleague may be a better choice for the role. I'm not saying that you shouldn't care about the issues you get involved in as

a facilitator - just be aware of people's perceptions of you and your opinions.

Stick to the topic

Be wary of people wanting to use the community engagement forum as a stage for them to vent their spleen. I continually reinforce what the engagement process is focusing on. I also make sure that people do have other avenues to express any concerns about issues unrelated to the community engagement process.

Be clear on who's making the decision

Let the people involved know this right from the start. Otherwise when they do find out (and they will) they'll be pretty



grumpy. And you'll be the poor soul that they'll be grumpy with. So right from the start of any consultation planning process I sit down with the 'client' and ask:

- Who'll be making the final decisions on the issue?
- What influence with the 'stakeholders' have on this?
- What can and can't be negotiated?

I always have a copy of the **IAP2** spectrum of public participation on hand to explain why I'm asking these questions. It's an invaluable resource!

Building your team

A Simple Model to Improve the Performance of Your Team

Let's finish from where we left off in Issue No. 1. We covered the five *Stages of Group Development*, based on a model developed by Tuckman and Jensen (1977). The model provides a guide to understand the processes operating within a group at any given time. The five stages are shown in the table below.

| Stage | What's happening |
|---------------|---|
| 1. Forming | New group, just beginning |
| 2. Storming | Establishing direction & roles within group |
| 3. Norming | Using skills & teamwork |
| 4. Performing | High trust, confident, self-directed |
| 5. Adjourning | Role superceded |

In between issues, I hope you've set aside time to observe your team and apply some of the leaders strategies.

Stage 3. Norming

Team members begin to show a sense of belonging and group cohesion develops through increased levels of trust. They acknowledge all members input and use the strength of the group to solve issues.

Team members share feelings and ideas, solicit and give feedback to one another. Creativity is high in the norming stage and participants start to feel good about being part of an effective group. They look for ways to improve how they function as a group.

Role of the team leader

- Encourage your group and recognize them for the good work they are doing.
- Continue to facilitate group planning & development processes
- Provide ongoing feedback to the group.
- Encourage and support any emerging leaders.

Practical approaches

- Let the group have control – facilitate decision making, but only if required

Stage 4. Performing

When a group reaches the Performing stage members support each other, manage their group process easily, and focus on their task. This is the most productive stage of the group where people can work independently, in subgroups, or as a total unit. Members of the group focus on the task to be completed whilst fully supporting other group members. The group focuses on solutions and works actively towards achieving them.

Role of the team leader

- Provide good tools and techniques for the tasks
- Provide ongoing feedback
- Stay out of the way when not needed – step back!

Stage 5. Adjourning

At this stage a number of scenarios may have emerged:

- The group has lost its focus
- The groups original purpose has changed or no longer exists
- The groups' task is complete

Effective promotion

- Makeup of the group has changed substantially

This may be characterised by marked reduction in enthusiasm of team members. When the group has reached this stage the team leader may help the group to decide whether it should continue in its' current form and what the alternatives could be.

For a group that has decided to continue the team leader should

- Facilitate definition of new purpose and associated goals
- Facilitate identification of roles and responsibilities

When a group has clearly achieved its goals and has no further purpose, the team leader should:

- Facilitate a debrief to help the group reflect on their successes achieved & challenges overcome
- Recognise the achievements of the group members
- Help organise a celebration of the groups' work as part of a closure process



Admit it - We all Need Recognition!

Like it or not, in any role, to achieve *real* success, you're eventually going to have to be visible. Visible to potential new clients, visible to peers or visible to funders. If you stay hidden away 'just doing your job', you'll find that someone (more or less talented) will literally *steal* your limelight. And you'll be left wondering "why did I miss out on that project? How did he get that gig in front of me?"

The good news is that there are *plenty* of ways for the important people in your work life to get to know you better. Here's a short list of the things I do:

- Maintain my networks - by attending and helping organise events. Examples include the AFN and IAP2 events
- Do some online stuff - Blog from my website, LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook
- Produce this newsletter
- Get out for coffee or lunch with clients or colleagues
- Speak at conferences, forums and events

I'm guessing you're thinking "that looks like it would take up a lot of time - time that I don't have!" That's true - but what if you *don't* allocate time to do this? What if you don't make a sound case to your supervisor to be allowed to do this? Well, put it this way - you'd better be enjoying 2012, because it won't change much for you otherwise! A tad harsh - but still fair I believe.

Implementation

And I'm no angel on this - it took me years to get this newsletter up and going and it'll take more persistence and commitment to make it the quarterly feature in your professional life that I want it to be.

Now let's look on the brighter side of this. A BIG benefit of all of this is that it pushes me to improve my knowledge. There's no way I can consider speaking at events , write this newsletter or do the online stuff without really being up to speed on the topic. Sadly, people like to pick off 'easy targets' - so it's important to know my stuff!

So my encouragement to you is to make you own list and allocate some time each week; each month and each quarter to work on the implementation side.

And of course I'm keen to hear of your results - help your peers out there with a few success stories - it'll make our world a better place!

Resources for you

Facilitation

International Association of Facilitators Oceania Conference. Buiding Capacity through facilitation. March 7-9th, Melbourne. (See you there!) www.iaf-oceania.org

Community engagement

IAP2 spectrum of public participation. Available from www.iap2.org.au

Building your team

'Shackelton's Way. Leadership lessons from the great Antarctic Explorer'. Margot Morrell and Stephanie Capparell (2001). ISBN 1-85788-211-3. Nicholas Brealey Publishing

Effective promotion

Subscribe to Dan Kennedy's No BS Marketing Newsletter. Go to www.dankennedy.com for a free trial. Warning - It's not for the faint hearted!

Use this section to list two things you'll do over the next three months in each of the focus areas of the newsletter

Facilitation

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Community engagement

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Building your team

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Effective promotion

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Questions

Use this section to list up to two things you'd like answered in following editions of the newsletter - then send them to me at andrew@andrewhuffer.com.au

Facilitation

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Community engagement

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Building your team

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Effective promotion

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Next edition

- Facilitation - Insights to assist you with strategic planning
- Community engagement - stakeholder mapping
- Building your team - who's who in the zoo
- Effective promotion - the bright and dark side of Linked In

Wrapping up

I'm always looking for ways to improve my business. So if you have ideas on this newsletter for a start, I'd gladly welcome them.

And if you have *questions* about any aspects of the newsletter - from content, through to the headlines used and layout, let me know - there's a reason behind most of the things I do..most of the time!

Whilst there's been a large gap between this newsletter and the first one, I've committed to producing one newsletter per quarter throughout 2012. But if I don't get any feedback, complaints, questions, demands or ideas for articles, I'll probably stop. So please throw what's on your mind my way!

So, if you have specific questions, hit me with them via **email** or via my **website**.

And finally, if somehow, you're not already a newsletter subscriber, become one by going to www.andrewhuffer.com.au

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