Talking the Walk



A Communication Manual for Partnership Practitioners

Talking the Walk:
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Authors: Sue McManus
Ros Tennyson

Contributors:
Andrew Acland • Sean Ansett • Anuradha • Nigel Atkin • Alison Beanland • David Birch • Greg Butler • Michelle Commandeur • Michelle Evans • Helen Fenney • Maria Hayes • Bettina Heinz • Gemma May • Saskia Merriman • Steve Metcalfe • Catriona Murray • Judith Nicol • Joe Phelan • Rafal Serafin • Leda Stott

Project manager: Sue McManus

Editing and proofreading: Emma Barthes
Emily Wood

Illustrations: Maria Hayes

Designer: Alison Beanland

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Introduction



The Partnering Initiative (TPI) – a global programme of the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) – is now widely regarded by all sectors for promoting rigour and good practice in cross-sector partnering for sustainable development. A major element in our work is producing practical tools and guidelines that are accessible to practitioners from all sectors, locations and cultures. Among our key publications are a series of guides that deal systematically and, we hope, authoritatively with partnership issues without being overly academic or theoretical. *Talking the Walk: A Communication Manual for Partnership Practitioners* is the fourth in the series.

This publication represents more than a year's work, and whenever our enthusiasm showed signs of flagging, the encouragement, patience and confidence of our fellow contributors kept us going. Huge thanks are owed to all of them. Three people deserve special mention for their help in getting financial support to make the whole project viable. Without Maria Bobenrieth of Nike, Michelle Commandeur of ANZ Bank and Rafal Serafin of the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation, there would quite simply be no book.

The first seven chapters in *Talking the Walk* look in detail at the realities of communicating in partnership. As well as narrative, each chapter contains a number of boxes and tables giving examples or "Practitioner Tips". Near the start of chapter 7 (pages 58-59), you will find a diagram outlining the communication aspects of the Partnering Cycle. Chapter 8 comprises nine tools that you can use or adapt for your own purposes.

Since the manual is about communication, we invited as many contributors as possible to participate in this project, to demonstrate the collaboration that we saw as a vital ingredient of partnering communication. Woven throughout the manual are think pieces that some of these contributors have written. In addition, chapter 9 contains communication stories and communication case studies reflecting the experience of a range of practitioners in the field.

As the manual is simply a starting point, chapter 10 encourages you to anticipate the future challenges you will face and to build your communication skills to meet these challenges. To help in this endeavour, at the back of the manual we've included a Further Resources section, listing a number of print and online publications to add to your communication toolkit.

In preparing this publication, we reviewed a considerable amount of partnership case study material. We quickly became convinced that partnering is above all a communication challenge and that, far from being incidental or peripheral, good communication is actually the heart or, perhaps more accurately, the heartbeat of all effective partnering.

We hope that by the time you have finished reading and testing out the manual in your own partnerships, you will agree.

Sue McManus
Ros Tennyson

Some Definitions

Audience – any key individuals, groups or the general public that may have a reason to be interested in the partnership, its activities or its impacts.

Communication – the process by which information and knowledge are exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs and behaviours. The term has several uses and can be confusing – for example, (a) *as a competence:* a skill to be deployed in the partnership process; and (b) *as a function:* tactical communication efforts where the goals of communicating might be to inform, persuade, motivate or achieve mutual understanding. The function is often referred to as "Communications".

Partners – organisations that have signed up to the partnership, and their nominated representative(s).

Partner's stakeholders – groups or sectors impacted by or impacting on an individual partner organisation.

Partnership project / programme "beneficiaries" – those who have gained direct benefit from the project or programmatic activities of a partnership – usually the "target group" that the partners have defined as the focus of their partnership work.

Partnership's stakeholders – groups or sectors impacted by or impacting on the partnership.

Stakeholders – publics that are affected by or can affect an organisation. They are often publics with a vested interest in the actions, decisions, policies, practices or goals of the organisation. Stakeholder advocates often represent stakeholders that cannot represent themselves – such as elements of the natural environment, or disenfranchised groups.



1. Partnering:
A Communication Challenge

Cross-sector partnerships are by their nature challenging, requiring collaboration between players from diverse organisations that may have quite different priorities, values and ways of working. These challenges are typically reflected in all aspects of communication both within and outside the partnership. It is vital, therefore, to identify exactly what these challenges are and how to systematically address them so that communication becomes a part of the partnership-building process, not a cause of persistent dissent.

Collaboration between different sectors in society to achieve sustainable development goals (commonly known as "partnership") is becoming an increasingly common phenomenon worldwide. Such partnerships are initiated by businesses, civil society organisations or public sector agencies, and they can be found at local, regional, national and international levels. Partnership programmes range from those seeking to **influence** (activities designed to marshal arguments and evidence to impact policy and decision making) to those dedicated to **action** (projects and programmes designed to address a specific development issue – for example, education, climate change, health, post-conflict reconstruction).

Many factors contribute to cross-sector partnerships being efficient and effective, many of which TPI and others have addressed elsewhere.[1] They include reasonable levels of partnering skill, adherence to certain shared values and principles, common goals or objectives holding the group together, good governance arrangements, an adequate enabling environment and so on.

But what about communication as a factor in partnership success, whether internal (within each partner organisation and between partners) or external (with those outside the partnership who are impacted by – or who impact – it)?

Although many practitioners in their personal records[2] refer to poor communication as possibly the most significant challenge in their day-to-day partnering work, we have found comparatively little material in the public domain that addresses communication as a matter of primary importance in effective partnering. This was the prompt for creating this manual – in which many partnership practitioners from all over the world have taken an active part, whether as individual contributors or as participants in workshops or training courses who contributed original material.

Why do we believe that communication is so important in partnerships for sustainable development?

Our starting point for this publication was to review some common partnering challenges exposed for a different project.[3] The project undertook a number of case studies of very different partnerships from diverse contexts, aiming to develop a methodology for case studies that would permit their use as vehicles for learning and as "tools for change". While the project was primarily designed to explore the nature of case studies more than the nature of partnerships per se, a surprising number of common findings about partnership issues did emerge.

At the time, we did little more than list these challenges[4] (see left-hand column in the following table), but a subsequent review of the material from which this list of partnering issues was compiled quickly revealed a remarkable number of communication threads.

Partnering Challenges	Communication Threads
Terminology and language	● Divergence of views / understanding of key terms (e.g., “project”, “partnership”, “community”, “sustainable”, “development”). ● Jargon from each sector being incomprehensible and alienating to the others (e.g., “market analysis”, “participatory appraisal”, “social needs analysis”).
Context and culture	● Cultural diversity often being as big a challenge as sectoral diversity – but usually unacknowledged and unexplored. ● Partnership being developed in a vacuum without real engagement with the local community or recognition of the contextual constraints.
Equity, power and leadership	● Unspoken but strongly felt power imbalance between partners. ● Leadership being all too often assumed by the person with the highest external status, organisational authority or resource contribution, rather than being shared between partners.
Transparency and trust	● Suspicion that certain partners are not being honest about their motives for partnering. ● Despite partners talking about trust, a sense that the levels of trust are rather superficial and will not stand up in a crisis situation – evidenced by partners resorting to blaming each other very quickly if things go wrong.
Partnering and the public sector	● Partnerships incorporating public sector partners because they think they have to, without really finding ways of accommodating their interests or needs. ● Public sector-initiated partnerships being too much like “business as usual” and not building on the potential of the partnering relationship to be more innovative.
Exits and exit strategies	● Too often a poorly planned and managed process – retrospectively damaging the work of the partnership. ● Rarely explained well to external audiences and therefore interpreted as a partnership or partner “failing” rather than “transitioning”.
The controlling hand of (external) donors	● Donors not understanding the partnering process and the time required to build strong and productive collaboration. ● Donors expecting conventional reports, assessments or monitoring procedures, which too often restrict rather than enhance the partnership’s operations and flexibility.
Failure to learn from mistakes	● Partners not taking time to reflect on the experience but “keeping going”, even when there might be better ways of proceeding. ● Partners failing to internalise lessons that emerge (e.g., from reviews or case studies) and therefore not benefiting from others’ insights.
Playing the partnering game	● Using the term “partnership” to describe activities because it is politically correct, not because it accurately describes the nature of the relationship or the approach to the work. ● Partners pretending to be serious about collaboration, but in reality seeing it as peripheral and not in any way adjusting their behaviour.
Focus on “impacts” as opposed to “value”	● Partners believing that it is only valid to seek project achievements, rather than the added value for their own organisation / priorities. ● Informing external audiences of project achievements only, rather than wider, more strategic benefits.

Our reviews of raw case study material on partnering issues soon convinced us that partnering is above all a communication challenge and that, as we said in the Introduction, good communication is the heart – or more accurately, the heartbeat – of all effective partnering.

This view was reinforced by findings from a one-day workshop with partnership practitioners[5] in Melbourne, Australia, conducted in February 2007 as part of the action research for this publication. Participants at the workshop were asked to explore two questions:
1. What communication challenges have we faced as partnership practitioners?
2. What have we done or might we do to address those challenges?

What follows summarises the issues they raised and their actual or suggested responses.

PT

Practitioner Tips

Some Challenges from within the Partnership

People-based	Role-based	Language-based	Understanding-based	Values-based
Identifying the key or best people to do the communicating – so it is done well. Clarifying communication channels – to avoid conflicting information being circulated.	Deciding who does what, how they are briefed and to whom they are accountable. Analysing and explaining the need for a (internal or external) broker.	Using jargon, which is often a block. Introducing complicated concepts that alienate and separate.	Having a wide range of different communication needs and expectations among partner organisations that can be hard to reconcile. People not liking to admit they don't understand something, so saying "Yes" when they might mean "I'm not sure I understand".	Not having enough respect or appreciation for each other's values as partners. Being unwilling to accept diverse expectations / drivers of different partners.

Some Challenges from outside the Partnership

Being heard	Being clear	Being compelling	Being selective	Being effective
How do you compete with the increasing communication "noise"?	What are you aiming to communicate, and to whom?	How do you make "partnership" an interesting topic?	Are you communicating about the partnership or about the outcomes of the partnership's work?	How do you assess if you are achieving your communication goals?

Some Solutions and Conclusions

- Build communication capacity in the key players who need it.
- Keep language and communication simple and straightforward at all times.
- Create a culture in the partnership where it is OK to say "I don't understand" or "I don't know" or "Can you explain?"
- Have a communication plan – with specific targets and with evaluation and performance measures specified – built into the partnership agreement. Use it!
- Agree what you all, as partners, want to say about the partnership.
- Consider more carefully who will be interested in (or actually care about) what you want to share or communicate. Target them more precisely.
- Do more to use communication as a tool for developing the partnership itself.

Each context and culture may well have different approaches and attitudes to communication – the kinds of communication challenges in Australia may be significantly different from those in India, Russia or Japan – so it is essential not to generalise. In chapter 2, we explore the importance of checking out our own and each other's cultural and professional assumptions.

We all need to be regularly reminded that we tend to define certain communication approaches as "good" simply because we recognise them and feel comfortable with them, and other approaches as "poor" simply because they are different and therefore we feel uncomfortable. Compare, for example, these three responses to a situation:

The partnership is facing an issue of such importance that it threatens to destabilise, perhaps even destroy, the partnership, so an external facilitator has been employed to help the partners address the issue constructively and arrive at a solution to the problem.

Response 1:

The facilitator invites all of the partners to a meeting and asks them in turn to speak their mind and put their point of view as forcefully as they wish to. She has started the meeting by agreeing with the group a set of ground rules, one of which says "All points of view are valid and everyone will be allowed their say". One by one, each partner voices his / her opinion, and the noise levels and the emotional temperature rise. It gets to a point where crisis seems inevitable, and the group members turn on the facilitator and blame her for her inadequate handling of the situation. She points out that they are getting angry with each other, indicating some possibly serious divergence of views that they need to address honestly if the partnership is to make progress. The partners admit to being quite shocked at the barely contained violence of their feelings and challenge each other to reconsider their views and their behaviour. By the end of the meeting, the partners agree to work harder to understand and respect each other's perspective, and they recognise that addressing the issue under debate requires each of them being prepared to adopt a more flexible stance to arrive at a compromise they can all live with.

Response 2:

The facilitator summarises the problematic issue, pointing out clearly the different perspectives of each partner and the importance of the issue to the future of the partnership. He then suggests that all those present quietly reflect on why they care about the partnership and what will be lost for them, for their organisation and for the beneficiaries of the partnership's activities should the partnership fail. After 15 minutes, he invites each partner to share his / her views on the partnership's importance – which each does quietly and thoughtfully. Once each person has spoken, the facilitator suggests they review the controversial issue in light of their views about the partnership. The partners quickly see that they will each need to take personal responsibility for finding a solution to the problem if the partnership is to move forward. They then agree quite easily that the way forward is the one that is most likely to strengthen the working relationship and provide greater stability for the partnership in future.

Response 3:

The facilitator decides to talk with each of the partners separately and as often as necessary to help them face up to the issue and the implications of not addressing it well. She arranges one-to-one meetings, and whenever she thinks there has been a breakthrough with one of the partners, she revisits the others to share and discuss the latest development. By asking each partner to clarify what information they are willing for her to share and by demonstrating that she has not overstepped her brief, enough trust is built between her and each partner that she is able to move them closer and closer to a resolution that will be acceptable to all. When she finally suggests that they meet, the issue has to all intents and purposes been resolved and the partners simply acknowledge to each other their acceptance of what they have agreed to and what actions they will take as a result.

The facilitators used three quite different communication approaches – which was the best? Each approach achieved the goal of "addressing the issue constructively and arriving at a solution to the problem", as outlined in the facilitator's brief: the first, by allowing all the arguments and

opinions to be voiced and worked through; the second, by encouraging reflection and silence, out of which a way forward quietly emerged; and the third, by a form of "shuttle diplomacy" in which each partner adjusts his / her perspective in response to new information from a third party.

Of course, the conclusion is that none of these approaches is best – though in arriving at this conclusion, each of us may have had to struggle with being drawn more to one approach than to another as a result of our cultural background and our particular personal experiences of (and preferences for) working as part of a group.

Like a good facilitator, a good partnership practitioner or partnership broker uses communication skills flexibly to do the following:

- **Interpret** between different people and perspectives.
- **Promote** appropriate partnering behaviour.
- **Encourage** respect among the partners.
- **Empower** others to communicate within and beyond the partnership.
- **Seek** ideas and opinions to inform constructive and creative change.

In order to do these things well, practitioners themselves need to be open, alert to potential sensitivities and trustworthy. They also need to demonstrate commitment to continuous personal improvement in communication matters. By doing so, in addition to improving their communication skills, they will be acting as good role models for their partnering colleagues.

We hope that the technical know-how and practical tools presented here – and compiled by partnership practitioners out of real-life partnering experiences – will provide readers with support in their own approaches to "talking the walk", both within and beyond their partnerships.

We firmly believe that being analytical and scientific in approaching communication challenges is both possible and necessary, but we also believe that good communication entails intuition, imagination and vision. Some of the "think pieces" in the manual explore these more qualitative aspects and we hope will provide stimulus, encouragement and confidence in building more imaginative and reflective communication approaches.

Communication is central to collaboration. Collaboration is the basis of partnering. At its best, partnering is both a practical and an inspirational mechanism for managing change that has the potential to contribute richly to a globally sustainable future.

> *"Partners are collaborators, thinkers and dreamers. To work in this way, we abandon our comfortable, tried-and-true traditions in our working lives. We also move from a position of control into a location of collaboration. To collaborate is a high-order creative process."* **Michelle Evans**[6]



2. Intentions, Assumptions and Inclusion

There are many ways of understanding and communicating, and we need to regularly remind ourselves that each of us has a personal perspective of what is right or wrong or true at any moment. Cross-sector partnerships are essentially about negotiating between diverse perspectives and agreeing on innovative approaches to achieve pre-agreed sustainable development goals. These are both communication activities. Good communication in a partnership starts with recognising and being clear about the assumptions we bring to the process of communicating. It also entails being clear about the communication intention, and as part of this intention, ensuring that the partnership makes room for the voices of all the partners.

Partnerships may have many reasons for communicating, including:
- Raising awareness.
- Engaging new partners.
- Keeping everyone involved.
- Managing the project or programme.
- Recording the partnership's history and progress.
- Reporting to external donors.
- Handing over to others.
- Informing the wider public.

Each of these reasons will be directed at different target audiences and will take more or less priority according to the phase of the Partnering Cycle (see pages 58-59). In the next two chapters, we look at who these target audiences might be – both internal and external to the partnership – and in chapter 7, we examine different communication options that might be adopted and adapted to each audience and purpose. At this stage, however, we consider the more underlying aspects of the communication challenge.

The Right to Know

Those participating in cross-sector partnerships typically agree that effective communication between partners is essential. Usually they also agree that their partnership needs to reach out to a wider public. But partners do not always find it easy to agree on the motivation and focus of such communication, since these partnerships bring together diverse and often-unspoken motivations, expectations, perspectives and interests of the individuals and the organisations involved. What's more, the partners are used to responding in different ways to the challenge of meeting public expectations.

The process of opening up a cross-sector partnership's operations to public scrutiny requires a careful balancing of the partners' different interests and perspectives. In addition, it means balancing different motivations for reaching out to the wider public. The desire to open up a partnership to public scrutiny responds to the view that those involved in and affected by the partnership's operations are entitled not just to be informed, but also to contribute or participate in some way to shaping those operations. The pressure *not* to open up a partnership arises from the recognition that transparency will be costly in terms of time, paperwork and human resources. Reporting can soak up significant resources that could otherwise be more directly deployed to generate public benefit through project implementation. Moreover, unrestricted access to information can jeopardise legitimate interests in candour or efficiency, and threaten important social values such as the protection of individual privacy, proprietary information or sensitive data.

Ultimately, what is communicated and to whom within and beyond a cross-sector partnership rests on the judgement of the partners, but must also meet the expectations of a wider public. In some situations, partners will invariably remain at odds with each other. In many parts of the world, for example, the tendency of public sector and business partners is to be secretive, whereas

civil society partners are more likely to demand openness. In other situations, it is business and government that demand transparency. The media, civic groups and government agencies will also demand access to information in different ways and at different times, citing the right to know. Thus, partnerships will always have to pursue some sort of policy on dealing with the right to know.

In what ways and on what basis the partners jointly decide on what they are to communicate and to whom is an important test of the robustness of their relationship and the value-added of the partnership in generating public benefit.

The Issue of Diversity

In an intercultural world, the approaches needed are flexibility and curiosity, plus the ability to think beyond your cultural assumptions and to learn from your mistakes. On the following two pages, Bettina Heinz discusses how you might apply these elements to communicate more successfully across cultures.

Clarifying Intentions

Assuming that you or your organisation is responsible for initiating the communication process, a good starting point for any communication is to understand your intentions as clearly as possible. This step is not as easy as it sounds, since intentions can be specific or general in character and either short-term or long-term in aspiration. As well as these considerations, you need to remember that beneath the explicit intentions are invariably underlying intentions that you as a communicator may only intuitively be aware of (see table below).

Example Audience	Explicit Communication Intention	Implicit Communication Intention
New partners	To engage their interest and secure contributions.	To test their potential level of commitment to the partnership.
External donors	To inform them how their donation will be used.	To encourage them to give a good report to other potential donors.
Project beneficiaries	To invite their inputs or critique on what is being proposed.	To assess their capacity to carry the project beyond the term of the partnership.

And it is not just your intentions that matter; you also need to know, as far as you possibly can, what is explicitly and implicitly important to those you are communicating with (see table below).

Example Audience	Their Explicit Communication Requirement	Their Implicit Communication Requirement
New partners	To know what and how much they are committing to.	To test out the integrity of the lead partner and the value the partnership will bring to their priorities.
External donors	To be sure their donation is being used well and for the purposes agreed.	To assess whether this partnership is the most efficient, economic or sustainable delivery mechanism.
Project beneficiaries	To be confident that what is being proposed is what they need and want.	To see whether the partners are genuine in their intentions or only in it for reputation gain.



Communicating across Cultures

By Bettina Heinz

Communication across cultures is a curious phenomenon. With increased globalisation it has become increasingly necessary, yet it continues to be a communicative process fraught with challenges and obstacles at both micro and macro levels. On a micro level, ineffective intercultural communication can lead to interpersonal conflicts, business failures or organisational difficulties. On a macro level, it can create or increase social tension to the levels of sociopolitical dissatisfaction, diplomatic failures or, at worst, warfare.

Surprisingly, it is not uncommon for the most culturally diverse communities (including many partnerships!) to engage in the least amount of meaningful intercultural communication, where those involved feel able to reveal their cultural assumptions and by so doing begin to understand others' ways of creating and exchanging meaning.

Not surprisingly, practitioners frequently identify intercultural communication as one of the most significant challenges to successful partnerships. Just as members of communities can end up living parallel but separate lives in diverse neighbourhoods, participants in partnerships can end up working together on a common project without activating the benefits of their cultural expertise or without becoming aware of the limitations of their cultural filters.

We can start to understand this situation by considering the importance of cognition.

Cognitive Processes

Intercultural communication skills require one to be capable of empathy, aware of assumptions, mindful of stereotyping, critical of ethnocentrism[7] and sensitive to the limitations one's own worldview imposes. All of these skills, and the path to improving these skills, are cognitive in nature. However, we often don't explicitly acknowledge cognition, since the word tends to sound too psychological, too biological and too scientific for everyday communication.

But those moments when our own cognitive processing becomes clearer to us are illuminating.

The cultures we were raised and operate in affect the way we process and produce communication. We come to situations with preconceived perceptual frames, and our minds quickly activate sequences of familiar associations that confirm expectations. One way of trying to track our own processing is to keep stock of moments when we experience surprise, since surprise results when our expectations are violated.

Why were you surprised? What assumptions did you bring to a particular interaction? What does the existence of these assumptions signify?

For successful intercultural partnerships, the priority must lie in creating a communication climate in which the partners are seen as equitable individuals, not as static representations of their respective cultural groups. At the same time, in their approaches to each other, partners must focus on commonalities rather than on differences.

Commonalities are not difficult to find since all humans share basic communicative needs, and the most significant focus in intercultural communication is the sincere exchange of meaning.

Ambiguity and Attribution

A tolerance of ambiguity is a vital characteristic of successful intercultural communicators, since – as a result of cultural differences – we cannot always uncover or understand our partners' communicative intent. In fact, we may have to consciously pursue alternative ways of obtaining the information we need and accept that our ways of verifying information or placing it into context are themselves culturally marked and may not be appropriate. It's important to observe, to presume our ignorance and, where possible, to solicit the advice of members of the cultural groups we're interacting with.

However, we should not be so tentative in our intercultural approaches that we do not make progress. In fact, a breach of cultural etiquette need not always result in soured relationships; it can often be turned into a positive, transformative, intercultural exchange.

Imagine the common scenario of addressing a representative from a different cultural group in an inappropriate way. Perhaps the salutation was too formal, or too informal, or inappropriate for the context, or perhaps you mispronounced the name. You may not even realise that your communication was incorrect or inappropriate. If you realise where you went wrong, you can correct yourself, acknowledging the source of your mistake. If you realise that something went wrong but you can't identify the problem, you should try other ways of expressing the meaning you intended to convey.

Once you accept and acknowledge your mistake, you have a chance to engage the other by acknowledging the power of culture and cognitive convention.

Vulnerability and Sensitivity

There can be humour in intercultural misunderstandings. But it requires a certain degree of courage to go there. You must make yourself vulnerable first. You need to observe not just the other's behaviour, but also your own, and the response to your behaviour. In other words, you need to pay attention to the ways in which you make sense of things, because sense-making is culturally constituted.

The sincerity behind your communication is crucial, but cognitive attribution can interfere with the interpretation of sincerity. In intercultural encounters, individuals who are highly aware of the cultural divergence between the parties tend to over-attribute behaviour to cultural ways of being. They might attribute the lack of a gesture to a person's culture and not recognise it as that person's idiosyncratic behaviour or disposition at the moment of the interaction. The meaning of a smile, or the meaning of a yawn, is open to interpretation and subject to cultural convention. Your ability to communicate effectively will depend on sensitivity to processing both your conversational partner's behaviour and your own behaviour.

Social psychologists have studied attribution processes for decades and have sought to describe how individuals explain other individuals' behaviour. What's interesting is that cultural patterns of interpretation shape not only how we behave, but also how we interpret other people's behaviour.

Of course, our assumptions about what constitutes intercultural communication are also a product of our culture and not universally shared. International partnering initiatives between so-called developed and so-called developing countries have often suffered from an inability to truly listen to the people on the ground.

One can't simply approach intercultural communication as a set of problems for which one can devise solutions. One can only approach it as an area for both applied and theoretical considerations, a fertile ground for planting seeds for ideas whose shape can only be imagined, not predicted. Intercultural communication is a living thing; it occurs in the moment, against historical backdrops and with individual personalities, in specific locations and times.

If explicit instruction about cognitive processes can help us identify trouble spots, we might be able to better equip practitioners with the tools they need to communicate effectively across cultures.

Bettina Heinz, PhD, is Director of the School of Communication & Culture at Royal Roads University, in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. She has practised, studied, taught and written about intercultural communication for over a decade and published scholarly articles in journals such as *Communication Education*, the *Journal of Intercultural Communication* and *Multilingua*.

Checking Assumptions

It is tempting when working across different sector groups to make assumptions about each sector's communication preferences. Doing so can be a serious mistake. Rarely do organisations from within your sector have identical communication needs or expectations, so how likely is it that you can simply categorise organisations in any other sector in terms of their communication approaches? It is worth exploring this point further (see table overleaf).

Once you are in a communication loop, you may not get the response you were expecting or hoping for from those you are communicating with. Even though (perhaps out of impatience or insecurity) you may jump to the conclusion that they are indifferent, they may not have responded for a number of reasons. They may in fact be far from indifferent – they could actually be shy, overawed, confused or anxious, or hugely enthusiastic and simply waiting for us to stop communicating so actively so that they have a chance to respond!

So you must check before rushing into a communication style or activity that may be inappropriate and even damaging to the working relationship. If in doubt, ask. In fact, ask anyway, because if you are too confident that you know what is appropriate without asking, you are likely making assumptions without realising it. A good "rule of thumb" is to school yourself to make as few assumptions as possible. Perhaps you will find it easier to do if you regularly remind yourself how frustrated and even diminished you can feel when people make assumptions about you.

Sector	Commonly Assumed Communication Preferences	Practitioner Experience Suggests…
Corporate	• Brief bullet points, not narrative • Email, not face-to-face • Headlines only, not details • Results, not process	Where they see the relevance of the partnership to their wider business objectives, corporations like to be deeply engaged. They can be disappointed or frustrated if excluded from the partnering process and if assumed to be simply "hard-nosed".
Public	• Full details of all decisions • Written minutes • Named responsible individuals • Evidence of meeting targets	The public sector is often driven to working in partnership out of frustration at their inability to provide adequate and appropriate public services. Partnering gives them an opportunity to operate differently – for example, by making quicker and more innovative decisions.
Civil society	• Narrative explaining background / rationale • Face-to-face or phone calls • A focus on process • Evidence of community engagement / consultation	NGOs can be as pedantic and wedded to detail as the public sector, and they can be as elitist, competitive and impatient with process as the business sector. They often require as much paperwork or statistics as the other sectors. Civil society organisations may also be less representative of community interests than they claim.

Who Gets Left Out?

When you communicate in or about your partnership, you also need to ask yourself whether you are – consciously or unconsciously – opting to talk only with those people you are most used to talking with or whom you know best. Have you in fact included everyone in the conversation who should truly be included? Are you willing to devote the necessary time and resources to ensuring genuine involvement of all stakeholders? On the following two pages, Michelle Evans and Leda Stott recommend leaving space for all the voices to be heard.

Answers or Questions?

Ultimately, we believe that the most important issue in partnership communication is the *manner* in which you communicate. Your way of communicating is inevitably dictated by your underlying attitude. Are you "telling" – communicating what you believe you know best – or are you "asking" – inviting response, engagement or action?

In the manual, we suggest that a genuinely questioning attitude is most likely to lead to good communication. We do not mean that every communication has to be framed in the form of actual questions – on occasions you simply need to *inform* people of something practical such as the arrangements for a meeting – but rather that, whenever possible, the communication is "open" rather than "closed" and that you are genuinely pleased rather than irritated when those you are communicating with offer a response or a new contribution to the communication chain.



Hearing the Unheard Voices: Practice-Based Approaches

By Michelle Evans and Leda Stott

Genuine partnership engagement requires clearly identifying those who may be marginalised or excluded, looking beyond individuals and organisations who "speak" on behalf of a partner or stakeholder group, to those who do not. In making such an assessment, partnership practitioners need to recognise that the space for different voices to be heard is shaped by particular contexts and cross-cutting issues such as age, class, cultural beliefs, ethnicity, gender, rural / urban background, political affiliation, and education and health status, all of which may change over time and will need careful unpacking.

Effective partnerships strongly emphasise that all partners and stakeholders fully participate in the work of targeting projects and promoting wider sustainable change. Hearing and responding to the unheard voices within these groups, however, demands commitment, time and resources. It involves assessing the visibility, and invisibility, of individuals and organisations working with and within the partnership, confronting the underlying power dynamics and determining different options for engagement. Partners must therefore have clear incentives for embarking on a process that might mislead by creating false expectations and in some cases be unnecessary.

Assessing levels of engagement and deciding how to address them necessitates "interpreting" the silence of those who do not speak.[8]

Low or non-participation could suggest that individuals/groups are:	In which case we may need to:
Indifferent	Review incentives for partnership participation.
Intimidated	Examine the partnership culture.
Disenfranchised	Reassess partnership structures.
Incapable	Examine implicit criteria for participating.
Waiting	Anticipate what will trigger their participation.

To hear these silent voices and act upon them, partnership practitioners must ensure that they use approaches that genuinely permit listening, as well as suit specific partnership contexts. Michelle Evans has found the following three methods key to her work as a creative cultural partnership broker in Australia:

1. The indigenous Australian concept of Dadirri
2. Dreaming the partnership
3. The praxis approach.

Dadirri is about profound non-judgemental watching and listening. It asks us as practitioners to be *in* time, not *on* time. It asks us to be in place. It asks us to receive people individually as well as collectively, to be compassionate and to be committed to hearing beyond the words that are spoken. Miriam Rose Ungenmerr from Daly River in the Northern Territory is the elder who has developed this concept that is truly indigenous to Australia. It is the way of learning and being in her community context. She says, "There are deep springs within each of us. Dadirri is about tapping into that deep spring that is within us."

"This approach reminds me to listen beyond words, to be in place and to be in time. I have found that it is enormously helpful, especially in Aboriginal community contexts, to be on my feet, in my body, rather than in my head – otherwise, I find that I am being too clever and strategic; there are other times for that. I have found that if I take time to be with people, to listen, to hear where communities are, I can start to develop a deeper understanding of how the partnership and the project fit and how they can start to open that community into the future. I find myself intuitively and mentally mapping possibilities, opportunities and ideas for future development. As brokers in a community and partnership context, we are wired to be strategic, creative, networked, up to date and innovative. This is a gift, and how we use it with the counterpoint of a Dadirri-infused approach can be magic." Michelle Evans

Dreaming the Partnership is the conceptual development and pitching phase sometimes missed or not fully developed between partners in partnership scoping. This is the fun and exciting phase of creatively developing the "partnership narrative" after fully exploring and developing the partnership project and how it relates to each partner. Dreaming up a partnership is both a concept and an approach. The concept is that bringing many creative minds together works. Trying different fits that draw on synergies across organisations and individuals is enormously helpful to build both the dream and the profile of the initiating partner's openness to work in partnership. The approach is a communication plan – a way of pitching a concept, a way of asking questions and drawing the responses into a theme that uncovers a rich cultural underpinning. To weave a map of people who add, subtract, link and enliven through their wide experiences and networks dreams the partnership. By spending time in this stage, partners can find that many potentialities add to an initial dream and enrich the concept towards the formalising of the partnership.

Praxis. The process of working within the framework of sustainable development requires you as the practitioner to question what your stance and motivation are for being involved, what level of participation the community has in the decision-making around the project and what the partnership is addressing in terms of social change. This process is similar to partnership brokering.

"Working in a cross-cultural context, with marginalised communities that are often not prioritised, I need to be clear about how these voices are heard within a partnership context that includes big corporations and government instrumentalities, as well as other sometimes-conflicting communities and organisations. I need to be quite upfront about the postcolonial context within which this work sits and what it means to this project. I need to be clear about the political and ethical issues that may arise when mixing a range of partners within a project. I have found this part of the work quite dependent on my ability to communicate and to be strong in leadership and brokerage. I spend a lot of time reflecting on my approach and the context within which I work and how certain terms or titles – like the development paradigm – may impact on the work we do." Michelle Evans

To be reflective in your practice is your bread and butter. If you can't ask yourself those hard ethical, moral, practical questions about the decisions you make in your work, or those made within a partnership that you are working in – then why do it? Paolo Freire speaks of praxis in his important text, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970): "The oppressed need to avoid seeing their predicament as irresolvable, but rather recast it as a limiting situation that they can transform."[9] The terminology that we use is vital to our success. Having a praxis approach of reflective practice – action and reflection – is instrumental to being open to hearing the unheard voices. Ultimately, we must acknowledge that we may not be allowing entry to these voices by the structural paradigm we work within.

Hearing those who are usually "unheard" requires partnership practitioners to adopt communication approaches that are enormously challenging. They call for us to abandon the comfortable, tried-and-true traditions of our working lives and move from a position of control into a location of real collaboration. This is a high-order, creative process that demands that the ego be left behind. In so doing, we may enable a genuine sharing of ideas, thoughts and dreams so that partnerships for positive and lasting change may be nurtured.

Michelle Evans is the Head of the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development at the Victorian College of the Arts in Melbourne, Australia. Michelle has a Master's in Creative Arts (Research) and is PBAS[10] accredited. Michelle teaches in the areas of Community Cultural Development and Indigenous Arts Management.

Leda Stott is an independent consultant specialising in cross-sector partnerships and development issues. Over the past 10 years she has designed, developed and evaluated partnership programmes with a range of organisations in Africa, Europe and Latin America. She is a tutor on the Postgraduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership (PCCP) at Cambridge University, a PBAS mentor, a Senior Associate of The Partnering Initiative and editor of the journal *Partnership Matters: Current issues in cross-sector collaboration.*



3. Communicating within the Partnership

Partners are often surprised at how much their partnership depends on good internal communication: timely conversations, good recordkeeping, appropriate written agreements, open discussion and more. What is "good practice" in internal communication between the individuals representing each partner organisation? How can this good practice be embedded more deeply within and between the partner organisations themselves? Thoughtfully designed and well-managed communication is likely to play a major part in maintaining the active engagement of partners (as well as other stakeholders) and is central to creating an environment in which the partners are able to learn from and make practical use of experience.

Whom Are You Communicating with Internally?

When we use the term "internal communication" in the context of a multi-sector partnership, we are actually referring to two types of communication – that taking place within the individual partner organisations and that taking place between the partner organisations. In each case, we will be communicating with different audiences.

Potential Internal Audiences

Within (Individual) Partner Organisations

- Senior managers
- Other teams / colleagues within the organisation that need to be engaged
- Legal, HR and PR departments
- Board members / trustees / committees (depending on sector)

Between the Partners (i.e., the Partnership Itself)

- Each other's organisations
- Partnership staff / volunteers / advisors
- Project beneficiaries / target groups
- Other organisations directly impacted by the project

How do we approach communication for these two areas – within partner organisations and between partners?

Good Practice in Communicating within Partner Organisations

Before a partnership starts, a prospective partner organisation invariably experiences a period of intense internal communication. What form this internal communication takes and how easy it is to undertake will depend on four key factors:

1. The organisational "drivers" for the partnership – why has the organisation chosen to be involved? What are the explicit or underlying motives?
2. The level of authority at which the decision to partner has been made – will it be sound enough to secure medium- to long-term commitment and engagement?
3. The potential significance of the proposed partnership to the "core business" of the organisation
4. The communication skill level of the individual(s) promoting and developing the partnership initiative.

From the earliest moment, there is a need to get buy-in from others within each partner organisation. Without it, a firm commitment to the proposed partnership is unlikely to be forthcoming. Many, perhaps most, organisations are still challenged by the idea of forming interdependent relationships with other organisations from different sectors. They invariably prefer "going it alone" by taking decisions unilaterally, in ways they find logical and comfortable. So the first communication challenge is to marshal a convincing argument for how a partnering

approach will add value to the organisation – while at the same time acknowledging the potential for discomfort that such an approach might bring.

But this is not the end of the internal communication story. Once a partnership is under way, partnership practitioners commonly report that the internal communication challenge (i.e., within one partner organisation) can be far greater than the communication challenges either between partner organisations or with external stakeholders. Why is this? Is the tendency to take internal organisational engagement for granted and therefore to invest more energy in communicating with other partners and stakeholders?

Those brokering the partnership or managing the partner relationships on behalf of their organisations need to continuously and actively engage with – and seek engagement from – their internal colleagues. The box below suggests how some practitioners have effectively engaged their organisations in a partnership.

PT

Practitioner Tips[11]

1. Inform

- Identify good practice from the partnership and disseminate widely.
- Regularly disseminate information and stories about the partnership and the partnership activities.
- Identify, articulate and disseminate targeted lessons from the partnership to senior and operational staff.

2. Engage

- Invite more people from the organisation to partnership meetings.
- Include more people in working groups and tasks.
- Give more people roles to speak, act or champion on behalf of the partnership.
- Provide volunteering opportunities for groups of staff at all levels.
- Engage wider group of people as advisors, etc.

3. Acknowledge

- Acknowledge, value and reward individuals' contributions.
- Create social interaction opportunities.
- Organise large-scale, original events and activities to celebrate and publicise achievements.
- Ask others for recognition that endorses the partnership.

4. Transform

- Build greater organisational capacity for partnering.
- Arrange visit to projects.
- Arrange personnel exchanges between partner organisations.
- Help to internalise new ways of operating learnt through the partnership within the organisation.

On the following pages, David Birch addresses some challenges for partner organisations in communicating internally.



Communication Challenges for Partner Organisations

By David Birch

Many people not directly involved in developing, maintaining and evaluating business–community partnerships tend to assume that such partnerships are one of two types: an add-on to an organisation's core business or a fundraiser for an NGO. There are lots of examples of these two categories of "partnership" around the world, but there are considerably fewer of a third type – where the partnership is part of "core business" and as such is deeply embedded in the more forward-looking companies and community organisations that implement them, and also achieves significant internal impact.

This situation raises some interesting communication challenges.

Challenge One: Communicating for Internal Organisational Awareness

Most business–community partnerships involve very few people within the partner organisations; sometimes, only a handful of individuals are actively involved in or know anything much about the partnership. In these circumstances, how do you raise awareness of what might in fact be a significant partnership? How can those involved tell the story of the partnership beyond the meeting rooms and offices where they manage and evaluate that partnership and its projects, in order to dramatically increase the number of people (often at the highest levels) in an organisation who actually know something about the partnership and its outcomes? Surely, if the partnership model is to be considered as an integral and embedded part of the case for core business, for company or community, then communication about the value of such partnerships is needed at all levels within the organisation. While an individual champion can usefully promote the partnership in the first place, it is imperative that, to be able to sustain and grow the partnership over the years, more and more people in the organisation understand its actual value, beyond being simply an add-on or a source of funds.

Probably one of the most unsuccessful means of achieving this higher level of communication within large companies is a regular notice of business–community partnership activities on an internal intranet facility. The motivation to post such information is a good one, but for the most part, the material on such intranet postings remains unread. Similarly, email distribution of information often goes unread, lost in a mass of spam and other messages.

Hard-copy newsletters and magazines remain a popular means of communicating about an organisation's business–community engagement. If developed in the right format – namely, eye-catching, clear and easy to throw into a briefcase for reading on a plane or train – they can be a valuable means of promulgating information. More often than not, though, these also sit unread in lobby areas, along with the many dozens of similar publications.

In-house seminars and working groups, generally using PowerPoint presentations, can be useful – but such activities often require considerable resources to mount and do not always reach a broad sweep of people in the organisation.

The only real solution in my experience is to incorporate knowledge of, and engagement in, business–community partnerships in the now-widespread practice of performance appraisals, adding such knowledge and engagement as a specific key performance indicator. To do so requires the involvement of a personnel or human resources department within the organisation, and the establishment of guidelines informing employees and managers exactly what is expected of them. Only then is it likely that the intranet, newsletter or email with information about business–community engagement will be taken seriously.

Challenge Two: Communicating the Value of the "Local"

Some organisations do have a good PR and / or media department, but a further challenge for many organisations, particularly large corporations and NGOs, is the tension and sometimes lack of fit between the organisation's corporate entity and identity, and what happens locally on the ground within individual business or community units. A local unit may have a good story to tell about a partnership, but in order to get it out has to go through a central communications machine based at HQ, only to be told that such a story does not really fit with the current communication strategy. As a result, local units often view their work as marginalised, and they become disheartened. The challenge here is not simply how best to communicate a good story, but how to be better at strategically aligning partnerships and partnership stories to HQ thinking, while also helping HQ to rethink the value of the "local" as compared with the "national" or "global".

The most successful way of ensuring a much better fit between the "corporate" and the "local" entity is for someone senior to champion such engagement. This champion can then ensure that everyone down the line recognises its importance to the organisation. This recognition may take the form of including discussion of business–community partnerships in formal performance appraisals (as BP

introduced many years ago for senior management), or simply having an item on business–community partnerships and engagement on the agenda whenever all departments, including the PR and / or media department, meet together.

In any organisation, everyone needs to hear a clear message that business–community partnerships and engagement *make good business sense*, and should be seen as a serious investment in time and resources that, like any investment in the organisation, needs to be regularly on the agenda and revisited and evaluated frequently.

Challenge Three: Communicating Between Different Departments

Often in large organisations – whether business or NGO – a number of departments can have community–business partnerships as part of their brief. For example, a large company may have one department concerned with environmental issues, another with indigenous relations, another with external affairs and government relations, and another with community relations in general. Any of these departments can often develop partnerships without other relevant departments being informed or involved.
This lack of communication internally can result in wasted resources, inefficient use of people's time, and failure to access available skills and knowledge.

Again, ensuring that business–community engagement is a regular agenda item at joint management meetings is essential. The challenge for any organisation, though, is to find the right person or department to drive this part of the agenda. The message here is a simple one. Effective communication with, and alignment of, all relevant departments requires a single, jointly owned understanding that business–community partnerships are good for business – whether corporate or NGO. To develop that understanding, business–community engagement needs to be repositioned as core business, along with all the other aspects of an organisation's rationale for its existence. NGOs need to remove business–community partnerships from fundraising sections and create stand-alone departments, even of only one or two people. Likewise, businesses need to reposition partnerships not simply as part of the general brief of external affairs, human resources or corporate affairs departments, but as fully realised sections with their own management structure and business briefs.

Three communication challenges, then, apparently very simple at first sight, with many likely to say "but this is all just common sense; we know all this" – but in partnering, it can be surprising how "common sense" can apparently often fail us as practitioners. Serious attention to all three of these communication challenges can make the difference between success and failure.

David Birch is Professor of Communication at Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia, and was the founding Director of the Corporate Citizenship Research Unit, Deakin University until 2006 and General Editor of *The Journal of Corporate Citizenship* from 2004 to 2006. He has reviewed and evaluated many business–community partnerships and is currently working on a new book covering various aspects of citizenship affecting business and community.

Good Practice in Communicating between Partners

Effective and continuous communication between partners is fundamental to the partnership moving forward and to ensuring it achieves the hoped-for goals. Such quality communication – as we hope we have convincingly conveyed in chapter 2 – is intricately linked with rich conversation (whether face-to-face or in writing) and a willingness to listen and learn. In fact, it is our view that good practice in communication is intricately linked to positive partnering behaviour.

Perhaps a few examples will illustrate what we mean in this regard:

Examples of common negative partnering behaviour	**What this behaviour is likely to convey to partners**	**How to transform the situation with good communication:** • **By the individual and / or** • **By the other partners**
Arriving late and ill prepared for meetings.	*The meetings – and probably the partnership – are unimportant.*	• Identify someone else from within the partner organisation who can give the meetings greater priority. • Ask questions to reveal what other priorities are more pressing, and develop a conversation about how it could be different / better.
Making bilateral alignments / agreements with selected partners / individuals.	*If we agree this between ourselves, the others will have to accept it.*	• Reflect on the potentially negative impact on other partners, and understand their need for involvement and transparency. • Ask for clarification of why this alignment / agreement has arisen, and explore how best to share bilateral conversations with the group.
Failing to complete agreed tasks within the timeframe and giving no explanation.	*These tasks are not a priority, and any knock-on effect from having neglected them is someone else's problem.*	• Go back to partners at an early stage and explain why the tasks cannot be completed as planned, and seek their suggestions for completing them a different way. • Revisit why the tasks are important, and explore alternative ways of completing them so that activities and timetables are not put at risk.
Going public on views about other partners or the partnership to external stakeholders.	*Presenting an individual or single partner organisation perspective matters more than loyalty to other partners or the partnership.*	• Recognise the challenge of being accountable to partners as well as to immediate line managers, and explain to partners some of the organisational drivers that have led to this behaviour. • Agree a strategy and ground rules for going public that take account of each partner's particular external communication needs.

Positive Partnering Behaviour

Effectiveness in terms of both partnering behaviour and communication is likely to result when partners are:

- Engaged and committed
- Genuinely interested in each other's views, experiences and priorities
- Prepared to take their share of responsibility for an effective working relationship
- Willing to be held accountable to other partners
- Open to new ideas or to new ways of approaching tasks
- Keen to "get on with it" while maintaining commitment to consensus and consultation.

Tool 3: Needs Analysis for Individual Partners (see page 74) **suggests some questions that you can ask yourself or others in discovering more about the needs and priorities of each partner organisation.**

It is in everyone's interest to create a culture in which partners can develop and deepen these attributes. Such a culture may take time and may require the partners being prepared to learn and change – for example, breaking out of usual behaviour patterns, showing respect for a different point of view and valuing people's individual presentation and communication styles.

Before you enter into a partnership, check out that you have had enough dialogue to ensure a reasonable level of knowledge and understanding of your potential partners and their organisations – and they about you and yours.

You conduct conversations or communicate in a number of ways all the time (email fast becoming the favourite communication tool), and perhaps you think you are pretty good at it. Perhaps you are, but you and everyone else can always get better – and in a partnership it seems to be particularly necessary that practitioners continuously strive to communicate as well as possible, starting with their immediate partner colleagues.

Once a partnership – even in its earliest stages – is established, remember to do the following:

- **Work out what internal communication is needed,** and who will do what and when. Agreeing a communication plan is just as important as agreeing a financial plan or a business plan.
- **Share communication roles and tasks** between the different individuals and partner organisations. In allocating communication tasks, play to the personal and professional strengths of each member of the team, as well as to the communication competencies within each partner organisation.
- **Seize every opportunity to build your own and your partners' communication competencies.** One of the ways of keeping yourself and your partners enthusiastic and engaged is to ensure opportunities exist for trying new things and developing new skills.

Also ensure you follow these practice principles:

- **Be timely** in your communication. Some matters require instant action, whereas other issues need time for reflection and adjustment.
- **Be consultative,** not dictatorial. For example, invite contributions from others, rather than inform them of what you have decided they need to know.
- **Be flexible** by keeping communication as fluid as possible, and don't make anything too final too soon.
- **Be meticulous** by dating everything and agreeing with partners to revisit, adjust and adapt as the situation changes.

PT

Practitioner Tips[12]

1. Clarify

- Be clear about each communication objective.
- Make sure partners adhere to a common party line.
- Consider the budget implications and allocate resources to communications.
- Base communication strategy on a needs assessment.

2. Design and Implement

- Balance rigour with creativity.
- Tell good stories (e.g., how obstacles were turned into opportunities).
- Be creative and draw on those who communicate well (e.g., storytellers, artists).
- Measure impact and effectiveness.

3. Evolve

- Ensure your communication activities evolve during the life of the partnership.
- Give opportunities for feedback on communication products, and change as necessary.
- Think of layers of communication over time and at different levels.

4. Be Principled

- Be honest and authentic in whatever you put into the public domain (resist "spin").
- Recognise the importance of communication in building genuine trust and transparency between partners and on behalf of the partnership.
- Link communication efforts to stakeholders' right to information.

Effective Teams and Vibrant Organisations

Clearly, those individuals representing their organisations and working together in a partnership quickly become a de facto "team", just as the partnership itself quickly becomes a de facto "organisation". A group of partners can be a strong team (efficient, productive and innovative) or a weak team (impractical, unproductive and predictable), just as a partnership can be either a thriving or a dysfunctional organisation. With these factors in mind, we might usefully consider the attributes of an effective team and a vibrant organisation.

> *"Teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations. This is where 'the rubber meets the road'; unless teams can learn, the organisation cannot learn."* **Peter Senge**[13]

According to the organisational development guru Peter Senge, in addition to a commitment and a willingness to learn, four other key elements – or what he calls "disciplines" – need to be in place if a group of individuals is to become a well-functioning team and if that team is in turn to contribute to developing a vibrant organisation:

1. *Personal mastery* – continually clarifying and deepening personal vision, focusing energies, developing patience and seeing reality objectively.
2. *Mental models* – reviewing and adjusting deeply engrained assumptions, generalisations, pictures and images that influence how the individuals understand the world and how they act.
3. *Systems thinking* – understanding that human endeavours are bound together by a host of interrelated actions and patterns of behaviour that may take years to fully play out their effects.
4. *Shared vision* – evolving and holding onto a shared picture of the future that fosters genuine commitment and engagement, rather than reluctant compliance.

It is possible to see each of these disciplines as dependent on clear and creative communication. If you as practitioners build greater personal mastery, you will be better (more patient and less impulsive) listeners. If you can adjust your mental models, you will more willingly let go of preconceptions and prejudices, and be better able to engage with those types of people and organisations you never previously valued. If you can see the interrelated nature of what you – and others – do, you are more likely to think, plan and communicate more systemically. If you and your partners work together to evolve a shared vision of a better future (to which your partnerships will contribute), you will be better able to overcome the daily irritations and challenges that beset your best partnering intentions.

Tool 4: Tips for Successful Partner Meetings (see page 75) describes some behaviours that will help in fostering more collaborative and productive meetings, among teams and other groups.

Fit for Purpose

Building a portfolio of communication tools and approaches within a partnership allows you to "pick and mix" as appropriate to the phase in the partnering cycle and to the specific task at hand. In chapter 8, we offer a range of tools that can be adapted to suit specific situations. As mentioned earlier, a comprehensive communication plan is essential to a jointly owned communication approach, and the process of developing such a plan can in itself be an excellent communication exercise for partners.

The purpose of good inter-partner communication is to maintain partner engagement and move the partnership forward. If you select communication options and approaches that are "fit for purpose", you will achieve this goal more easily and more quickly.

Whatever the reason, partnerships can be quite unexpectedly destabilised by one or other partner organisation suddenly appearing to be less engaged and "on board" than it had earlier seemed to be. Often belatedly (and sometimes too late), the partners find themselves having to revisit a primary partner relationship. This is, of course, a particular challenge to the individual(s) representing that partner organisation within the partnership – but the other

partners also need to take the issue seriously and to consider what part they could and should play if the partnership itself is to progress (or, in some instances, survive).

PT

Practitioner Tips[14]

Principles

- **Communicate in ways that invite your partners to engage**. For example, rather than exhaustive notes, highlight the main points and invite others to fill in the gaps and add their perspectives.
- **Be aware of your partners' preferred avenues for communicating and use them,** whether they are face-to-face conversations, email, pagers, office phones or cell phones.
- **Stay open to continued suggestions and conversations.** Create ways for new ideas to be reviewed and processed easily without derailing progress.

Actions

- **Contact partners on a regular basis.** Ask for ideas and feedback, and find out about your partners' concerns. Trust can be defined as the knowledge that someone will act with your best interest in mind. Learn from your partners everything that you need to know so you can act in their best interest.
- **Invite colleagues together for open discussions.** Allow a diversity of ideas to coexist; don't push consensus unless it is required. Multiple perspectives open more doors and build better applications.
- **Put people in touch with each other.** Publish a directory with phone numbers and email addresses and whatever else is helpful – e.g., roles, responsibilities, photos.
- **Network and nurture alliances.** Encourage growth, and look for win-win activities.

Record-keeping a Key Issue

Not everything that happens in a partnership needs documenting, but record-keeping is particularly important in a partnership for a number of reasons, including ensuring transparency, recording commitments and capturing the partnership's history.

Some have argued that meticulous record-keeping is a key partnering skill because the records are so central to partnership building and relationship maintenance, so make sure you give it appropriate priority in your list of tasks, and – even better – make sure that all your records are as lively, succinct and easy to access as possible.

Get into the habit of recording things at all stages and in a number of formats, whether as formal minutes or in a personal logbook, and in written or in oral and visual formats. Having several types of record will be invaluable, not just in keeping the partnership on track, but also in providing the raw data for your future partnership stories.

Finally, make sure that those documents that have to appear in a final form (e.g., formal records and legal and financial agreements) or that are intended for the public domain have been "signed of" by all those who have a right to do so.





4. Communicating beyond the Partnership

In many partnerships, communicating with a wider audience is seen as one of the main partnering priorities – whether this priority is to do with making the partnership's activities or projects more widely known and appreciated, seeking wider influence with policy makers and external donors, or simply gaining profile and reputation benefits for any or all of the partners. Even where partners have agreed that external communication is an important component of the partnership, working out when, what and with whom to communicate can be challenging and can cause surprising levels of discomfort and disagreement between the partners – who may have widely different individual communication priorities and timescales.

Whom Are You Communicating with Externally?

Beyond the partners themselves, a partnership may have a large number of potential audiences for information and communication about the partnership's activities and accomplishments.

Potential External Audiences

Within (Individual) Partner Organisations

- Shareholders / investors / donors (depending on sector)
- Other key stakeholders (e.g., policy makers, supply chains, bilateral / multilateral agencies)
- Others in same sector (e.g., via "umbrella" organisations or associations)

Between the Partners (i.e., the Partnership Itself)

- Important stakeholders / networks of all partners (i.e., it matters to the partnership that other partners' networks, etc, are engaged and not hostile)
- External donors contributing to the partnership or project
- Organisations indirectly impacted by the project (for example, community groups)

Beyond the Partnership

- Academia
- Financial institutions
- International agencies
- Local, regional or national governments
- Policy makers / politicians
- Potential new partners
- Pressure groups
- Public figures / potential champions
- Other partnership practitioners
- Other (issue-based) networks (i.e., others engaged in similar sustainable development objectives)
- General public

In chapter 7 we cover the need for a comprehensive communication plan for communicating externally. Below we consider some of the practical approaches and considerations for putting that plan into action.

When to Communicate beyond the Partnership

A key challenge in any partnership is for partners to agree – and to adhere to – an external communication approach. Partners may vary considerably in their views on this. Certain partners may see external communication as absolutely central to their involvement and therefore seek to "go public" about the partnership and its activities with a fanfare and at an early stage. Others may be more circumspect and be extremely cautious about making any aspect of the partnership public unless and until a certain level of measurable achievement or sustainability has been reached.

There is no right or wrong here – doing early publicity may give the partnership and its work a much-needed boost, while delaying publicity until the partners have more tangible things to report may give the partnership and its work more gravitas. In either case, failure to explore and agree issues of timing can have unexpected and unhelpful consequences (see the following examples).

EXAMPLE – Going Public Too Early

The partners
International environmental NGO and multinational oil company

What happened?
After a five-year partnership where the environmental NGO had helped the company evolve a strategic environmental responsibility policy, the company's CEO was invited to launch the new policy from the platform of a bi-annual global conference of "green" NGOs – which he duly did.

Why was it a problem?
While anticipating some hostile reaction from other NGOs and being prepared to explain the rationale for the partnership, the NGO had not anticipated the amount of hostile reaction from staff within its own network of country-based offices.

A vocal minority openly challenged the company's statement during the conference and threatened to dissociate from the NGO's HQ. They saw their NGO's integrity as being seriously compromised by this partnership.

Having spent five years working within the partnership, the NGO's HQ staff had grown to understand and respect the corporate partner, as well as recognise how changing the company's environmental behaviour would contribute directly towards achieving the NGO's mission. They had failed, however, to engage their in-country staff and global network in their developing thinking.

What would have made a difference?
- Sharing information throughout the preceding five years about the partnership (helping other staff understand the evolution of the partnership over time).
- Drawing in field staff from the NGO to a more direct relationship with the company at the country level (building multi-level relationships, not just at HQ).
- Undertaking a survey of field-staff attitudes to such corporate partnerships with a view to understanding their concerns and finding ways of addressing them (increasing knowledge and building staff capacity).
- Holding a pre-conference briefing with an opportunity for a meeting between company and NGO staff to discuss concerns (exploring assumptions and joint problem solving).

EXAMPLE – Pressing for a Media Release

The partners
International agency and multinational corporation

What happened?
The partners had worked together for two years to develop an education programme for children in urban slums in Africa. The international agency wanted to publicise the project at this stage, since they thought it was already proving highly successful and could be scaled up by incorporating other companies as partners. The company's interest was more strategic, seeking to influence educational policy and delivery, rather than promoting further corporate philanthropy.

Why was it a problem?
The international agency could not understand why a media release should be delayed and became more and more insistent that this was an urgent requirement and core element in their partnership. The company felt unduly rushed into making a publicity statement that they feared would be interpreted as confirmation that they were only involved in the partnership for "cheap publicity". Ultimately, the disconnect in views and expectations led to the partnership's early termination.

What would have made a difference?
- Exploring diverse expectations at a much earlier stage of the relationship.
- Discussing timing issues – perhaps agreeing to a media release, but at some future date when other goals had been achieved.
- Brainstorming to find other communication approaches to achieve the goals of both partners without either partner needing to compromise on its individual priorities (e.g., arranging visits to the project by potential corporate partners or government ministers and officials).
- Widening the options for the partnership to change its style and focus to achieve a better fit between the two organisations.

While being cautious about presenting the partnership's work and achievements too soon (i.e., before the partnership is really established or before achievements have been verified) is appropriate, if partners hold back on providing any information about the partnership or its activities for too long, they risk others interpreting this delay as a lack of transparency. Deciding on the right time to communicate is a delicate balance to achieve – especially when partners are only just getting to know and trust each other.

Perhaps a useful start is to agree to as much openness as possible as a matter of principle. Partners could reach further agreement early on about the partnership's targets with regard to communication timing. This agreement could be a staged process, with different pre-agreed communication objectives at each stage.

Sometimes, in the early stages, it is less a question of formal communication (media releases, case studies, presentations) and more to do with celebrating (for example, the launch of a partnership or project) and sharing ideas (for example, inviting a wider group to a workshop or brainstorm).

At a later stage, there may be value in project exchanges, sharing lessons of work in progress with other partnerships or partnership practitioners, recording (photos, film, audio) unfolding stories, or keeping a partnership logbook or journal, all of which could provide material for more formal communication later on.

Once a partnership or programme of work is well established, it may be the time to move into a more formal communication programme – always being careful not to oversell the partnership's achievements (risky, since partnerships are always evolving and today's success may well become tomorrow's challenge).

What to Communicate

Of course, it is not simply a question of timing. There may be equally important questions about what is and what is not legitimate to communicate. A classic in this regard is how an individual partner's logo should and should not be used when publicising a partnership (see the following example).

EXAMPLE – The Right to "Brand"

The partners
Multinational company and international agency

What happened?
A multinational company (a food manufacturer) worked with a UN agency to improve school attendance and achievement by providing free food for poor children in a deprived region in rural India. At the end of the second year, all the company's packaging was redesigned to include the UN logo. The UN agency took the company to court, demanded the new packaging be immediately withdrawn and terminated the partnership.

Why was it a problem?
The use of the UN logo on the packaging was seen as implying an endorsement of the product, rather than merely providing a record of the collaboration. This action would always be wholly unacceptable throughout the UN system, and presumably the UN agency assumed that the company would be aware of this situation and would not breach such an obvious protocol. The company was genuinely surprised at the reaction and claimed it was unaware that its action would be considered unacceptable, since as far as it was concerned, it was simply publicising a successful partnership.

What would have made a difference?
- Establishing clear guidelines or ground rules for use of logos in the initial partnering agreement.
- Obtaining clearance from both partners before using logos of either partner in the public domain.
- Exploring acceptable alternatives (e.g., describing the partnership and its activities and achievements in the company's annual report).
- Setting up professional mediation between the partners once the mistake had been made, seeking to resolve the issue without reverting to legal action or ending what had been a worthwhile and valuable partnership.

Once again, what is "right" is not always obvious. In some partnerships, using individual partner logos is inappropriate or unacceptable. In other situations, using individual logos is central to legitimising or increasing the credibility of the partnership or the project.[15] These issues *always* have to be tackled on a case-by-case basis.

Once the partners decide that they need to communicate with a wider group – for example, project beneficiaries, external donors, or other agencies working in the same geographic or development area – from quite early on in the collaborative process, they should clarify what level of information they consider appropriate to give. Such information might include the names of the partner organisations, the project or theme being explored and the anticipated timescale for any visible results. These basic facts may be all that is needed in the early days.

Once the partnership is established, the partners may have a wide range of issues to communicate or share with others – for example:

- Quantitative and qualitative information about the partnership's development impacts
- Personal stories of change and achievement
- Influence of the partnership's activities on a range of audiences
- Lessons or case studies that expose the partnering process – to help other practitioners in their partnering activities
- Articles in the media drawing out the issues likely to be of interest to a wider public.

Above all, partners must agree exactly what information is made available beyond the partnership, when it should be made available and who is entitled to communicate externally on behalf of the partnership (and also who is not).

Good Practice in External Communication

Like good communication within the partnership, good communication beyond the partnership should have many of the qualities characteristic of a rich conversation.[16] This point may seem a little obscure, but we believe that most external communications are too focused on telling others what the communicator has pre-decided they ought to know, rather than designed to initiate a spoken or unspoken dialogue.

It all hinges on what you want from your communication activity – is it simply to make statements about intentions and achievements, or do you actually want a response of some kind? We assume that in most partnerships it is – or should be – the latter.

Possible or hoped-for responses could come in a number of forms, including the following:

- Feedback or new ideas that will improve the partnership or project
- Active engagement of new partners, key individuals or the general public
- Contribution of new or further resource support
- Changes in individual or organisational behaviour
- Revisions to mainstream delivery, policy or legislation.



Practitioner Tips

Reach your priority audiences by ensuring your communications are:
• Accessible • Responsive • Engaging.
Make your communications stand out from the crowd by keeping them:
• Fresh • Focused • Purposeful.
Abide by a set of ground rules so that what you communicate externally is:
• Agreed • Coordinated • Authentic.
Give avenues for feedback and further engagement by providing:
• Suggestions • Opportunities • Contacts.

The purpose of good external communication is to make the partnership and its activities known to those who might be impacted or influenced by it, or who might impact or influence it. The partners do need to be clear about their communication priorities and targets beyond the partnership. They also need to pay serious attention to making such communication as clearly focused and "fit for purpose" as internal communication arrangements between partners should be (see the section on "Good Practice in Communicating between Partners" on page 22).

Tool 5: Key Questions and Considerations (see page 76) **can help you think through who the partnership needs to communicate with externally, as well as how to do the communicating.**

Building Relationships and Reputation

> *"Nothing exists in isolation. Nothing functions in isolation. All people and processes are fundamentally interconnected. The question is not whether or not we have relationships in society but rather what the status and quality of those relationships are."* **Laurie Wilson**[17]

As with an organisation, a partnership can manage its reputation by communicating and building good relationships with all its stakeholders. However, building relationships with external stakeholders can all too easily be delegated down the line to someone else – perhaps to a public relations staff member – rather than be seen as a management concern. It can also be relegated to "a 'feel good' tactic to be tolerated during times of plenty and eliminated during times of budget constraints."[18] But the relationship builders are far more essential to a partnership. Viewing yourself as a relationship builder, and not simply as a disseminator of information, should be at the heart of partnership strategy and operations if these cross-sector partnerships are to achieve what they set out to do.

All relationships start with *communication* – with open and honest dialogue. Communication is a tool to pursue genuine knowledge about others, and leads to awareness and understanding. With mutual *awareness* and *understanding*, erroneous assumptions can fall away. When assumptions are replaced by knowledge, this new understanding can result in beneficial *actions*. Actions that consider the interests, perspectives and values of those in the relationship will be most effective in creating *respect*. And the desired-for outcome of communication, awareness, understanding, actions and respect is a good reputation, and if you're really fortunate, trust.

Tool 6: Managing External Relationships (see page 77) **documents a possible approach to maintaining well-functioning relationships with specific external audiences.**

Renewing "PR"

We believe it worthwhile at this point to raise the topic of public relations and ask how it fits with our notions of effective partnering communication.

Someone uses the term "PR" or "PR practitioner" in your hearing, and what's your gut response? PR has become one of those terms that can draw negative press, even insults, and where people can jump to assume that anything coming out of a public relations department must be "spin", or a way of whitewashing, greenwashing or even bluewashing a situation and therefore not to be trusted. Compounding this situation is the practice of parking the public relations function in the marketing division. But public relations is not marketing. So what is it?

Definitions of public relations are thick on the ground, probably adding to the general confusion about what exactly it is. Probably one of the most straightforward definitions comes from the British Institute of Public Opinion, which in 1948 defined public relations as "the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain *mutual* [italics added] understanding between an organization and its public."

Babatunde Folarin summed up the characteristics of public relations as follows:[19]

- Designed to establish and maintain mutual understanding and goodwill between an organisation – or partnership – and its publics or stakeholders.

- A communication discipline or profession, with links to other branches of knowledge – i.e., it's an interdisciplinary field and both a science and an art.
- Primarily a management function, though like other management functions, it has its technical operations.
- Activities are planned and deliberate, not incidental; they are also sustained or continuous, not ad hoc.
- Essentially proactive and predictive, though it is often compelled to be reactive and backward looking.
- Thrives on dialogue and persuasion.

On the following pages, Nigel Atkin shares his perspective on current public relations.

Only communication that has an authentic voice will ever have real conviction – especially in this age of oversell and hype. Communication in partnerships invites us to review and rethink our possibly jaded view of public relations. A deeper look may help in a return to what "PR" actually means and what it is capable of achieving. How might you as partnership practitioners and brokers take a lead in rewriting the rules of the game? How will you tell your partnership stories authentically and respectfully, and avoid the "spin"?





Public Relations in the Information Age

By Nigel Atkin

In the reality of the Information Age, individuals need to become better communicators so they can consume, discern and disseminate information that is in their interests and in the interests of others. And it isn't a stretch of the imagination to view communication as a human right, where all human beings have a voice and can engage in dialogue, share ideas and effect change.

I share two possibly insightful experiences to illustrate some of what I've experienced in coming to the conclusions above. In the Vietnam War era in the United States, a noted dissident sarcastically quipped that if a person was outside the established order of industry and government, one "had every right to make an ineffective speech." In another instance, when I was at a cultural event in Northern Ireland in 1971, I commented to a Republican that I worked in public relations on Fleet Street in London, to which he replied, "Ah, brains, no conscience, eh?" showing me clearly the popular perception, indeed disdain, for the practice of public relations.

These and other such incidents launched me on a journey to study informational clarity, power and ethics in my ongoing pursuit of wisdom. I drew on my years as a journalist, a public relations practitioner and an educator to help people become better at communication. In particular, I came to recognise how the intelligent, ethical use of communication contributes to building the understanding and respect required between individuals, groups and nations.

Communication is what will harmonise the broad concepts of *globalisation*, commonly understood as the new frontier of opportunity, and *tribalism*, a common term for the siege mentality brought on by too rapid a rate of change and seen by many as a barrier to further change. If communication is absent and either globalisation or tribalism is taken to extremes, considerable conflict and grief will manifest. Communication is usually the antidote to such conflict and grief, and all sectors – non-profit, business and government, often in partnership – have a role to play in shaping an understanding of the consequences of these realities.

Communication can be personal or mass-mediated, one-way or multi-channelled. And, most importantly, it is managed. Becoming aware that communication is managed is the first step to recognising that critical thinking is a vital Information Age skill.

Intention and Consequence

If it is true that the brain follows the eye, being aware of who placed the imagery or words in front of the eyes adds to a person's decision-making ability. When a person asks, "What is the intention of those communicating to me, and what is the consequence to me of consuming this information?" that person is more informed, and is often less vulnerable to someone else's agenda.

Becoming a discerning consumer of information is one benefit. Another is recognising that if you have something to say, you must consider managing your own communication by first being aware of your interests and the consequences of what you are proposing to communicate and then by planning consciously. Communication planning for both the short term and the long term demands research, analysis, the communication itself and then evaluation as ongoing conscious practice. If, as French philosopher Michel Foucault said, power is the ability to manufacture truth, then no one else is more empowered, or likely, to have the same interest in telling your story, communicating your truth, as you.

Doing Good

Consistency – or the lack of it – between what words and images an organisation communicates and how it actually acts has become increasingly visible. With the proliferation of communication technology, as well as increased travel and growing stakeholder empowerment, the concept of *transparency* – easily understood by observing that the opposite of transparency is secrecy – is driving more organisations into ethical action, in word and deed.

To do good, and to be perceived as doing good, is a recent phenomenon in the world of stakeholder relations and in the practice of public relations. Manufacturing practices deemed to be environmentally unsound or to be contrary to human or labour rights have cast unfavourable light on many businesses internationally. These and other issues, especially the accounting scandals and oil spill tragedies of the past decade, have accelerated activity in corporate social responsibility (CSR). Ethical action is an increasing focus, as is communicating externally about this action.

Not uncommonly, organisations now report on three areas: their economic bottom line, their sustainable relationship with the environment and their social activities. Organisations are starting to consider that people, place and profit together represent a fresh approach to success.

Relationships

As public relations evolves and as more organisations embrace its tools, we can usefully cast a glance backwards into history to see where the teachings of indigenous peoples can give insight into related concepts. For instance, respectful interaction has always characterised some older societies, where a balance between self and others has been a way of life, where harmony in and respect for the environment and for people have never been separated from purely economic returns.

The ancient Chinese concept of *guanxi*, commonly translated as "connections" or "relationships", is used extensively in business today. People hoping to do business in China work hard to grasp the complexity of this key idea. Simplistically, it is about helping one another, building social capital between individuals and developing a long-term, often lifetime business relationship. But asking the question "What would your grandmother tell you *guanxi* means?" has elicited responses indicating that the relationships one has in life go far beyond those with business clients. Relationships extend to all others, and to the heavens and to the earth, as denoted by the characters that represent *guanxi* in writing.

In Canada, it is common for Aboriginal people to close an event or prayer or ritual with the words "All my relations". In this concept of relationships, the indigenous people of Canada go beyond their blood relatives and respectfully include all other living things, the rocks, water and air, the tangible and the intangible. Practical, indeed sacred, interconnectedness is recognised in the concept "All my relations". What implications might a larger notion of relationship have for partnership work?

Relationships do not only have monetary considerations, and many people in public relations are rediscovering this aspect and forming intricate and self-supporting partnerships to serve non-corporate interests, including wider environmental interests.

New partnerships require a heightened awareness of communication. In this regard, just as managing these relationships is not the sole domain of the economic elites, the formal practice of public relations is not an arena only for a select few in the bureaucracies of profit and power.

The tools of thinking critically, of practising discernment and of developing voice are available to everyone in the Information Age. The international capacity for dialogue is growing, and public relations is owned by every person and group with a desire to tell their story.

Canadian resident Nigel Atkin is an independent consultant with an extensive communication background in all sectors. He conducts onsite training in public affairs, communication, strategy and ethics for Canadian and international clients. He has taught the "Evolution of Public Relations" and other courses part-time at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada, for more than 10 years. Nigel's philosophy is "when people become better communicators, they become better in all areas of decision making". Nigel has also contributed some of the materials and concepts that appear elsewhere in this chapter.





5. Conversation:
The Essential Building Block

Conversation – whether face-to-face or long-distance – is, in many ways, the building block of all communication. Partnership practitioners therefore need to create the optimum environment for such conversations to take place, as well as build their skills in listening and speaking. But "conversation" in the partnering context implies more than these practices: it suggests a responsive approach at all times – less a case of "this is what you need to know" and more a question of "is this what the situation requires?" Good conversations can be vigorous and can involve disagreements. The best conversations are transformational.

Our working hypothesis is that all communication is a form of conversation – even when you are not face-to-face with the person or people you are communicating with. All communication is a direct or implicit invitation to engage, whether physically, emotionally or mentally. And since partnership is heavily dependent on good communication – as we hope we are successfully demonstrating – then paying particular attention to the art of conversation is essential.

The Skill of Listening

Perhaps not surprisingly, good listening skills are fundamental to rich and meaningful conversation. However, you can listen without actually hearing what is being said – because your mind is too busy interpreting, assuming or preparing a response. All too often you may not be "actively" listening.

Active listening is when you as the listener pay undivided attention to the person who is speaking. It can require that you change some ingrained, poor listening habits, but change becomes easy when you are genuinely interested in the speaker's views and when you are more concerned with understanding his / her perspective than with communicating your own.

Being an active listener means that people who engage in conversation with you feel valued, which is an excellent basis on which to build strong and productive relationships – and is why active listening is so important in effective partnering.

The Ability to Be Responsive

Of course, good conversation involves give and take. It is not simply about good listening, but also about being responsive to the issues raised, the emotions underlying what is being said and the relative importance of the situation. Being responsive requires being imaginatively engaged – seeing issues from the other's perspective and judging your response appropriately. It is through conversation in the early stages that relationships are explored and either established or terminated. It is through conversation (followed, of course, by action) that levels of understanding, respect and, ultimately, trust can grow.

Andrew Acland has more to say about what makes conversations "rich".



Richer Conversations

By Andrew Acland

Not all conversations are equal.

There is a spectrum of conversation: at one end is the sort of deep and searching conversation that transforms ideas and relationships; at the other is something shallower that changes little and may simply reinforce previous opinions or prejudices.

What makes the difference between richer and poorer conversations?

Poorer conversations	Richer conversations
• Focus on differences and distinctions between things.	• Bring out the patterns and connections among things.
• Repeat and defend old assumptions and conventional wisdoms.	• Explore and question assumptions and conventional wisdoms.
• Try to convince others to accept particular arguments.	• Challenge others to learn more and search harder.
• Narrow understanding and limit purposes.	• Expand understanding and build shared purposes.

Of course, a relatively shallow, limiting conversation has its uses when time is short or when understanding differences matters less. In addition, there are degrees between "richer" and "poorer" conversations. But in the context of creating partnerships where mutual understanding and shared purposes are paramount, richer and deeper conversations are required.

But how do you get beyond the poor and shallow type of conversation that often breeds confrontation and disagreement in order that the conversation may indeed end up being transformational?

The Two Dimensions of Conversation

Every conversation has two dimensions: the *substantive* and the *relational*. The substantive is what the conversation is about; the relational is how it happens and the effect this has on relations between those involved.

Rich conversations happen when these two dimensions both go smoothly; if one doesn't for some reason, the other will also suffer. If, for example, someone drones on at dinner, ignoring the yawns of fellow guests, even if the subject is interesting the conversation will be less than rich because the relational dimension has been neglected.

You may argue that this is an unfair example, because a monologue without exchanges is never a conversation. But in the scenario above, there *were* exchanges: all those yawns from the reluctant audience. All conversation involves exchanges – and making rich conversation depends on those involved being alert to them.

Let's examine how to improve the substantive and relational dimensions of conversation separately and then bring them together.

The Substantive Dimension

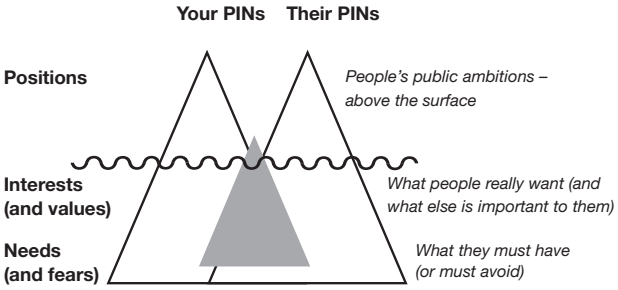
How do you transform a conversation made poor through disagreement about substantive issues to a richer one?

First, you have to invest time and effort in listening so that you really understand what the other person is trying to achieve, and why. Don't assume you know already, and don't assume that their interests and yours are the same or that theirs are less important. Equally, don't assume that because you have different interests you also have incompatible ones.

Ask the other person questions and get them to be as specific as possible about what they want. When people are anxious or wary, they tend to use generalities, so you have to get down to specifics if you want to find shared or compatible interests.

It can be valuable to use what is sometimes known as the PIN diagram – PIN standing for Positions, Interests and Needs. It's a way of mapping people's different and overlapping interests and concerns, and is a potent aid to rich conversation.

You could try drawing two PIN diagrams to illustrate where your needs and interests overlap and where they do not:



Think of these triangles as icebergs. People's most important interests, like most of an iceberg, can be beneath the surface. Simply mapping them in this way can help make things clearer.

Mapping the PINs does not, of course, make the differences between you go away, but as the shaded area suggests, you usually have some common interests, and the more you can develop these, the less the aspects that separate you will matter. This is why the process of expanding interests and understanding is such a key part of a rich conversation. A poor conversation, by contrast, is inclined to focus purely on differences as represented by rival positions.

So the substantive dimension of rich conversation is all about looking for common ground and building on (albeit underlying) shared interests.

Ah yes, you may say, but the problem is that we can't get to that point: our conversations always become so emotional, and the real problem is that the other person is irrational. How do we get beyond this?

The Relational Dimension

Each person's behaviour towards the other determines whether the relational dimension leads to a conversation that is rich or poor. In other words, what you do will influence what they do: if you confront them, they may confront you; if you try to appease them, they may take advantage of you and then feel aggrieved if you then change tack and become more assertive.

So you have to decide as soon as possible what behaviour is most likely to create the conversation that you want to have. This approach immediately raises two questions for many people: first, why should *I* change *my* behaviour if *their* behaviour is the problem? And second, isn't changing my behaviour to influence others essentially manipulative?

Let's answer the second question first. The reality is that most of us use different types of behaviour according to the circumstances. All I am suggesting is that you do it consciously rather than unconsciously. In fact, if you don't adjust your behaviour and you talk to your boss the same way you talk to your children, then you have a problem that is beyond the scope of this manual!

Now let's talk about *their* behaviour and why it may have to be you who sets the tone and pace of the conversation.

People bring to a conversation the resources they have. Those resources will include levels of education, understanding, technical expertise and emotional wellbeing – and may or may not include the ability to have a constructive conversation with others. If this last ability is lacking, then to move forward you have to plug the gap: *you* have to help *them* to have the conversation you *both* need to have.

This is a good moment to pause and ask yourself how good you are, really, at conversation with others. For example, when you are with someone else, what percentage of the time do you spend listening to them? Fifty percent? If it is less than 50%, the problem is you, not them. You have two ears and one mouth. Take the hint and use the proportion.

Think of conversation as a dance. Dancing works best when you both know the steps; if one of you doesn't, then it's up to the other to lead the dance until your partner picks up the rhythm and the moves. Sooner or later you'll dance together without treading on each other's toes.

When Icebergs and Dancing Aren't Enough

So you've identified shared interests, built on common ground and even managed a few steps in time with the music – but you still think the other person is just too irrational for any amount of conversation to work. What do you do then?

First, abandon the idea that the other person is "irrational": people always act rationally *from their point of view*. But if the other person is very different to you, if they come from a different country, if their education or background or training or understanding of the world is very different from yours – if in fact they are working off a different map of the world – then yes, they may seem "irrational" to you. However, it's not really the differences that get in the way and cause the problem. It is that in the modern world we usually make do with poor conversation and rarely invest enough time in rich conversation.

Rich conversations take time. Sit back and relax, or better still, go for a long, long walk to explore your world and their world and the world you both want to create.

Andrew Acland is a mediator specialising in designing and facilitating dialogue in complex, multi-party, multi-issue contexts. He is also an external examiner for the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (PBAS), and the author of many books and articles on conflict, public engagement and relationship management.

Partnering Conversations

Different types of conversation are needed at different points in a partnership, and you should know which is appropriate and when. One way of describing the different options is to consider what outcome the conversation is intended to generate (see table below).

Guidelines for Partnering Conversations[20]

Intended Outcomes	Useful Openings	Characteristics
Generating new possibilities	• *What would success look like?* • *If this worked, what might happen next?* • *What is the bigger picture we are creating with this initiative?*	This conversation encourages those involved to envisage a future scenario or invites the sharing of ideas and aspirations.
Generating new opportunities	• *What will you / we be able to offer or contribute?* • *What else needs to happen for us to be ready for action?* • *How do your / our views align with those of others?*	This conversation invites concrete commitment and exploration of what is realistic.
Generating action	• *What needs to happen next?* • *What will you / we do and by when?* • *How will we ensure appropriate action has been taken?*	This conversation allocates tasks, responsibilities and accountabilities to ensure a move from discussion to practical activity.
Reaching agreement or completion	• *What is left for us to clarify or accomplish?* • *Who needs to know and what do they need to know?* • *How will we best acknowledge who has done what and engage anyone who feels left out?*	This conversation ensures that all issues have been covered and that the partner relationships and the activities are on course to succeed.

Meeting the Challenge of Difficult Conversations

Conversation among partners is not always easy, for two main reasons.

First, as we implied earlier in this chapter, we are quite simply not as good at conversing as we should be. All too often we are self-absorbed, full of the importance of our own ideas, experiences and views, or simply too preoccupied to give the conversation our full attention. Those we converse with will recognise this immediately – even if unconsciously – and will be unwilling to engage further or more deeply.

Second, human beings are idiosyncratic and complex creatures, and conversation can reveal aspects of other people that we find difficult or aspects in ourselves that others find difficult. We are all products of our individual backgrounds, personal and cultural values, good and bad experiences, aspirations and ambitions. Sometimes we see conversations as little more than opportunities for bargaining, for imposing our views or for having our own way. As a result, we can appear controlling or even prickly, leading to us being labelled (or labelling others) as "difficult people".

Those who are good at the art of conversation will tend to explore rather than ignore this phenomenon. They will make the effort to penetrate more deeply into what is driving the behaviour of others that they are finding difficult to understand or to handle, or that others are finding difficult to handle in their behaviour. Sometimes having the courage to initiate a difficult conversation is the essential first step in breaking down interpersonal barriers and breaking through to new levels of connection.

In any case, as you know when you have experienced it, a vigorous, unexpected and engaging conversation can make all the difference to your sense of wellbeing and commitment. So whatever the challenges that such conversations present, they are worth overcoming.

The following tips suggest some ways to approach a difficult conversation.

PT

Practitioner Tips[21]

Perceptions

- Look for what is important.
- Recognise the role of interpretation and judgement.
- State your intention in speaking.
- Check out the other person's intention in speaking.
- Recognise both parties' contribution to the situation.
- Explore the real causes so you can correct them.

Feelings and Identity

- Seek to understand others' feelings ("understand" doesn't mean "agree with").
- Acknowledge your and others' feelings without judging them negatively.
- Recognise that you are both complex people and neither is perfect.
- Understand everyone's concern for identity and self-esteem.
- Build a more balanced self-image.

Some Principles to Remember

- Partners have different information.
- Partners have different interpretations.
- Partners' conclusions are likely to reflect self-interest, but self-interest does not necessarily preclude mutual benefit.
- Partners can make wrong assumptions about each other's intentions.
- Responsible self-expression may not always feel comfortable.
- Partners will always need to protect their personal and organisational identity.
- The partnership itself needs to find and maintain a balanced identity.

Conversations with the Self: Building Professional Practice

Conversation – whether easy or difficult – can have additional purposes. As well as drawing groups together and providing the building blocks for long-term engagement and practical action, conversation can stimulate both personal and professional development. In particular, in the training of partnership practitioners and partnership brokers, the concept of "reflective practice" is warmly welcomed, since it is seen as enabling those who usually operate under considerable pressure a technology or approach for slowing down and gaining deeper insight into and understanding of what is happening in their partnering work.

Ros Tennyson, the co-author of this manual, looks at the conversations you have with yourself that can help you develop your professional practice.



The Imagined Conversation

By Ros Tennyson

A conversation is essentially an exchange – usually in words, but not always – between two or more people. It involves a giving and receiving of thoughts, remembered experiences, challenges and more. It may be planned but rarely goes according to plan, since you cannot know in advance how others will respond to your inputs or how you will respond to theirs.

Often, conversations are based on questions: "open", "closed" or "hidden". Open questions are those that encourage a fuller, more detailed answer and promote dialogue (essentially a search for what lies beneath a statement or an opinion). *Closed* questions are those that require a simple "yes" or "no" answer (a way of securing clarification to a question or closure). *Hidden* questions are those that are not voiced but underpin or inform the dialogue – whether consciously or unconsciously.

As explored elsewhere in the manual, conversation is a core part of the many communication challenges we face as partnership practitioners, and we undoubtedly benefit from a deeper understanding of its nature and potential. But conversation may have more purposes than to interact with your partners and build a well-functioning partnership.

Partnership practitioners can use the techniques of well-managed conversation to school themselves to become more reflective in their approach to their work. A reflective practitioner[22] is someone who is able to review, analyse and deconstruct how they do their job and through this reflection to better understand their impact on others and the various options for doing things differently. Most importantly, they are better able to envision scenarios where positive change is likely to occur.

Being a reflective practitioner requires some personal and professional discipline, regularly allocating time and space in order to go beneath the surface of day-to-day busy-ness. Some people simply sit in a quiet place; others walk or do some other form of non–work-related physical activity so that they can review what has happened with a degree of quiet objectivity. It is a form of experience recollected in tranquillity.[23]

Individuals use different prompts to aid their reflection – I always use questions. And by using questions, I provoke myself to find answers. In other words, I create an internal conversation.

My questions are of various types:

"Why...

...did x happen?"
...was that conversation so difficult?"
...didn't we reach a decision?"
...did I do / say x?"

"What if...

...x had / had not been there?"
...I / they had done x instead of y?"
...we had waited until...?"
...we try something completely different?"

"What...

...would be the best possible outcome of x activity?"
...would it be like if it was working brilliantly?"

"What next...

…needs to change / happen to make a difference?"
...should I do / not do to help this process work?"

By asking such questions, I not only review what has happened and try to understand why, but I also begin to challenge my own assumptions, behaviour and impact on the situation. Even more importantly, such reflection gives me an opportunity to imagine something different, to explore a range of scenarios and to therefore mentally prepare myself for a whole range of possible options, solutions and actions. The questioning – the to and fro of the imagined conversation – helps me as a practitioner to become simultaneously a participant *and* an observer.

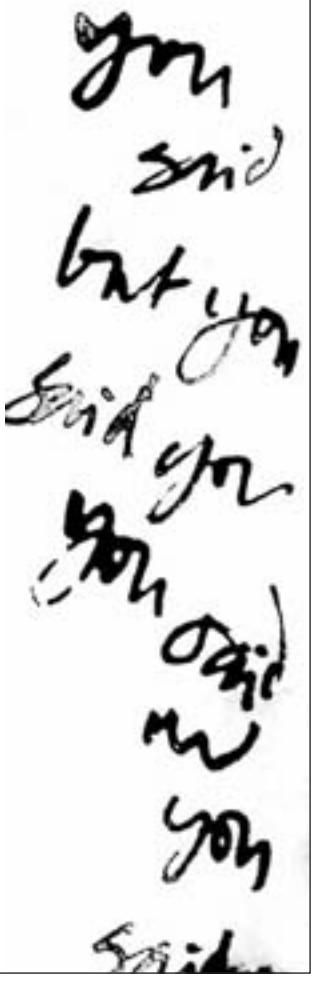
But there is also something beyond this.

Once reflective practice becomes a habit, you move beyond the question-and-answer mode to an imagined conversation without words. You learn to still the chattering voice inside your head – full as it always is with impressions, memories, anxieties and unfinished business. You become better at resisting the relentless need to plan, to be logical, to be in control. You allow yourself to simply wait, and if you are lucky, images and ideas begin to emerge unquestioned and unasked for. It can be a truly creative and inspiring experience and can inform what you do and how you do it in a completely new way.

My hypothesis is that a good reflective practitioner increasingly knows how to ask themselves the right questions

and to genuinely explore the real (if sometimes painful) answers – in other words, they have a particularly well-developed capacity to conduct productive "imagined conversations". But an even better reflective practitioner is able to move beyond such imagined conversations to no conversations at all.

With a bit of perseverance, reflective practice becomes a habit – and its impacts can be quite startling, leading to significantly more informed, confident and decisive decision making and behaviour. Reflective practitioners are therefore, in my experience, better equipped than non-reflective practitioners to conduct their *external* conversations (aka communication) far more effectively.



Ros Tennyson's bio appears on the inside back cover.



6. Words and Images

It is essential that messages and intentions are clear. Being clear means adopting direct, uncluttered and jargon-free language, not only when we speak, but also when we write. Clear writing means using language that is alive, that invites imaginative response, engagement and action. Clear language is easily translated and transmits across both sectoral and cultural boundaries. But words on the page or screen are not the only communication tool – images are useful too. Sometimes an appropriate image can communicate even more quickly, directly and powerfully.

The Challenge of Writing Effectively

Although what follows in this chapter addresses written words and visual images specifically, many of the principles apply equally to the spoken word. In general, though, people speak more clearly in person and tend to use more straightforward language. Also, in face-to-face conversation you have the benefit of non-verbal clues, plus immediate feedback from the listener, who in most cases will let you know right away if he / she hasn't understood something you've said.

Knowing how your readers will respond to what you've *written* is much more challenging task – which is why you need to take the time to anticipate and think through their likely questions and answer them before they can even ask them! It's also why you need to make sure you've written as clearly, coherently and correctly as possible, to minimise the likelihood of your readers interpreting your messages differently than you'd intended.

Writing is a challenge, whether you anticipate having one reader or 100. And if writing for just one reader is challenge enough, how much greater and more complex is the challenge for a multi-sector and multi-stakeholder partnership, where you're needing to tailor your communication for a wide range of audiences and all of their possible interpretations of what you write.

It's not that multi-stakeholder partnerships necessarily require a whole new approach to writing – though partnerships do offer an opportunity for discovery and innovation – but they do demand even more planning and forethought. You need to be particularly thoughtful about what you write or depict because of the complexity of the situation.

All good writing does what it is supposed to. Earlier in the manual, we discussed the need to have a clear purpose for communicating. When you write, what do you want your reader to say, do, think or feel as a result of the communication?

Your job is to make your documents as clear as possible by specifying what action you want your readers to take. This involves you doing the synthesis, not expecting your readers to have to work out what you mean and how you want them to respond. To accomplish your purpose, you need to engage your readers' interest. If you lose their attention shortly into the document, then you've no chance of achieving what you set out to do. So how do you best hold your readers' attention?

Sue McManus, the co-author of the manual, shares some thoughts on how to make your writing more engaging.



Inviting Your Reader onto the Page

By Sue McManus

In my work as an editor and writing coach, I find people over and over asking me for some form of "magic bullet" that will radically improve their writing. I haven't found any magic bullets or short cuts yet – there's no getting away from the need for hard work, and for practice, practice, practice. But I have picked up a few principles that make it more likely that your reader will want to read what you've written and then to keep reading. Below, I share three of my favourite principles:

- Have a dialogue with the reader.
- Tell the readers a story.
- Write the type of text that you'd enjoy reading.

Ensure a Reader-Based Dialogue in Your Writing

Good writing is dialogue imagined. First, recognise that you, the writer, are having two conversations: one with yourself and one with the reader. Then learn to figure out which is which, so you can keep the monologue of thinking separate from the dialogue of writing.

Faced with a document that is little more than the writer's interior monologue, the reader falls back on an interior monologue of his / her own. To avoid the monologue trap, you need to define the audience or reader's interests and concerns before you write. You can then structure your writing as a reader-based dialogue, rather than as a writer-based monologue.

Directly addressing your reader as "you" in your writing can add a more personal note to the dialogue on the page or screen. However, this perspective may not be appropriate for all forms of communication.

Tell a Story When You Write

Good writing is about telling good stories. Of course, telling the stories of the people involved will give readers a more vivid picture of your partnership work than if you simply describe what you do. But even in the way you write – how you construct sentences and paragraphs – you can use the principles of narrative to good effect. For example, as Joseph Williams says, even a single sentence can tell a good story when it has a clear central character (the subject of the sentence) and clear actions (the verb or verbs in the sentence).[24] Compare the following three sentences:

- "There has <u>been</u> the effective exercise of information distribution control on the part of the director."
- "The director has <u>exercised</u> effective information distribution control."
- "The director has effectively <u>controlled</u> how her staff distribute information."

Notice how the verbs change in the three examples. As the action is stated more directly and the verbs become stronger, the sentence has more life. The first example sounds particularly stilted but is sadly also typical of what has been called the "Official Style" or the bureaucratic style.

Use an Engaging Writing Style

Good writing invites readers to keep reading. So what type of writing do you prefer to read? Have a look at the following two paragraphs:

Example 1 "For all the reasons outlined above, it seems to be prudent to find a solution to the pricing problem as soon as is humanly possible. Also, it is the responsibility of this department to be closely allied with the marketing and the purchasing departments. Together, these three groups should be systematically reviewing all the viable pricing options in order to clearly identify the one set of parameters that is most accurate in terms of the profitability objectives that were established by the planning committee at the last strategy offsite."

Example 2 "We need to solve the pricing problem immediately. This department will spend the next week working with the marketing and purchasing departments. Our objective: to find the best pricing structure given the profitability objectives from the last strategy meeting."

Both paragraphs are grammatically correct and are making the same point. But which paragraph did you find easier to read? OK, it's not rocket science. And to return to Joseph Williams' notion of the sentence as a story, the first example is also less clear because most of the main characters (or subjects) and the main actions (or verbs) are buried.
Of course, someone will say that at times a more formal, bureaucratic style is required. But is such a style genuinely considerate of most readers? If wanting to communicate with your readers is your prime consideration, then why the need for convoluted or overwritten text? And if your readers aren't your prime consideration, then why are you writing at all, and what result do you expect to get from doing so?

People sometimes still think that they need to sound learned or formal or bureaucratic in order to appear credible. Fortunately, the world is changing – even in academic circles – to a more personal tone. It's possible to write about complex and profound ideas but to do so in ways that engage the reader and invite them to keep reading. The more that how you write sounds like how you talk, the more direct and personal your communication will be and the more it will engage your reader. You want action, not only *after* you've communicated, but also in the communication itself.

10 Tips for Making Your Writing Come Alive

TIP	EXAMPLES	
	Original	**Revised**
Sentence Level		
1. Use the active voice (avoid the passive voice).	• "A new report was released by the Health and Safety Committee last week." • "The ground rules should be agreed on" *(which raises the question "by whom?").*	• "The Health and Safety Committee released a new report last week." • "The partners should agree on the ground rules."
2. Make positive statements (avoid the negative form, especially double negatives).	• "Failure to communicate early in the process is not recommended."	• "We recommend that you communicate early in the process."
3. Favour verbs over nouns and noun phrases.	• "The partners arrived at the conclusion that the project would prove to be a success." • "It is stipulated in the quarterly plan that the partnership is required to do a thorough assessment of the changes it has made to service delivery." • "make a decision" • "the undertaking of a careful evaluation"	• "The partners concluded that the project would succeed." • "The quarterly plan states that the partnership must thoroughly assess how it has changed service delivery." • "decide" • "evaluate carefully"
4. Use strong verbs that convey action.	• "to impact" • "to effect" • "to involve" • "to focus on"	• "to reduce" • "to boost" • "to participate" • "to target"
5. Trim wordy sentences.	• "The project requires a rather special set of practices." • "Without a doubt, the current investment climate is changing with great speed and unpredictability, but investors are nonetheless encouraged to remain focused on strategies that target the long term when making investment decisions."	• "The project requires special practices." • "The investment climate is changing quickly and unpredictably. Still, we encourage you to adopt long-term strategies when you invest."
Word Level		
6. Use plain words.	• "utilise" • "necessitates"	• "use" • "needs"
7. Favour concrete words over abstract.	• "The project focused on minimising the high risk associated with the adoption of emerging technological solutions to support information interoperability."	• "The project aimed to minimise the risk of adopting new technology that helps groups share information."
8. Use jargon sparingly.	• "Once in, the motivation for staying in is the high business cost of withdrawing from the partnership and the denial of business process inefficiencies."	• "Once in a partnership, companies are motivated to stay in. They want to avoid the high cost of withdrawing, and they like the volume discounts the partnership offers."
9. Avoid chains of nouns.	• "sustainable development partnership brokering outcomes"	• *(You'd probably need to radically rewrite a sentence containing such a chain of nouns.)*
10. Avoid "opening fillers", empty phrases and vague pronouns.	• "There is one approach to partnering that works particularly well." • "It is important to make sure that all stakeholders are invited." • "This indicates that we need a new process."	• "One approach to partnering works particularly well." • "Partnership brokers must invite all stakeholders." • "This finding indicates we need a new process."

Sue McManus's bio appears on the inside back cover.

Everyone Can Learn to Write Better

> *"Contrary to what some people seem to believe, simple writing is not the product of simple minds. A simple, unpretentious style has both grace and power. By not calling attention to itself it allows the reader to focus on the message."* **Richard Lederer et al**[25]

So what are the fundamentals of good writing? The plain language concept captures them well. The term "plain language" originated in the legal world in response to a need to counteract overly dense and jargon-filled legal documents and make information more accessible to everyone. Plain language refers to communication that is simple and direct and uses common words. It's clear, straightforward language, with the needs of the reader foremost in mind. It covers not only the words you use, but also the way you organise your ideas and subsequently design and lay out the page or screen.

Key Principles of Plain Language

1. Consider your readers.
2. Organise the information.
3. Construct effective paragraphs.
4. Write clear sentences.
5. Choose words carefully.
6. Use reader-friendly layout and design.

Tool 7: Document Checklist (see page 78) can be a useful reference to review after each document you write, to help you in building your writing skills.

In a world where everyone's receiving an increasing number of communications, you need your communication to be succinct and clear, so that people are more likely to pay attention to it in the midst of the communication "noise". And the harder something is to communicate, the clearer it needs to be. Removing unnecessary or lengthy words and phrases from a document reduces the noise in the document itself and makes for easier reading for your audience, who are then more likely to keep reading. The resulting clarity and brevity also allow you to see whether you have said what you wanted and needed to say.

Some people fear writing because they pre-judge their output to be awful – they're editing themselves way too soon. When you write your first draft, forget about finding the exact words or following the principles of plain language. You're still sorting out what you want to say and can fine-tune your writing later.

Our conversations are full of ambiguity, hesitations, false starts and fragments. Our writing has this same ambiguity and is as open to broad interpretation. As a result, more of the work – perhaps as much as 60% – is actually in revising than in writing. If you don't allow for rewriting, you won't write well. It's at the revising stage that you look at your latest draft, apply the principles of plain language, and find ways to clean up the draft and make your writing come alive.

When you are completely finished, ask yourself two questions:
1. Have I said what I wanted to say?
2. Have I said it in such a way that the reader can understand it?

With a grasp of basic principles and lots of practice, you *can* develop good writing skills.

Building a Plain Language Culture in a Partnership[26]

Planning
- Learn the techniques and skills of plain language.
- Define plain language as a value of your partnership work.
- Build plain language planning into your programmes and projects.

Doing
- Develop a set of writing standards for the workplace.
- Encourage jargon-free internal products, such as notices, policy documents and manuals.
- Use plain language in external products, such as letters, forms and website pages.

Following up
- Use inside or outside editorial help to give feedback on product readability.
- Invite client feedback on readability through surveys or focus groups.
- Maintain a culture of writing improvement.

Requirements
- Opportunities for training
- A set of clear guidelines
- The will to change.

The Power of Visual Images

Words are not always the only or the most appropriate way to create a response in your readers. Vivid images such as drawings, paintings and photographs can often convey your messages even more effectively than written text, and are sometimes the most appropriate way to communicate – for example, with illiterate people, including many "functionally illiterate" adults in the more developed countries.[27]

Maria Hayes, the manual's illustrator, has more to say about the value of pictures and images on the following two pages.

The Concept of "Plain Numbers"

As well as using pictures or photographs to help you tell your stories, you may want to depict your messages in graphic form, particularly when you need to present financial or other numerical information.

Some people claim we are undergoing an "Iconic Revolution", which is actually changing our brain functioning and affecting the way we process information. Revolution or not, these days most people do get the bulk of their information visually. When well conceived and designed, charts, tables and graphs can help you communicate more quickly and more clearly.

Choosing the correct chart form depends completely on being clear about what *your* message is, what *you* want to show, the specific point *you* want to make. In other words, it's not dictated by the data or by the measures you use. You need to draw the reader's attention to the aspect of the data you want to emphasise.



Communicating with TLC

By Maria Hayes

I look at my work and ask myself, what makes up a drawing or painting, formally, materially? I conclude it comes down to TLC – tone, line and colour.

The way those elements are put together, are handled, the images they create, are infinite. So what are they in essence?

Tone

It seems to me that tone is *relational*. You can never have a lone grey tone – it is only grey in relation to black and white and other greys. In order to draw tone, you have to consider the whole image simultaneously and constantly check the relationship balance of tones, one against the other. A tone drawing deals with the darks and lights of an image. When working in tone, you are drawing the quality of light hitting (or missing) the surface of the subject.

To draw first in tone is to feel your way, fumble almost, into the subject and its relation to the edges of the paper. Drawing only in tone is a fluid way to gently set down the relationships. The image remains in flux, feels akin to someone finding their way through a darkened house. Tone-only drawings have a softened feel and look to them, as if you have screwed up your eyes to see the darks and lights only, omitting all detail.

Line

Line is wholly different. Line is *directional*. Line moves and exists in the moment, in itself, and states, absolutely, what it defines. Line considers only where it is going. It can provide the edge and the tension that can let a drawing speak. Line is difficult to alter and often shows itself to be "right" or "wrong". Essentially, it will always remain its own authority. And whether or not it relates to the tones already present in an image, line will bring the image into sharp focus.

A line is unquestionable – it closes off all hesitation or enquiry. Either by itself or in contrast to the tone work, this confident and purposeful energy can be exciting in a drawing. I am temperamentally drawn to line; much of my work is only line, or I begin with line, and then add tones, which fall into place tidily between the lines. But lately I find it much more challenging to begin with tones – an open exploration – and then to add line, to see a slight mismatch between the elements. This way of working is somehow more true to the experience of looking. It also requires me to adopt a listening role, which makes the drawing more responsive and reflective, less of a monologue. So instead of going for a walk, head down, shoulders hunched and talking to myself in my head, I look around, take time to absorb my surroundings and chat with someone as I travel.

These two tools – tone and line – can make drawings on their own, but when they are combined, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Colour

Into this cocktail we may add colour. For me, colour is *emotional*. I have a more complex emotional response to colour than to black-and-white images. Colour will shift the emotional quality of an image and encourage certain associations – which might be a mixture of the cultural and the personal. A subjective and emotive element, colour is the one that opens a world of possibilities.

I hesitated to use colour in my work for years – colour theory didn't help. Somehow, for me, colour was another territory that didn't always come naturally. Nowadays, once I am clear in my emotional connection, I can use colour confidently to express that position. To do this, I work from instinct, from the impulse, from listening. If I respond to a situation, a story, a dance, I listen to its "colour" – to the timbre of emotional exchanges, of how it makes me feel. The colour I use has to resonate with the experience to be a true representation.

These three formal elements of tone, line and colour are the ingredients needed to make a painting or drawing. With these three tools, with the relational, directional and emotional harnessed, I can go about making my work.

TLC in Partnership

In partnership work, it is said over and over that the key to a successful collaboration is communication. The sort of communication in which all partners experience being heard and responded to. Where all partners agree on the work in hand and the work yet to be produced. Achieving this level of productive communication is not easy and also involves TLC!

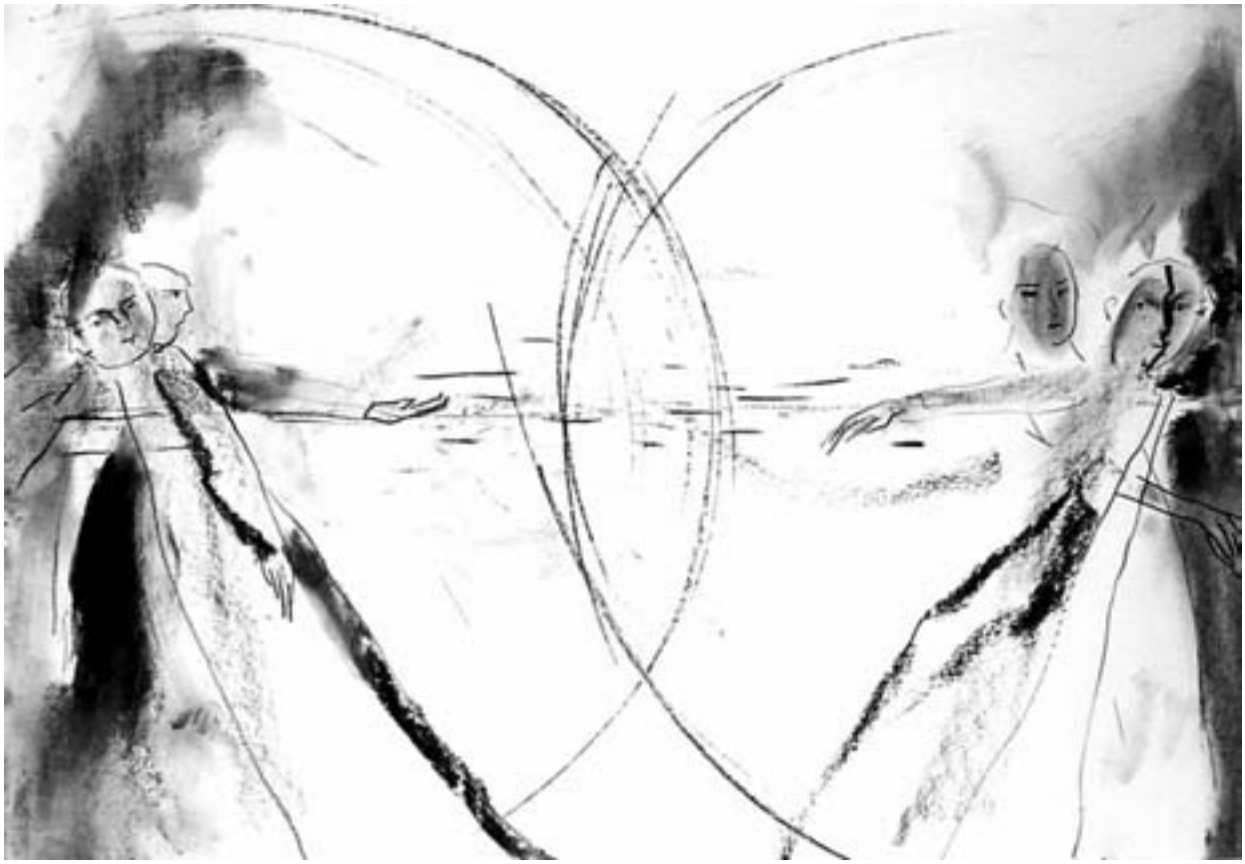
The tonal elements of partnership communication occur in the relational quality of the partnership – how the partners handle the lights and darks of their relationship with each other and themselves in partnership. Often, they need to take a few steps back to see the "bigger picture" and to balance the tones in a working collaboration. Sometimes, lightening a situation with humour may alter the whole feeling to the work; at other times, a dark gravity is necessary when vital issues are at stake. So someone in the partnership

needs to be assessing if the balance of tones are working. Someone needs to be the artist with the outside eye.

The directional lines are important too. Once the relationship is established, someone needs to take the lead, to say this way now and to assign areas of responsibility. It may be time to stop listening to the potential ways forward and to choose one. Like the line in a drawing, it may be time to drive the image forward, defining the issues and making things clear.

The colour enters with the emotional relationships that develop as the work progresses. As we work together we come to know one another better, and this knowledge affects the way in which we can work. We establish trust and see more opportunities for creative risk taking. The whole piece becomes richer.

The reality of both making a drawing and making a partnership is that you work in the dance of the three elements. Sometimes it's line, sometimes tone, sometimes colour. Sometimes one dominates; sometimes they balance. I already stated that at times I work against my own "type" and begin a drawing by setting up the tonal or the colour relationships, leaving the line until last. I surprise myself with a different dynamic of work and enjoy the creative growth I experience as a result (as well as the new image!). The equivalent in partnership work may be to establish who you are and how you are with each other before tackling the "what needs to be done?" part of the work. It may require finding out about each other's values and personalities before embarking on a more linear, achievement-based working relationship. In this way, the line may become more sensitive, more fluid, and we may make better drawings with our world and ourselves.



Maria Hayes has been creating, exhibiting and performing art since 1986 after completing her Fine Art and Theatre Studies degrees. Based in rural North Wales, she combines this practice with mentoring, lecturing, research and project management in schools, galleries and higher education institutions across the UK. Maria's work is in private and public collections in the UK and internationally. The illustrations in this book were created when Maria was artist-in-residence at The Partnering Event held in Cambridge, UK, in September 2006.

Below are some suggestions for good chart design.

PT

Practitioner Tips

- Leave out details that might confuse or distract your readers. Your job is to make the message clear.
- Round the decimals if they have little effect on the message.
- Use graphic treatments – arrows, lines, shadings or colour – when you want to emphasise a specific aspect of the data.
- Give each graphic a comprehensive title. Titles that contain the key message usually communicate more accurately.
- When you're including a graphic in a written document, in the text tell readers what they will see in the graphic. Some people are "chart blind" and read all sorts into a graphic.[28]
- When you're using charts in a presentation, make sure that you verbally deliver the message that each chart is intended to highlight.
- Less is more. Use one chart and it's likely to receive full attention; use 100 charts and none will be memorable.
- Don't let creativity override the content.

In certain situations, you may be better off without a chart – for example, when:

- You want to deliver a simple message that can be expressed with words alone.
- You are dealing with tenuous projections or ranges where a chart may denote a misleading sense of accuracy.
- Your audience is used to seeing data expressed in words – e.g., profit-and-loss statements.
- Your audience is unaccustomed to or resistant to the use of charts.

And finally, remember that the characteristics of effective writing apply equally to charts. Make sure your charts and other graphics are *clear, concise* and *correct*.

Appearance Matters: Layout and Design

How you combine words and images in your publications, whether in print or online, can help or hinder your communication. Alison Beanland, the designer of this manual, gives some useful tips on the following two pages.

If the publication is worth doing, it is worth doing as well as possible. In general terms, it has to look good to attract – and hold – the reader's attention. The text itself has to be accessible at various levels to get your message across to the largest number of readers. It is important to imagine how your readers will respond to the publication. For example, some may dip in and out or simply skim this manual, perhaps picking out the think pieces or going straight to the chapter with the tools. Others will read the whole thing straight through from cover to cover.

You always need to take account of what you or the publication's authors intended and who your target audiences are. If necessary, test out a few sample pages on representative individuals and get their feedback before going to the time and expense of producing a publication that does not get it quite right.



Principles of Effective Layout and Design[29]

By Alison Beanland

When approaching a new project, you need to clarify a number of basic questions with those commissioning the publication.[30] Getting answers to these initial questions will help to steer the project and ensure that you are creating a final product that will work. Preliminary questions include:

- *Who is the document for?*
- *How will the document be used?*
- *What is the budget?*
- *Who will sign off on the design?*
- *What is the timescale for completion?*

The easiest way for me to illustrate general principles of effective layout and design is to take you through the process I went through in interpreting the brief I received for this publication. Obviously, you can judge for yourselves whether the layout and design are (or are not!) effective.

INITIAL DESIGN BRIEF FROM THE AUTHORS FOR *TALKING THE WALK*

OVERVIEW

- *Since* Talking the Walk *is the fourth in a series, it should clearly resemble the first three to help keep a coherent identity.*
- *In the earlier guides, we went for a clear, simple style – very user-friendly and easily readable on the Web, as well as in its printed format.*
- *It's important to make it easily downloadable in pdf format anywhere in the world, including places where Web access is limited and slow (i.e., minimal colour in text and limited use of background shading).*
- *At this stage, it's not quite clear how long this manual will be. It will have five "elements":*
  - *Chapters*
  - *Think pieces (contributions from different authors – averaging two sides of A4 in length) that will need to be clearly distinguishable from the chapters*
  - *Brief stories or case studies from partnership practitioners or brokers in the field*
  - *Centre spread diagram (will need your help with designing this, as it should not be too cluttered even though it has a lot of information in it)*
  - *Tools (up to 10 tools, which may appear in a chapter in the text or as stand-alone pages in a pocket at the end of the text).*

COVER

- *We would like to use Maria Hayes's picture* You Said! *as the image on the front cover, and given that the background in the picture is a grey-blue, we think something in this colour range could be the overall colour of the cover – do you agree?*
- *Title lettering should resemble the other guides in the series – main title above the image and longer subtitle below.*
- *If possible, on the back cover the* You Said! *image should be reintroduced in some way, but will need to be designed not to clash with the logos of the organisations that have produced and supported the book.*

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE LAYOUT AND DESIGN

- From the earliest stage of the project and in close discussion with the commissioners / authors, consider the format of the publication, including the size and number of pages.
- Push those who are writing your brief to be as precise as possible in describing what they want (even when they do not know the technical terms, ask them to state their preferences for typefaces and general look).
- If you plan a professional print run, discuss with the printers the options on the kind of paper (matt, glossy, recycled) and the type of binding that will communicate most appropriately something of your project to the reader, as well as influence how long the publication lasts and how easily it can be used.
- Ask to be sent samples of each type of "element" early on, so you can do some drafts and offer options on a few pages, rather than designing the whole publication at once and having to radically redesign at a late stage.

- Both the publication title and the cover image are key elements that will draw in the reader by establishing an identity for the project. They are therefore critically important.
- A strong visual for the cover that conveys something significant about the content or style of the publication is worth researching well and allowing adequate budget for, since it will be how your publication is described and recognised.

STYLE ISSUES

- *Clearly, the style needs to follow the earlier guides, although as this manual is dedicated to communication, we would also welcome some new communication elements.*
- *Typefaces should be a good size, making the text easily readable.*
- *As always, we would like to go for plenty of "breathing space" – i.e., not too dense in layout or too cluttered.*
- *We are aiming at a look that is both understated and stylish.*

Tips for typefaces and other stylistic issues:

- Choosing the right amount of space between the words and the lines is as important as using the right type size.
- Make sure that your type size is not too small, as dense type can be offputting.
- Choose a typeface principally for its legibility.
- A serifed font (e.g., Times) is typically used for the main text (because the curly tails enhance legibility by leading the eye from character to character), while a sans serif (e.g., Helvetica, Arial) is often used in contrast for headings.
- Limit the number of different typefaces to two or three in a document – this will help the reader to navigate the material.
- Capital letters are harder to read and should be used sparingly.
- Avoid long lines – it's hard work for the eye to travel all the way from one side of the page to the other for each line.
- Justified text (going right up to the edges of both left- and right-hand margins) creates uneven spaces between words and hinders legibility by making more work for the eyes.
- Short paragraphs, headings and subheadings create natural breaks in the text and add white space.
- Using white space will enhance legibility, so be generous with the margins and insert blank pages in long documents.

VISUALS

- *All the illustrations will be Maria Hayes's black-and-white sequence created at The Partnering Event (an international gathering of partnership practitioners in September 2006).*
- *Maria is happy for her illustrations to be used as complete pictures or parts cut and pasted as you / we see fit.*
- *We have discussed, for example, using her pictures on all the think pieces, in order to differentiate these. Another option would be the opposite (i.e., create a simple border design for the think pieces, and use Maria's black-and-white images throughout the chapter texts). Over to you to play around with these ideas!*
- *We propose to include black-and-white photos of each think piece contributor, possibly with the photo accompanying each think piece together with a brief biography at the end of the piece (i.e., not at the end of the manual). Let's see how this looks.*

- According to a well-known Chinese saying, a picture is worth a thousand words. Look for opportunities to use relevant visuals.
- Photographs, illustrations and diagrams add texture and variety to a document, and help bring the document and its subject to life.
- It is often necessary or desirable to use what images are available. By cropping and grouping several images, you may be able to create something more interesting than using a single weaker image.
- Never use poor-quality images.
- The visual element in a publication can be enormously important and add (or subtract, if done badly) significantly. It provides a great opportunity for imagination – challenge those who are briefing you to think as creatively as possible about the options for visuals.

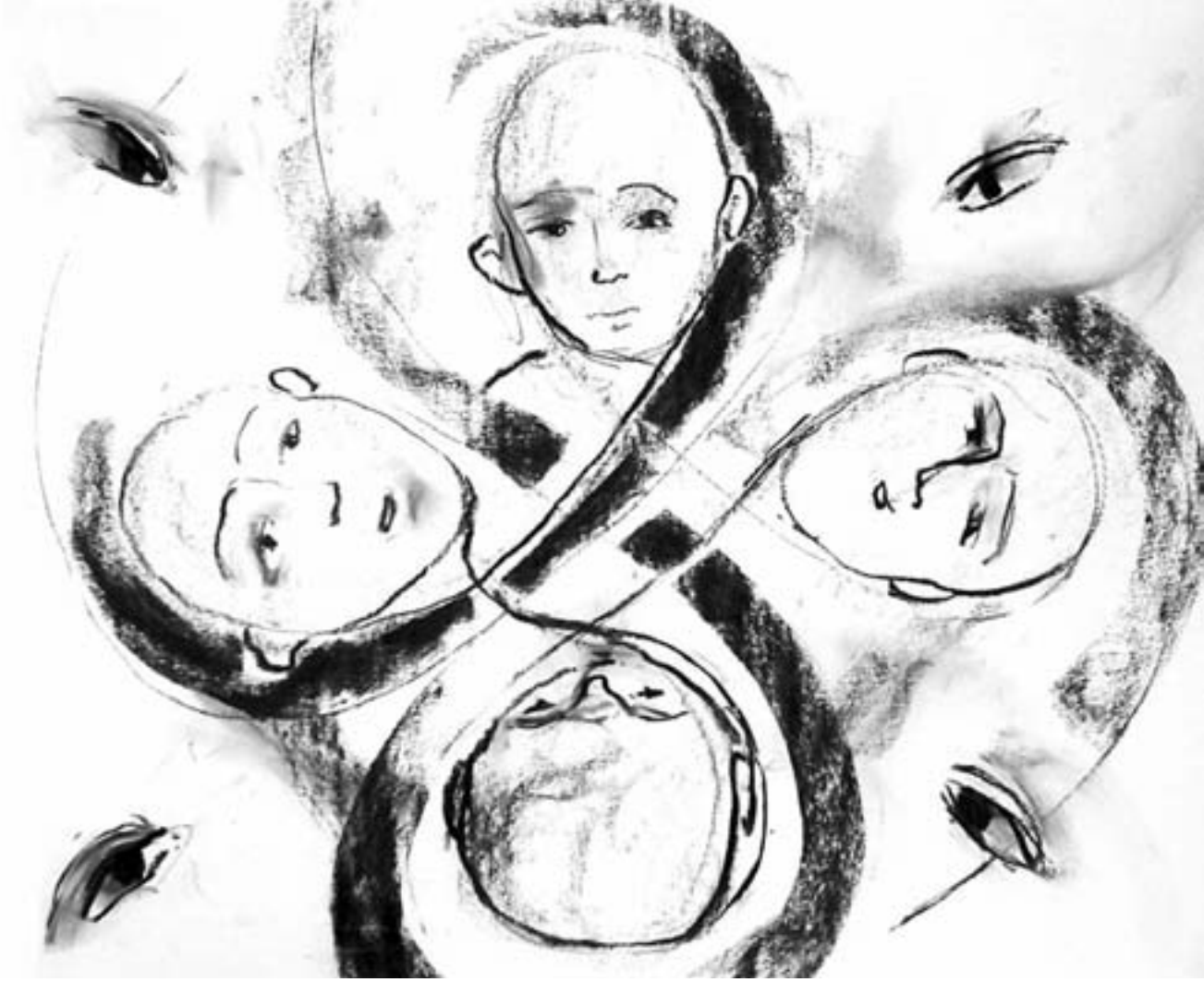
USE OF COLOUR

- *Since many people will download the book from the website as a pdf file, we'd recommend not using solid colour as background on pages with text – or even on divider pages. It's a waste of ink and sometimes doesn't print out well anyway.*
- *In addition, while we are keen to spend what is necessary on a great cover, we are also keen not to squander money on fancy colour printing in the main text. Our preference is to go for black and white – especially since we have such a great collection of original black-and-white illustrations.*

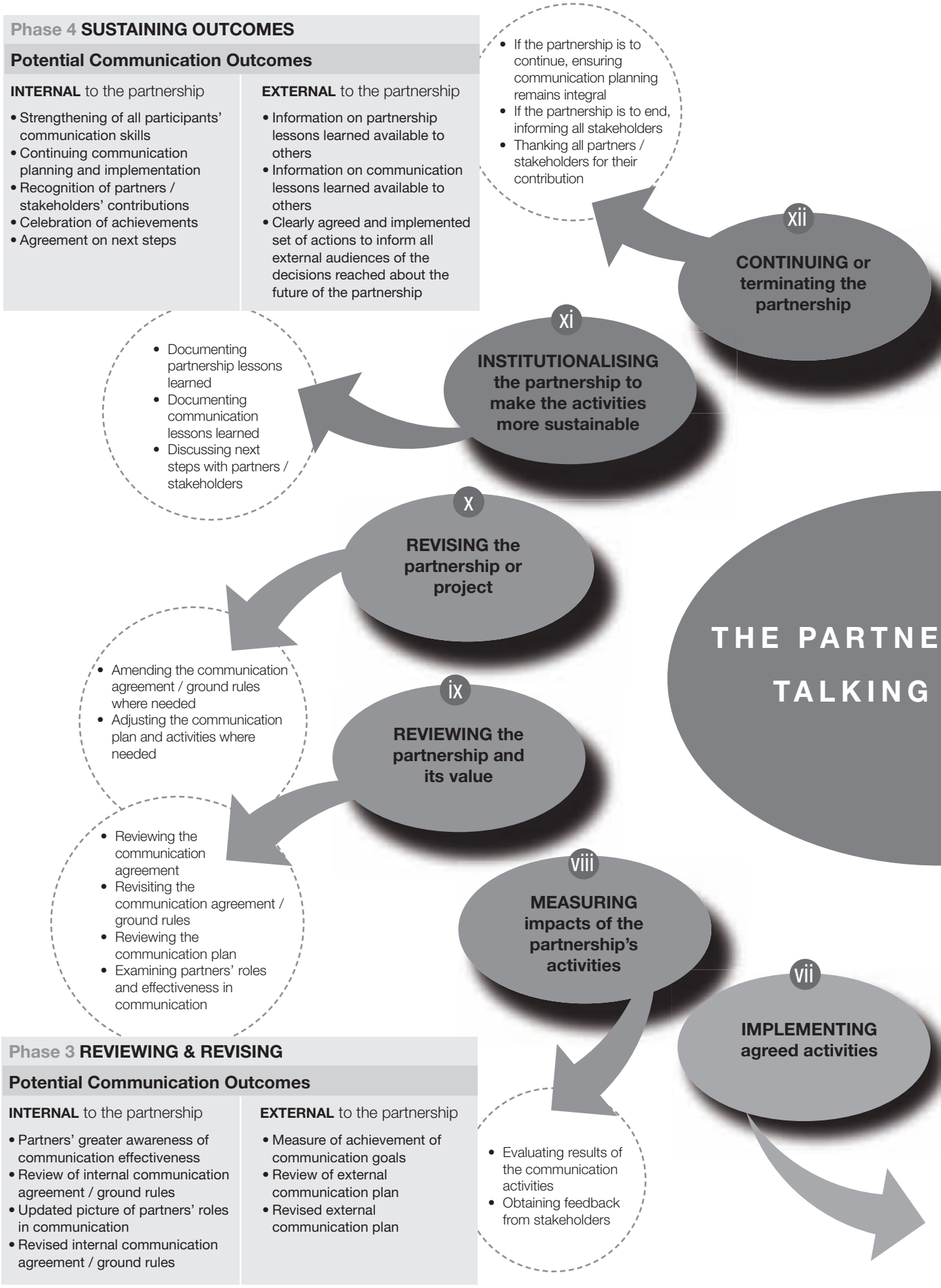
- The use of colour in a document for print is usually – but not always – dependent on budget. Printing in two colours is approximately 20% cheaper than printing in four colours, and printing in one colour is about 33% cheaper.
- A two-colour publication is often printed in black and one other coloured ink; the latter can be used as "tints" (that is, percentages of the colour that give a range from light to dark). The second colour is most effective when used sparingly for headings, for light backgrounds to boxes, or for text that needs to stand out on the page.
- Using colour is not essential for a document to look appealing, and designers are increasingly enjoying the challenge of working with black and white now that the use of colour is so widespread.
- Strong, elegant use of type and space on a page can often be more appealing than excessive use of type styles and design elements.
- It is a good general rule to keep things simple!

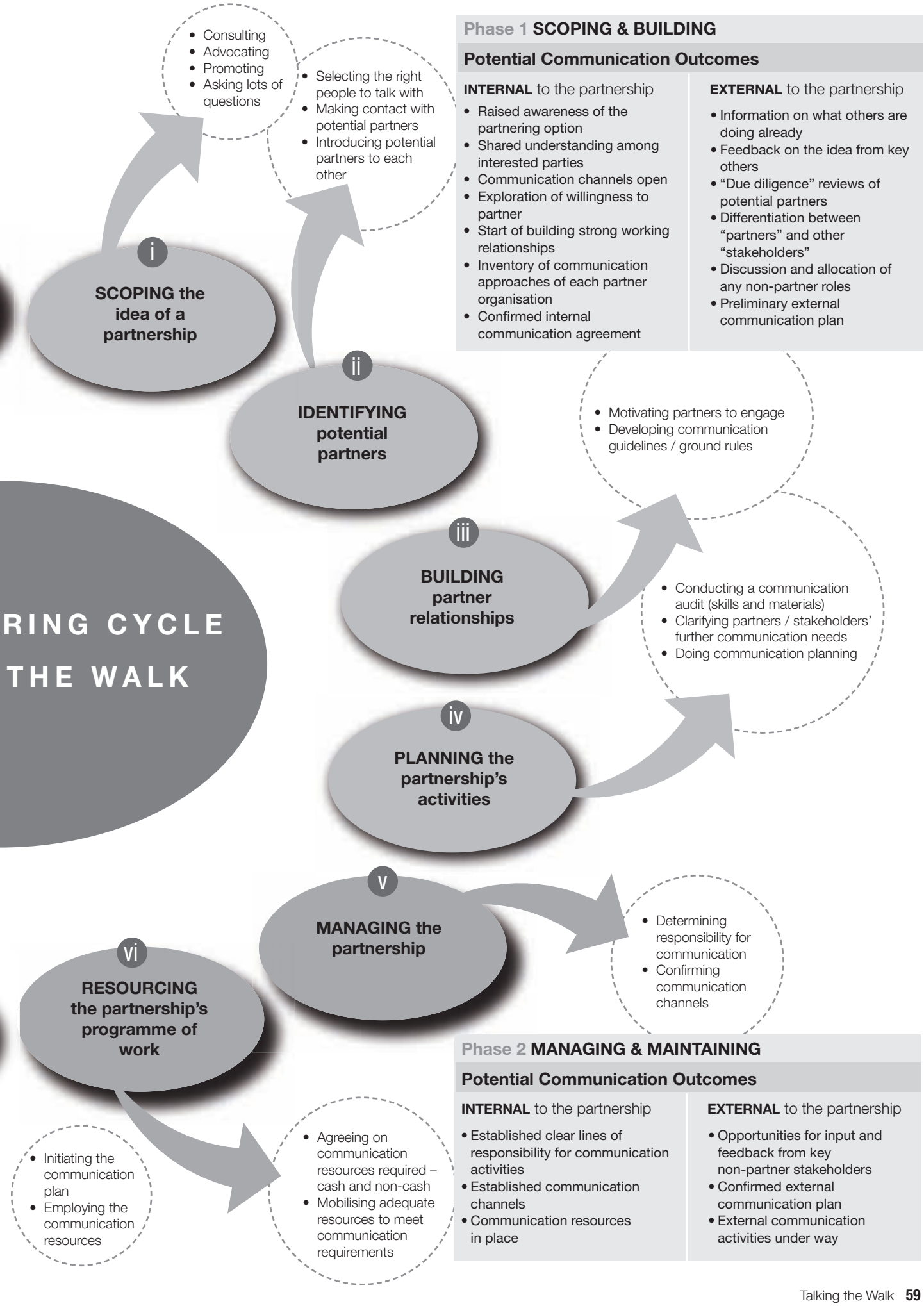
Alison Beanland has worked for the past 12 years as a freelance graphic designer on a variety of projects with IBLF, the John Lewis Partnership, Deutsche Bank, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, the Discrimination Law Association and Harvard University. She has undertaken two short-term assignments in Romania, sharing graphic design skills with not-for-profit organisations. Alison is the designer of this manual.





7. Planning, Implementing and Evaluating Communication


Phase 4 SUSTAINING OUTCOMES
Potential Communication Outcomes
INTERNAL to the partnership
• Strengthening of all participants' communication skills
• Continuing communication planning and implementation
• Recognition of partners / stakeholders' contributions
• Celebration of achievements
• Agreement on next steps
EXTERNAL to the partnership
• Information on partnership lessons learned available to others
• Information on communication lessons learned available to others
• Clearly agreed and implemented set of actions to inform all external audiences of the decisions reached about the future of the partnership
• If the partnership is to continue, ensuring communication planning remains integral
• If the partnership is to end, informing all stakeholders
• Thanking all partners / stakeholders for their contribution
xii
CONTINUING or terminating the partnership
xi
INSTITUTIONALISING the partnership to make the activities more sustainable
• Documenting partnership lessons learned
• Documenting communication lessons learned
• Discussing next steps with partners / stakeholders
x
REVISING the partnership or project
• Amending the communication agreement / ground rules where needed
• Adjusting the communication plan and activities where needed
ix
REVIEWING the partnership and its value
• Reviewing the communication agreement
• Revisiting the communication agreement / ground rules
• Reviewing the communication plan
• Examining partners' roles and effectiveness in communication
viii
MEASURING impacts of the partnership's activities
vii
IMPLEMENTING agreed activities
• Evaluating results of the communication activities
• Obtaining feedback from stakeholders
Phase 3 REVIEWING & REVISING
Potential Communication Outcomes
INTERNAL to the partnership
• Partners' greater awareness of communication effectiveness
• Review of internal communication agreement / ground rules
• Updated picture of partners' roles in communication
• Revised internal communication agreement / ground rules
EXTERNAL to the partnership
• Measure of achievement of communication goals
• Review of external communication plan
• Revised external communication plan
THE PARTNE
TALKING


Phase 1 SCOPING & BUILDING
Potential Communication Outcomes
INTERNAL to the partnership
• Raised awareness of the partnering option
• Shared understanding among interested parties
• Communication channels open
• Exploration of willingness to partner
• Start of building strong working relationships
• Inventory of communication approaches of each partner organisation
• Confirmed internal communication agreement
EXTERNAL to the partnership
• Information on what others are doing already
• Feedback on the idea from key others
• "Due diligence" reviews of potential partners
• Differentiation between "partners" and other "stakeholders"
• Discussion and allocation of any non-partner roles
• Preliminary external communication plan
• Consulting
• Advocating
• Promoting
• Asking lots of questions
• Selecting the right people to talk with
• Making contact with potential partners
• Introducing potential partners to each other
i
SCOPING the idea of a partnership
ii
IDENTIFYING potential partners
• Motivating partners to engage
• Developing communication guidelines / ground rules
iii
BUILDING partner relationships
• Conducting a communication audit (skills and materials)
• Clarifying partners / stakeholders' further communication needs
• Doing communication planning
RING CYCLE
THE WALK
iv
PLANNING the partnership's activities
v
MANAGING the partnership
• Determining responsibility for communication
• Confirming communication channels
vi
RESOURCING the partnership's programme of work
• Initiating the communication plan
• Employing the communication resources
• Agreeing on communication resources required – cash and non-cash
• Mobilising adequate resources to meet communication requirements
Phase 2 MANAGING & MAINTAINING
Potential Communication Outcomes
INTERNAL to the partnership
• Established clear lines of responsibility for communication activities
• Established communication channels
• Communication resources in place
EXTERNAL to the partnership
• Opportunities for input and feedback from key non-partner stakeholders
• Confirmed external communication plan
• External communication activities under way

Partnerships evolve and change over time – their dynamic nature is what distinguishes them from more formal institutional arrangements, and what makes them potentially so valuable. Each phase of a typical partnering cycle requires different communication activities and skills. Communication is about staying in touch and keeping yourself and others informed, about being timely, appropriate and selective. Communication is also about staying curious and about more consciously (and conscientiously) using it as a mechanism for continuing to learn.

Communicating during the Life of the Partnership

Clearly, partnerships evolve and change over time – this is what makes them different to more formal institutional arrangements. Each phase of the Partnering Cycle requires different communication activities and skills (see pages 58-59).

In the rest of this chapter, we discuss the communication aspects in each of the four phases of the Partnering Cycle.

Phase 1. Scoping and Building Communication

At the outset of building effective communication into a partnership, you need to consider several aspects. These include:

Allocation of Responsibilities: Deciding who will do what and when is sometimes hard. People feel enthusiastic and often offer more than they can deliver, particularly when other priorities intervene or where they begin to realise that they do not have (or do not believe they have) the capacities to do their allocated tasks.

Timing: Timing will depend on what the purpose of the communication is and at what stage in the Partnering Cycle a particular form of communication is appropriate. Sectoral or cultural differences may also affect timing – e.g., some sectors wanting to go for external communication at an earlier stage than others, or people from different cultures thinking that explicit communication at a particular point is inappropriate.

Issues Management: Partnering challenges arise when communication is not planned and those involved have not thought ahead about issues resulting from each communication choice made. For example, what issues may surface after an announcement of a campaign launch? How does the group respond to critics? What risk management strategies are in place to deal with unexpected critiques? Have people been overlooked who should have been consulted before making a specific public announcement?

A useful starting point is to conduct a "communication audit" – likely to be highly collaborative in approach and to include all key players, perhaps even at the early exploratory stage in advance of a formal partnering agreement being signed. You might do an audit as part of a start-up workshop or scoping study. Such an audit may be of two types:

- **Skills Audit:** The partners around the table are not necessarily experts on communication. In some cases, it can then be difficult to obtain the necessary information or input on what can be done. You might need to bring in other people from outside the partnership project to provide and further monitor this work.
- **Materials Audit:** You might want to document the print and visual materials that the partner organisations have created to date and that are pertinent to the partnership work. In this process, you're beginning to construct a database of what might be useful to build on later – as well as what might be less useful or to be avoided – and also to identify some obvious gaps to fill at some stage.

Tool 1: Preparation Activities (see page 72) outlines some areas to look at as you prepare to do more planning.

Communication Agreements and Ground Rules

Formally agreeing on how partners will communicate internally and setting ground rules for such communication are aspects that can easily be overlooked. Some partners may also move too quickly to communicating with a wider external audience. Internal communication is often the most vital element for building and maintaining the commitment of the organisations participating in the partnership.

For greater representation, you may want to consult with a diverse group from each partner organisation when you develop your agreements or articulate the ground rules.

Communication Plans[31]

A number of types of communication plan may be of use at various points in a multi-sector partnership's life – for example:

PLAN TYPE[32]	PURPOSE	WHEN TO USE
Strategic communication plan	To determine the communication priorities, actions and resources for the partnership overall	Best developed in conjunction with the partnership agreement and activity or business plan
Operational communication plan	To determine annual priorities, actions and resources	Annually in conjunction with the partnership's budget cycle
Project-specific communication plan	To support programme or project objectives through communication	When the partnership is introducing, amending or terminating particular policies, products, programmes, services, initiatives, etc
Stakeholder relations plan	To define and establish desired relationships with specific stakeholders	In conjunction with the partnership's strategic communication plan or annual operational communication plan
Issue management plan	To effectively prepare for and deal with an issue	When a situation has the potential to be, or already is, publicly controversial for the partnership
Special event plan	To design and logistically coordinate a large or small gathering of people	Any time the partnership is holding an event
Publication terms of reference	To guide production of a publication	Whenever the partnership produces a publication
Crisis communication plan	To guide and control the swift and accurate dissemination of information during a crisis	In an unexpected situation that affects or may affect the health and safety or wellbeing of people involved in the partnership, or that otherwise threatens the partnership

You may decide to develop an overall communication plan that addresses most or all of the areas listed above. Whichever planning approach you take, be clear what you want to accomplish by communicating. Look at each objective in turn and list what strategies are needed to help meet that objective. Each strategy should indicate which objective or objectives it is intended to help realise. The plan would also detail the particular actions or tactics for each strategy. In addition, it should list ways to measure or evaluate the success of each strategy and its relevant actions / tactics – and therefore whether the specific objective has been met. The plan should also state the key messages.

An important aspect of communication is that it is a two-way process – a conversation. Although some of these guidelines refer to your intended "recipients", remember that you too are an intended recipient and should behave accordingly. In other words, know when and how to listen, rather than just how to deliver your own message.

Before you devise a communication plan, you should ask some questions. The answers to these questions will form the basis of your plan, and help ensure greater efficacy of your project and partnership. The questions are listed below for a quick reference, with further suggestions outlined in detail in the section following.

Quick Reference Questions for Your Communication Plan

- Why are you communicating (what are the drivers for your communication; what do you want to achieve)?
- What are you communicating (key messages)?
- Who is your target audience or intended recipients of the communication?
- Who should communicate with the intended recipients?
- When do you need to communicate?
- How will you communicate (what methods are best for different conversations or messages)?
- How much time will your communication take?
- How much will your communication cost, and who will pay?
- What communication skills do you need to develop?

Why Are You Communicating?

People and organisations communicate for many reasons. Sometimes, official reporting requirements necessitate formal communication. Or you may need to publish the results of your project work in scientific journals. Most importantly, though, you will need to communicate with your partners and team members, and with other collaborators and stakeholders. Doing so effectively will help build trust and commitment to the partnership. It will ensure that everyone is aware of current developments, and that project and partnership needs are addressed.

What Are You Communicating?

What you communicate will depend largely on why you are communicating (what you want to achieve). The type of information or level of communication required will vary – compare, for example, the information published in a scientific journal with the needs of a farmer who must understand a new technology or development. Within the partnership, does everyone need to receive the same information? This is the time to think of your key messages – what you are trying to say and to whom.

Who Is Your Target Audience or Intended Recipients of the Communication?

Think about the conversation / information / exchange you need and what outcomes you expect as a result. A targeted audience requires targeted communication. Depending on why and what you are communicating, your audience or recipients will change. In addition to your partners and team members, many other parties (stakeholders) may be interested or require communication. They can include collaborators, farmers, government organisations, policy writers, decision makers, your own organisation, other programme managers, country managers and staff, and other interested organisations such as businesses, research or tertiary education institutes, as well as the general public.

Who Should Communicate with the Intended Recipients?

Don't feel you need to communicate with all people all the time. As Russell Baker put it so beautifully, "The worst thing about the miracle of modern communications is the Pavlovian pressure it places upon everyone to communicate whenever a bell rings".[33] Work out who the best people are to communicate what messages to whom, and plan accordingly. There is nothing as annoying as receiving a multitude of bulk email messages when in reality only one or two people needed the message. Most communication will be carried out by people within the partnership, but sometimes it may be necessary to use other sources to deliver your message (e.g., government

organisations, commercial enterprises, professional designers, publishers). Again, consider *why* and *what* you are communicating – who is best placed to deliver the most positive results?

When Do You Need to Communicate?
How often do you need to communicate for different types of communication? Daily, weekly, monthly or annually? For example, you may need to communicate within your partnership on a daily basis, but your annual report is obviously due only once a year. Think about when you will need to have meetings, conversations, dialogue, information dissemination or workshops with all your different stakeholders – your project team, collaborators, farmers, government institutions, donors, your own organisation, head office, country offices, etc. Ensure you allocate sufficient time for all these different exchanges when designing your project.

How Will You Communicate?
Think about the best way to reach different people, including partner organisations, industry members, managers and community groups. Business, industry and partner countries will want to hear how your partnership work relates to their operations, while government agencies and local councils may want to apply it in policy development. Maybe your work is also of interest to the general public.

How Much Time Will Your Communication Take?
The time you need depends on the type of communication you use. Daily email may only take a few minutes, while seminars or workshops could last up to a day, and a coordinated media program could last several months. In every case, sufficient time and funds must be allocated to adequate preparation. It helps to draft up a timetable of proposed events or publications, so that you can identify any overlaps with personnel or project priorities. Include preparation time on this timetable, and if in doubt, overestimate the amount of time you think will be required.

How Much Will Your Communication Cost?
Typically, communication requirements are under-funded. There is a growing awareness, however, that project budgets should include appropriate allocation for communication. For example, you might allow for tangible items such as project newsletters, information sheets, technical reports and website development. If you are planning more specialised publications such as a book, manual, brochure, educational materials, display or posters, you will need to budget for these (including editing, production and distribution costs). Think about whether you will need any professional assistance (e.g., graphic designer, event coordinator, and website designer or manager), and allow for this if necessary.

Don't forget to allow for time (e.g., because of salaries payable to partnership members). If the time each partner will need to allocate to specific communication activities has not been calculated reasonably accurately, a budget can be blown very quickly.

Not all funds for communication need to come directly out of the project budget. Consult with your prospective partners – they may well have expertise or other items they can provide (e.g., in-house publication facilities, venues for holding workshops and meetings). In-kind contributions of this nature can significantly reduce communication expenses.

What Communication Skills Do You Need to Develop?
Hopefully, during your scoping study or start-up workshop, you will have gained a good understanding of your team's skills gaps. Look for training courses that will help you and the other team members to develop communication skills. Your organisation may also be able to assist with tools and courses.

A Note on Communication Planning for Crisis Situations

Are you prepared for when your communication doesn't work or when the partnership runs into some form of trouble? What will you do in the following situations, for example?

Tool 2: Content and Coverage (see page 73) **gives an outline that you might use as a worksheet in drafting your communication plan.**

Within the Partnership

- The partners aren't communicating well?
- A partner wants to drop out?
- The funding stops unexpectedly?
- A partner acts without first consulting with the other partners (as happened in the logo example on page 30)?

Beyond the Partnership

- A war breaks out in an area where a partnership project is located?
- Members of a village near a project are feeling excluded from the project's activities and are becoming vocal about their dissatisfaction?
- The media attacks one of the partner organisations, resulting in fallout for the partnership?
- The media attacks the partnership or project itself?

You cannot predict everything that a partnership might face during its life, but you can certainly anticipate some of the more common obstacles or difficulties and plan ahead how you will respond in such situations. Being prepared will enable you to act quickly and appropriately in preventing the situation from deteriorating further. Developing a crisis communication plan that clearly outlines your proposed approach – what you will do and who will do it – is a worthwhile investment of time and energy.

For more details on what elements usually appear in a particular plan, consult your communications or public relations department. You will also find useful information in print and on the Internet.

Phase 2. Managing and Maintaining Communication[34]

Even following the principles of communication being some form of conversation, the point will come where you know you have something important to say and you will have a clear idea of who you want to say it to. At this stage you need to make some choices about how best to communicate your messages. You have many options, and you need to think them through and work out which option is best and why. The following aspects will influence your choice:

- Level of intensity of engagement that you are seeking
- Likely level of interest from your target audience in your message
- Audience demographics
- Communication preferences of your target audience
- Type of audience response you are seeking to elicit.

Other contributors to this manual have discussed the value of seeing communication not just as a one-way flow of information but as more of a dialogue. When working out what the best communication method should be, you need to ask yourself: What do I want to achieve as a result of my communication? How can I reach my audiences in a way that will engage them and provoke the responses I seek? How can I encourage that dialogue?

Avenues for Communicating within the Partnering Team

Internal communication is most effective when face-to-face, but you can also use staff newsletters and magazines to good effect. You need to pitch whatever approach you choose at what staff are interested in, not what management wants to preach.

You should ensure regular face-to-face feedback with people who are involved in your project throughout the life of the project (e.g., at weekly meetings). When providing feedback, include broader issues. Seek input into how communication, collaboration, training, capacity building and the budget are going. Often, leaders of projects can be somewhat removed from daily events. If sufficient trust exists, feedback sessions will become an invaluable means of keeping a finger on the pulse.

In particular, team members have the right to know how they and the project are progressing. Equally, team members should be given opportunities to provide feedback to project leaders. But consider cultural norms when providing and receiving feedback.

Avenues for Communicating with a Wider Audience

Spoken Medium

Face-to-face conversations, meetings and presentations are always worth the effort, provided you are well prepared. During the life of the project, you will need to do mid-term and final reviews – these tend to include presentations. Some projects are designed to include seminars and workshops.

What would be the best forum for presenting your progress and the results to date? Maybe a simple outdoor gathering with some food would be best. Think about the country you operate in and its cultural norms. If your work has a specific industry focus, then look for opportunities to present at industry conferences and expositions.

Written Medium

Print publications include magazines and newsletters (at international and partner country levels), technical reports, monographs and books, which serve different communication needs. Which, if any, of these printed products would be suitable for your partnership? If you are intending to produce specialist printed products, you will need to allocate funds in your budget for their production.

Perhaps your work is part of a larger programme and can be included in a combined document. Have you talked to other practitioners in your organisation or sector to explore opportunities to collaborate on this type of publication?

Might you want to use existing communication avenues, such as an industry newsletter with an established circulation? This could be a direct, cost-effective link to an external target audience.

Visual Medium

If your target audience is the local farming community, then your printed material should be in an appropriate style. Think about using pictorial rather than written formats, such as posters and brochures.

A sophisticated way to communicate, if available, is by videoconference (which is both visual and spoken). Depending on time differences and costs, this may not be possible, but it is worth considering regular videoconferences (or teleconferences) as part of your communication strategy.

Electronic Medium

Many partnership projects have their own website / Internet forum for the duration of the project. The Internet is an ideal medium for reporting on progress and results, as a broad target audience can access it. Think about how you might best present this information on the Web.

One major difference in formats is that readability online is reduced by about 50% compared with print,[35] and most users scan online text rather than read it word for word. So you should halve the number of words in any text destined for posting online. It means that you can't write a

document for print publication and then expect it to serve as your online text also – with the exception of pdf files that you park on a website for readers to download and print.

Email is possibly the most common form of communication used by project partnerships. It is quick and easy, crosses international boundaries and, depending on the user, may be accessed 24 hours a day. However, do make sure that email really is the best medium for your communication. Many countries have limited or fragmented email service provision. In addition, not everyone uses the same email protocols.

Be sure that you are aware of any technical limitations, and establish email rules from the start of the project. In particular, make sure everyone knows who will be included on what email groups. It is also a good idea to set up an email acknowledgement protocol – something simple like "I received your email; will respond by [date]" is extremely effective and helps reduce confusion over whether emails have been received or not.

Cell-phones can also be a useful avenue. One project did most of its international communication by text messages because there was no email provision and standard telephone lines were patchy at best.

The Communication Mix

Of course, the likelihood is that you will want to use a mixture of the communication options available to you. For example, you may decide to produce a report for a targeted number of people, and then use the report to gain media coverage and thereby reach a wider audience. The following table lists some of the more common options.

Communication Options

Spoken: 1-to-1 meetings • Audiotapes • CDs • Conferences • Interviews • Media events • Partnership meetings • Phone calls • Presentations • Public meetings • Public service announcements • Radio newscasts • Site visits • Workshops

Written: Adverts • Books • manuals • Brochures • Case studies • Email • Listservs • Fact sheets • Faxes • Feature articles • Interviews (e.g., newspapers, magazines) • Mailouts • Media releases • Newsletters • Reports • Testimonials

Visual: Artifacts • Billboards • Cartoons • Charts, graphs • Exhibitions • Logos • Paintings • Photographs • Posters • Slides • TV • Video • Videoconferencing

Electronic *(mix of written, visual and sometimes spoken)*: Blogs • CD-ROMs, DVDs • Internet, websites • Newsgroups • PowerPoint presentations • Text messaging • Wikis

Practical engagement such as project exchanges and secondments are also opportunities to communicate, so that participants can "understand by doing".

You will have no single correct solution to communicating your messages. Test different methods, seek feedback and don't be afraid to change. If a media campaign just isn't working, then work out why – and if necessary, use something else. If you don't have the budget for a report, then do something cheaper.

Flexibility, and above all, creativity are the best assets to have and will ensure that your messages get across as best as possible.

Tool 8: Options and Considerations (see page 79) looks at a number of options in more detail, suggesting some of their benefits and drawbacks.

Although this manual refers to target audiences and target groups, communication is about individuals, not groups. Whether you produce a report, newsletter or event, think of the target audience as a collection of individuals – and spend some time identifying who the individuals are and how you will reach them.

Ultimately, communicating is something that we all do every day. When you elect to pick up the phone rather than arranging a face-to-face meeting, or when you send a text message instead of emailing, you have decided which approach suits your needs – and what action you are hoping to provoke.

A Note on the Media

The media (press, radio, television, etc) can be an enormous asset to partnerships. Used well, the media can help promote project activities and outcomes, and ensure collaborators' contributions and policy directives are known to the general public.

People often consider the media to be an audience – though some argue that they are in fact an avenue to your real target audiences. However you view the media, you do need to remember that you have little control over what they will do with your communication – and no guarantee that they will use your information in the ways that you hope or even that your messages will reach the people you're targeting.

Usually, your organisation will have rules about dealing with the media. You therefore must seek advice from both your organisation and your partner organisations before undertaking any media engagement. If you think the media will be a valuable communication avenue, you may want to consider hiring in professional assistance. You don't want to invest time and money in preparing media releases or organising media events that are unlikely to attract the attention of journalists or producers.

Phase 3. Reviewing and Revising Communication

Will your investment in communication pay off? How will you as a partnership practitioner know whether you have achieved your own and the partnership's communication goals? What might be your success indicators for communicating in, around and beyond the partnership? What evidence do you have of poor communication having serious negative impacts on the partners, the partnership or the project? What evidence do you have that flexible, intentional, authentic communication has turned a struggling partnership into a force for achieving significant sustainable development?

As a partnership you will want to assess the value and effectiveness of your communication efforts by reviewing the following:

- Overall communication programme / plan implementation
- Communication concepts you selected
- Communication options / vehicles you chose to use
- Quality of the materials used
- Impact on your target audiences
- Wider outcomes of your plan.

Additional questions to consider might include:

- How do you allow for personnel changes?
- What do you do if your "champion" leaves?
- What are the separate feedback or evaluation requirements of each partner?
- Does investment in communication work? How do you know?

Reviewing is a useful way to reflect on what you've been doing and to adjust as needed. The focus is less on accomplishment as performance, and more on learning as a process. It's not a pass / fail matter, but an integral part of managing the work. The intention is not to set down firm rules or try to think of or take care of *everything* ahead of time – after all, it is a living process.

You may also be pleasantly surprised to have a beneficial outcome that you weren't anticipating. The work is not always about anticipating the worst or about everything going off the rails.

Methods available for measuring audience satisfaction can be either formal or informal. A formal approach might involve focus group testing or a survey conducted by phone or email, or it could simply be in the form of a participant feedback questionnaire. Informal research (but nevertheless valuable and valid) may include ad hoc conversations in the meal queue or at the coffee table, or on an airplane or train journey home, as well as unsolicited written comments in a follow-up email or phone call.

Reviewing the Communication Agreement

A review of the communication agreement provides a useful opportunity for partners to review and renew their commitment to communicate well and maintain their conversations. It may reveal some core challenges to the partnership that merit further attention, including:

- Partners viewing the partnership as an imposed model (leading to them being compliant rather than committed).
- The partnership being rather out on a limb and not well integrated into the mainstream work of the partner organisations.
- The partnership lacking genuine commitment, either from individuals or their organisations, so the communication element is just not given priority.
- The communication efforts not benefiting (or being seen to benefit) individual partner organisations in ways they would value or want.

Tool 9: Communication Assessment Tool (see page 80) lists some ways that you can monitor and evaluate your communication efforts and their impact on your target audiences.

Reviewing the Communication Plans

In addition to reviewing your main communication plan, you may want to look again at any or all of the other plans that you've also created – e.g., a crisis communication plan. The kinds of review questions you might ask are as follows:

For Annual or Ongoing Plans

- Did we carry out the actions as outlined? What didn't we do?
- How well did we use the available resources?
- Any gaps that we need to fill or improvements we need to make to the current plan or to the next plan of this type that we develop?

For One-off Plans

- Did we carry out the actions as outlined? What didn't we do?
- How well did we use the available resources?
- How might we amend this plan the next time we do something similar?

For Plans That You Hope You Won't Need

- If you did need the plans, was the approach appropriate and useful?
- If you didn't need the plans, is the approach still relevant?

Communicating Your Findings

Is doing the assessment itself another opportunity to communicate? If so, consciously use it as such. Also, don't forget to communicate what you learn from your assessment – for example, did the fact that you invested time in preparing an excellent a PowerPoint presentation and some handouts convey to and convince your audience that you were serious about your partnership and its work?

You must also leave time to reflect on what to do if it becomes clear that you have not communicated effectively. What if your review suggests that you did not meet your communication objectives? Do you have – or should you create – a contingency plan?

Phase 4. Sustaining Communication Outcomes

Of course, no communication is ever perfect but we can all strive to improve and we can create an environment in which reflecting on and being somewhat self-critical may give us and our partners a great opportunity for some shared learning and, by default, some further partnership building.

There is a growing view that the most successful and sustainable partnerships have the capacity for learning (essentially by internalising and building on experience). Internalising lessons from a communication review may be an effective way of building learning as a sustaining value of the partnership work. Such lessons will also bolster the value of communication within the partnership's future operations.

As well as building the partnership by encouraging the partners to share their learning, assessing and sharing how effectively (or not) the partnership is communicating will help the partners understand what they may need to do differently in the way they work together in future.

Reviewing the partnership's communication efforts is a good opportunity to reflect on where the partnership is headed and what the next steps might be in the partnership's life.





8. Tools for Communicating in Partnerships

The tools in this chapter are as follows:

Communication Planning
Tool 1: Preparation Activities
Tool 2: Content and Coverage

Communicating within the Partnership
Tool 3: Needs Analysis for Individual Partners
Tool 4: Tips for Successful Partner Meetings

Communicating beyond the Partnership
Tool 5: Key Questions and Considerations
Tool 6: Managing External Relationships

Communication Methods
Tool 7: Document Checklist
Tool 8: Options and Considerations

Monitoring and Evaluation
Tool 9: Communication Assessment Tool

Note: These tools are meant as guidelines. We suggest you freely adapt them to suit your particular needs and circumstances. Soft versions of these tools are available online at www.ThePartneringInitiative.org.

Tool 1: Preparation Activities

INFORMATION

Needs:	**What are each partner's communication needs and preferences?** *(See Tool 3: Needs Analysis for Individual Partners)*
Skills:	**What communication skills and resources can each partner bring to this work?**
Materials:	**Is there a bank of materials that you can draw from in communicating to a range of audiences, in a variety of situations? If not, who might help compile one?**

FRAMEWORK FOR THE PLAN

Plan Focus:	**Are you creating a communication plan for the partnership overall or for a specific activity?**
Type of Plan:	**Do you need to do an umbrella communication plan covering the life of the partnership, or is the need for one or more plans to meet specific purposes, such as an annual plan or a crisis communication plan?** **Will your first step be to develop a specific plan or agreement for communicating with your internal audiences (to inform, ensure buy-in, etc)?** **Will you then create one plan for your external audiences or tailor a series of plans for specific external audiences?**

LOGISTICS

Lead:	**Who will take the lead in preparing for the communication planning?** **Will it be one partner or representatives from all partners?**
Timing:	**When is the best time for the communication planning?** **Will this timing suit all the participants?**
Number of Sessions:	**Should the communication planning happen as one session or as several sessions?** **If the latter, when will each session happen and what will each session cover?**
Plan Outline:	**How will you structure your planning session or sessions?** **What questions might you ask as prompts?** *(See Tool 2: Content and Coverage)*
Participants:	**Who should participate in the planning process?**
Facilitation:	**Who will facilitate the planning session or sessions?** **Will it be an internal or external person or team?**
Writing and Editing:	**Who will compile and oversee the writing and editing of the plan?**
Signing Authority:	**Who will sign off on the plan?**
Costs:	**How will partners share the costs of the planning session or sessions?**

Note: We suggest that preparation for a communication plan should start as soon as partners have agreed on goals / objectives for the partnership and are close to signing a partnering agreement.

Tool 2: Content and Coverage

Background to the Plan
- What are the partnership's goals / objectives?
- What activities has the partnership undertaken to date?
- How are the partners already communicating? What tools are they using?
- What media coverage has the partnership had to date?
- What communication research has the partnership carried out (if any)?

Communication Objectives
- What do you / the partners hope to accomplish by communicating?
- What do you / the partners want your audiences or stakeholders to say, do, think or feel as a result of your communication?
- What responses are you hoping for from the people you're communicating with?

Communication Strategies
(the strategies should specially address the communication objectives that you've already identified)
- Can you suggest some effective ways of reaching the partnership's audiences?
- How best can the partnership reach its communication objectives?
- How can the partnership best capitalise on its strengths / opportunities?
- How can the partnership best minimise its weaknesses / threats?

Vulnerabilities / Opportunities (SWOT*)
Internal
- What do you see as the key strengths of the partnership?
- What do you see as the key weaknesses of the partnership?

External
- What opportunities do you see for the partnership?
- What threats do you see for the partnership?
- Do you have any competitors?
- Can you estimate the risks (of your suggested actions)?

Audiences
- Who will be affected by this partnership and in what way?
- Who do you think needs to know about the partnership work?
- Who do you think would like to know about the partnership work?
- Whom does the partnership need to tell about its work?
- Who are the partnership's internal audiences? Who are its external audiences?
- Who are the partnership's primary audiences? Who are its secondary audiences?

Key Messages
(3-5 succinct statements that the partnership will use repeatedly in its communication)
- Does the partnership have any positioning statements already?
- What does the partnership want its audiences to know and to remember?
- What are the benefits for the audiences? ("What's in it for me?")
- If I were your next-door neighbour, what would you say to get me to …?

Action Plan
- What specific actions are needed for each communication strategy?
- Who is responsible for each of these actions – who will do what, and by when?
- What is the targeted completion date for each action?
- Do you need to group the actions according to the intended audience or audiences?

Communication Materials
- What are the tangible "products" for each strategy?
- What existing communication materials or tools do you need to use?
- What new communication materials or tools do you need to produce?

Needed Resources
- What financial resources do you need to implement the communication plan (or each strategy)?
- What human resources do you need to implement the plan (or each strategy)?
- Do you need to provide communication training and build capacity to deliver the plan?
- Do you need in-kind resources (e.g., donation of computers, office space)?
- Have you already budgeted for these resources? Are they new items?

Spokespeople
- Who is the most appropriate person or people to speak on behalf of the partnership?

Outcomes and Impacts
- **Measures of success** – How will you measure the communication plan's success? ("Did we accomplish what we set out to do"?)
- **Methods of measurement** – What methods will you use to measure the outcomes?
- **Methods of control** – How will you monitor the plan's implementation to ensure it's on track?

Plan Oversight
- Who will have key responsibility to oversee the plan?

Note: This outline is illustrative only – headings and questions can be changed to suit specific circumstances.

* A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning tool used to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats that may impact a project or other venture.

Tool 3: Needs Analysis for Individual Partners

Partner Organisation: **Date:**

Who is asking the questions?

For what purpose?

PART 1: Communication Profile of the Partner Organisation

1.1 What are the organisation's current communication protocols?

1.2 What opportunities does the organisation have for communicating?

1.3 What resources, skills and channels are available for communication?

1.4 Are there key messages that the organisation wants to communicate?

1.5 What response(s) does the organisation hope for as a result of its communication activity?

1.6 How does the organisation prefer to communicate? Give specific examples, if you can.

1.7 Are there specialist communication staff in the organisation? Are outside communication consultants used?

1.8 Are there communication "champions" in the organisation? If so, who?

1.9 Does the organisation have any "non-negotiables" in terms of communication issues? If so, what are they?

PART 2: The Partner Organisation's Internal Stakeholders

2.1 List the organisation's internal stakeholders.

You could use a visual prompt, such as the org chart, to identify those who need to be influenced, engaged or informed. This could include mapping the relationships among the stakeholders and also their communication strengths.

2.2 Which of these internal stakeholders are priorities for communication about the partnership? List in order of priority, or cluster them as either "primary" or "secondary" target audiences.

For each internal stakeholder, ask the following questions:

2.3 What does the internal stakeholder need to know about the partnership work? Why?

2.4 What should other partners be aware of about this internal stakeholder that might influence how the partnership itself communicates?

2.5 How might the partnership create appropriate communications for this internal stakeholder?

2.6 Who is responsible for communicating about the partnership with this internal stakeholder?

2.7 Will this internal stakeholder expect to be consulted on the partnership's activities? If yes, how often and in what form?

2.8 Will this internal stakeholder expect feedback about the partnership? If yes, what, how often and in what form?

PART 3: The Partner Organisation's External Stakeholders

3.1 List the organisation's external stakeholders.

You could use a visual prompt to map who needs to be influenced or informed, using different colours to indicate different needs.

3.2 Which of these external stakeholders are priorities for the organisation in terms of communicating about the partnership? List in order of priority, or cluster them as either "primary" or "secondary" target audiences.

For each external stakeholder, ask the following questions:

3.3 What does your external stakeholder need to know about the partnership work? Why?

3.4 What should other partners be aware of about this external stakeholder that might have some bearing on how the partnership communicates about its work?

3.5 How might the partnership create appropriate communications for this external stakeholder?

3.6 Who is responsible for communicating about the partnership with this external stakeholder?

3.7 Will the external stakeholder expect to be consulted on the partnership's activities? If yes, how often and in what form?

3.8 Will this external stakeholder expect feedback about the partnership? If yes, what, how often and in what form?

Note: This tool can be used in several ways – for example:

- As a prompt for partner representatives to ask themselves what they know about their organisation's communication needs and priorities.
- As a guide for a partnership manager or broker to lead a formal or informal conversation with partner representatives from each partner organisation.
- As the framework for a print or online questionnaire that each partner representative can complete to be shared with the group in due course.

Tool 4: Tips for Successful Partner Meetings

Before the Meeting

1. Ensure that the **appropriate person / people** have been invited from each partner organisation.
2. Consider whether **key (non-partner) others** should also be invited (e.g., relevant specialists, government officials, policy-makers, donors).
3. Have a **list of all participants** (noting the organisation they represent, their role within the organisation and their relationship to the partnership), to ensure that all those at the meeting know who is present and why.
4. Be sensitive to any particular **cultural or other considerations** that may impact the way the meeting is conducted.
5. Agree that the **meeting outline (agenda) and format** are discussed with participants ahead of time, to avoid (or at least minimise) surprises and to enable those involved to prepare in advance.
6. Request that **relevant issues** are well researched beforehand, so the group is informed as fully as possible about the issues.
7. Identify **talking points**,* particularly for more important, formal or challenging meetings.
8. Make sure the **meeting venue** is accessible and welcoming.
9. **Arrive on time** and encourage others to do so too.

During the Meeting

1. Ask **questions** (more than once, if necessary) such as:
   - What are we trying to achieve?
   - What value does this collaboration / project have for us?
   - What timelines / constraints are there?
   - Have we considered…?
   - What do you think?
   - Is that your personal opinion, an organisational perspective or a general view?
2. Seek / give **clarification** of issues or points raised in the meeting.
3. Confirm your **understanding** of what is being said by paraphrasing comments, asking questions, summarising the status to date, etc.
4. Keep **options open** to widen discussion where appropriate.
5. Push for **clarification / definitive viewpoints / closure** when necessary (e.g., a decision is needed).
6. Allow **time for expression** by all present, including expressions of anxiety or dissatisfaction.
7. Propose **potential ways forward** – but accept that each participant must feel free to make their own decisions or (more likely) decisions arising from their organisation's priorities.
8. Check **agreement and apparent understanding** of all parties about meeting outcomes and actions going forward.

After the Meeting

1. Check that the nominated person has circulated **summary notes of the meeting** to all participants; include a clear **action list** (what, who, by when).
2. Check that **anyone else who needs to know** about the outcomes of the meeting has been informed.
3. Ensure a **system is in place** to hold those people to account for completing the actions they have agreed to undertake.

Note: Adapted from Catriona Murray (2007). *Cultures and Cultivation of Communication: An Exploration of International Partnerships.* Final paper prepared as part of the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (PBAS).

* "Talking points" are ideas or facts, usually summarised in a short list, that support an argument or discussion.

Tool 5: Key Questions and Considerations

KEY QUESTIONS	ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS	POSSIBLE RESPONSES
Partners		
What are the partners' different needs and expectations?	Is each partner organisation most concerned with: • Reaching a key group of decision-makers? • Reaching as wide an audience as possible, to cover costs (e.g., when selling a book or places at an event)? • Having media coverage, to raise its profile or enhance its reputation?	Tailor your communication as needed, to address the particular needs and expectations of each partner organisation.
What communication resources does each of the partners bring?	Do the needed communication resources include the following: • Human resources? • Mailing databases? • Media contacts and know-how? • Authority or credibility on a subject?	Identifying what resources are available will allow your communication to have more impact.
Target Groups		
How many people are you trying to reach?	• Do you know the people you're aiming to reach and so have their contact details? • Or do you know the type of person you want to reach, but the group is too big to contact directly?	• If your audience is very focused, then holding an event or doing a direct email may be the best option. • If you want to reach a much larger, less focused group, gaining coverage in the media could be a better route.
How open to your communication is your audience?	• Are you communicating with a group you regularly interact with, and that expect communication to and from you? • Or are you trying to reach people who may not have heard of you or who wouldn't expect you to be in touch?	• If it is the former, think in terms of a marketing approach, such as direct mail. • If it is the latter, think in terms of advertising or public relations.
What medium will work well for your audience and your messages?	• Do your audiences want something they can hold or something electronic? • How complex are your messages?	• Find out whether the endorsement that media coverage provides would be more effective. • Decide if you need to use images to back up the messages.
Logistics		
Do you have a budget?	• Have you thought your approach through, so you can get a good return for your investment?	• A report can look great, plus have a long shelf life – but it can also take months to write, design and print. • A website can be relatively cheap to produce, but needs money spent on marketing and upkeep or no one will visit it.
What are the timing considerations you need to be aware of?	• What deadlines do you need to be especially careful to meet? • How long do you want your messages to be visible for?	• Consider the lead times for writing, designing and printing, or for sending out invites, or the copy deadlines for journalists. • Some approaches (e.g., events and media coverage) create a big splash; other approaches (e.g., reports) have more longevity.
The Role of Dialogue		
How can you make your communication two-way?	• If you are holding an event, how do you get the diversity of voices you want? • How do you move beyond "send-and-receive" communication (e.g., presentations or speeches) into "dialogue", where everyone present is able to participate and contribute?	• All your communication should be based around dialogue, because you will be aiming to provoke an action – such as a change of attitude, or a funding commitment. • Electronic channels have the potential to support dialogue and two-way communication – e.g., through online polls or by blogs. With creativity, these concepts can apply to more traditional channels too.

Tool 6: Managing External Relationships

STEP **1**

Analyse the Situation

1. List all external groups or organisations that can influence the partnership economically, socially, politically and culturally.
2. Circulate the list of these groups / organisations throughout the partner organisations, to gain input and to ensure that you have identified all key target audiences.
3. Conduct roundtable discussions or surveys with members of the partner organisations on their perceptions of the relationship with each target audience, to give a basis for comparison.
4. Conduct focus groups or surveys with target audience members, to identify their needs, and their perceptions of both the partnership and the audience's relationship with the partnership.
5. Compare the perceptions of the two groups – partner organisation members and target audience members – to identify areas of agreement, as well as of divergence.

2

Plan Partnership and Communication initiatives

1. Create an advisory panel of community members and organisational members to review the information gathered through the use of roundtables, focus groups and surveys.
2. In conjunction with the advisory panel, develop partnership initiatives that are responsive to the audiences' needs.
3. Design communication programmes to disseminate information regarding the partnership's plans.
4. Encourage decision-makers and influencers to act as spokespersons for the partnership initiatives.
5. Pre-test the initiatives with a randomly selected sample of members of key audiences.
6. Arrange for the panel members to meet at least quarterly, to provide continuous feedback and to suggest any necessary adjustments to the partnership initiatives and communication programmes.

3

Implement the Relationship-Building Activities

1. Initiate the partnership initiatives and communication programmes.
2. Publicise the partnership initiatives through traditional communication channels such as media advisories and speaker's bureaus and through electronic channels such as the Internet.

4

Monitor Progress to Date

1. Periodically monitor the impact of the partnership initiatives and communication programmes:
   - Track the degree to which each target audience believes that the partnership initiatives are so far meeting its needs.
   - Track any changes in each target audience's perceptions of the partnership.
2. Modify the partnership initiatives and the communication programmes as suggested by the target audience members' responses.

5

Evaluate the Initiatives

Answer the following five questions:

1. Have the partnership initiatives met the audiences' needs? If so, how?
2. Should the partnership continue to target those needs, or should it be addressing other needs?
3. Have the initiatives benefited each target audience's relationship with the partnership? If so, how?
4. Have there been any positive gains in each target audience's perceptions of its relationship with the partnership? If so, what?
5. Are the initiatives generating benefit for the partnership, as well as for the target audiences? If so, how?

Note: Adapted from John L Ledington & Stephen D Bruning (2001). Managing community relationships to maximize mutual benefit: Doing well by doing good. In Robert L Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of Public Relations* (ch. 45, pp. 527-534). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.

Tool 7: Document Checklist

Have you...

1. Focused on your audience?

- ☐ Tailored your communication to people who may know much less than you do on the topic?
- ☐ Clarified what you want people to think, feel, say or do as a result of your communication?

2. Organised the information?

- ☐ Determined the overall key message or theme for your communication, whatever the medium?
- ☐ Decided which are your important points and which are secondary points?
- ☐ Developed a user-friendly structure for your communication (e.g., chronological order when describing a sequence of events)?
- ☐ Used headings to indicate the different levels of the logic?
- ☐ Told readers where you are headed (provided a "roadmap"), so they don't have to guess what comes next? For example, have you introduced the section headings before the sections begin?
- ☐ Used no more than seven or eight elements in any list? *If you have a long list, cluster the elements in shorter lists of related items.*

3. Constructed effective paragraphs?

- ☐ Given one main idea or point per paragraph?
- ☐ Kept paragraphs concise – below 10 lines or so on average?
- ☐ Linked sentences within a paragraph with transitional expressions (e.g., "in addition"; "for this reason"; "for example")?
- ☐ Also linked paragraphs with transitional expressions (e.g., "to continue this theme"; "a third principle"; "however")?

4. Crafted clear sentences?

- ☐ Ensured each sentence links with the main idea of the paragraph it appears in?
- ☐ Varied your sentence length? *Long sentences that are clear and well constructed are fine, but don't overuse them. As a general principle, keep sentences shorter, rather than longer.*
- ☐ Used the active voice whenever possible, and stated who is doing the action?
- ☐ Conveyed your message positively?

5. Chosen words carefully?

- ☐ Used straightforward and familiar words and phrases?
- ☐ Chosen action verbs over nouns or noun phrases?
- ☐ Avoided chains of nouns?
- ☐ Cut out unnecessary words?
- ☐ Avoided jargon and unfamiliar acronyms and expressions?
- ☐ Explained complicated ideas, technical terms? *Short isn't always best.*

6. Used a reader-friendly design?

- ☐ Kept the text large enough to read easily?
- ☐ Broken up the text with headings?
- ☐ Left additional white space?
- ☐ Added illustrations where appropriate?

Note: This tool draws on plain language principles and applies to most forms of writing, whatever the avenue or medium.

Tool 8: Options and Considerations

OPTION	CONSIDERATION
SPOKEN	
Community meeting	A good way to ensure two-way communication. Can be open or selective depending on the issue.
Event	A form of public relations that can engage if effectively managed, but needs to be carefully planned. Save it for major announcements.
Focus group	Useful for research and ensures two-way communication.
Information phone line or helpline	Usually necessary for managing an issue affecting target publics.
Presentation	Good for internal audiences (e.g., steering committee, senior management), particularly at the beginning and end of projects.
Radio	Highly effective for disseminating information fast. Speech is the dominant element, so clarity of message is vital.
WRITTEN	
Advertisement	Can be expensive and hard to measure effectiveness. Needs to "break through the clutter". Different messages suit different media (print or electronic).
Advertising feature / supplement	Can be effective for specific or special campaigns, but needs the support of advertisers to cover costs.
Direct mail	Letters to affected publics that are pitched at their specific needs and concerns.
Email	Generally a medium that is good for relaying information, but not for communication. Need to be selective about what you email and avoid "spamming".
Letterbox drop	Most people don't read unsolicited material in their letterboxes from those they don't know.
Media release	Easy, but not always effective, as relies on media filters, may not be run and is inaccessible to most audiences. Sometimes, individual interviews are more effective. Think in pictures when trying to attract media coverage.
Pamphlet / brochure	Are they really needed? Think of options, such as fact sheets, flyers, letters, the Web. What are the shelf life and the likely print run? (Always show publication dates.)
VISUAL	
Billboard	A form of public advertisement.
Public displays	In places where people can stop to talk – e.g., shopping malls, community centres.
ELECTRONIC	
CD-ROM / videotape	Useful for training purposes or special marketing. CDs can be a cost-effective alternative to print publications.
Internet site	Very effective if promoted properly. Allows 24-hour, seven-day access, and people can browse to the depth that suits their interests.
OTHER	
"Piggybacking"	Attaching the communication to a different activity to maximise impact and reach – e.g., educational events, health and leisure activities, raves and rallies, interest groups, local councils, etc, can help carry messages into the community.
Through opinion makers	Use of industry associations and community leaders to relay information often adds credibility to the message and makes use of their internal communication channels.
Word of mouth	Can be both positive and negative.

Note: Adapted from a communication planning template developed by Helen Fenney, independent partnership broker, Australia.
This list is illustrative only; it does not include every possible method or route for communicating.

Tool 9: Communication Assessment Tool

A. Tracking Implementation

Tracking

Media release ready by …
Written materials ready for distribution by …
Research completed by …
Communication activities (e.g., event plan) completed by …

Counting

Number of website hits
Number of enquiries
Number of surveys / questionnaires returned
Number of requests for your publications (quantity, plus who requesting)
Attendance at an event

Record-keeping

Kept a record of stakeholder responses, media clippings, copies of publications, website hits, etc

B. Measuring Impact

Stakeholders / Audiences

Participation (counting; with benchmarks)
Opinion change (with benchmarks)
Usage

Media

Media coverage (counting)
Media monitoring and analysis – tone, placement, quantity, frequency

C. Assessing Stakeholder / Audience Satisfaction

Formal Research

Focus group testing
Phone or mail survey
Reader feedback questionnaire

Informal Research

Conversations at the dinner table or in the coffee queue; on an airplane or bus; during a site visit

D. Creating an Appropriate Survey*

Approach

Before

1. Articulate what exactly you want to measure with the survey form.
2. Select the channel / format / delivery method for delivering the survey (electronic, telephone interviews, face-to-face) and also for presenting the results later (e.g., oral presentation, written report, summary posted online).
3. Construct the survey – create a new form or, if relevant, adapt an existing form.
4. Finalise the wording and format (with whomever you need to consult with).
5. Identify and compile a list of possible survey respondents.

During

6. Depending on the delivery method, distribute, post or administer the survey.

After

7. Collect the results and analyse them.
8. Present the results in the selected format.
9. Follow up on whatever actions are decided as a result.

*Survey Questions***

Distribution

- Did they receive a copy of the report (or whatever form of communication you are evaluating)?
- How did they receive the report?
- Did they read it?

Understandability

- Was the report readable / inviting?
- Did it make sense?
- Did it answer all their questions?

Preferred Accessibility

- Would they prefer to receive such a report in print? Online?

Appearance Rating

- Did they find the typeface readable? Was the text size appropriate?
- Were the graphic design elements suitable? Did they make an impact?

Impact

- How did they respond to the report? What did they think, feel, say or do as a result of reading it?

Overall Satisfaction

- Were they satisfied overall with the event report? (rate on a Likert scale of 1-5)

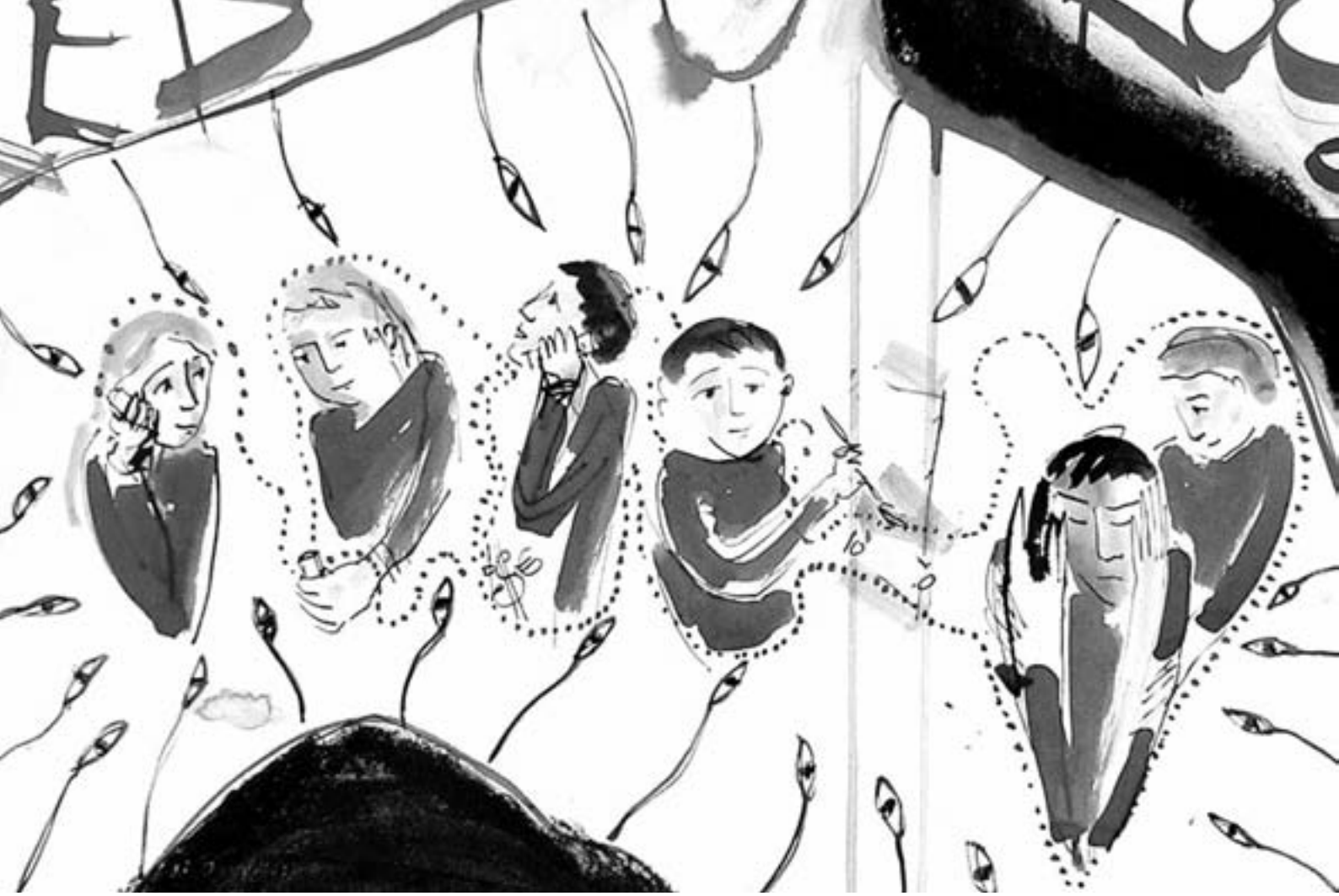
Other

- What worked?
- What didn't work?
- What should we do differently next time?
- Any other comments?

Note: The items or measures in each section are examples only and are not intended to be exhaustive. You will need to select which measures to use for the partnering work overall; each partner organisation will need to tailor the measures to suit its particular requirements for feedback.

* The point of listing these steps is because each of the steps requires time and resources (money, equipment, people, etc). Check that you build in enough time to prepare for and carry out your assessment.

** The questions are to prompt your thinking and do not constitute actual survey questions.



9. Stories from the Front Line

The best way to learn is from experience, and for this reason we invited a number of practitioners to write up their experiences, to illustrate a range of core communication issues from their first-hand partnering practice.

Responding to Partners' "Right to Know"

BY RAFAL SERAFIN, DIRECTOR, POLISH ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIP FOUNDATION

How should partners best agree on what is to be communicated? Who should decide, and on what basis should they do so?

One way of responding to these questions is to think of communication in terms of the "right to know" – an obligation to inform each other as partners and also the wider public about how the partnership delivers public benefit.

For instance, BP, the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation and Groundwork set up a business–NGO partnership in Poland in the late 1990s by to help small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) improve their environmental performance and participate in community-based sustainable development. The three partners included statements of their respective motivations for entering into the project in a partnership agreement. They agreed to make it a public document. In the agreement, they identified a set of "restricted matters" that all partners would have to agree on. One of the restricted matters addressed was the partnership's external communication. Subsequently, the partners agreed to focus communication on the project's role in generating the public benefits that had resulted from the Polish SMEs' improved environmental performance and their contributions to advancing Polish economic and social reforms.[36]

As a further example, a project to promote social economy along the Amber Trail Greenway in Poland, organised by the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation with funding from the European Union's EQUAL Initiative, is being implemented as a cross-sector partnership aimed at increasing the employability of disadvantaged young people in rural areas. The 14 partners represent local governments, civic groups and businesses. In the interests of transparency, the partnership established an elaborate procedure for decision making among all 14 partners, along with a comprehensive system of financial and implementation reporting demanded by EU funders. The focus on process rather than outcomes has resulted in an inflexible management structure that has made it difficult for individual partners and the partnership as a whole to respond to the project beneficiaries' changing needs and circumstances. What's more, communication about the process, and not the outcomes, has worked against building a climate of public support for social economy solutions to dealing with the exclusion of young people and women from the labour market in Poland's rural areas.

So how should partners typically approach the right to know in a cross-sector partnership?

In such a partnership, the partners may be deemed to have a right to know about, for example, each other's needs, circumstances and motivations, to the extent that these may impact how effectively the partnership can deliver on its goals. Similarly, the wider constituency involved in and affected by the activities of the partnership may be deemed to have a right to know something about the motivations, value-added and performance of the partnership, compared with other routes to achieving the same goals. In addition, there will be those in the media, government and civil society who will expect to be kept informed and even involved in the work of the partnership.

Responding to the right to know of both the partners and the wider public requires a partnership to decide explicitly what access it will provide to the following:

- Records and documents, such as plans, budgets, agreements, minutes of meetings and review documents
- Decision-making mechanisms, such as meetings and forums, where the partnership's operations are debated and resolved
- Activities that the partners undertake in the field
- Information about progress in achieving project outcomes.

Cross-sector partnerships should be open and transparent in their operations, to the extent that they strive to deliver public benefit. Indeed, at their best they should offer a model of transparency in practice. Yet it is important to recognise that even the most open cross-sector partnership will require some measure of secrecy or confidentiality in its day-to-day functioning. In this regard, it is essential for each of the partners to explicitly distinguish which of its activities should be treated as part of the partnership and which activities remain outside of it. This distinction is not easy to make and is never a "once-and-for-all" matter. But deciding what belongs within the partnership and what does not requires ongoing definition and redefinition in response to changes both in the partners' needs and circumstances and in the situation or context in which the partnership is striving to deliver results.

For instance, Coca-Cola and the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation have established the "Drop of the Beskidy Fund", a small grants fund to promote community action on protecting water heritage in Poland's Beskidy Mountains. The Fund was developed as a cross-sector partnership of local governments, civic groups and regulatory bodies. Operating successfully for three years, the Fund has generated several community-based projects to revitalise local water heritage. In the process, Coca-Cola and the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation separated out the partnership initiative from their other respective operations to create joint ownership of the Fund by inviting local governments, civic groups and water regulators to serve as the partnership's advisory board. The Fund does not depend on any single partner for communication, which is the responsibility of the advisory board. Each year in defining an activity plan for the coming year, all the partners must redefine their priorities, roles and contributions, and propose new ways of communicating these to the wider public. All activities of the Fund, including financial matters and decision-making processes, are fully open to public scrutiny. ●

Communicating with Communities

BY ANURADHA, MANAGER – OPERATIONS, MARAL OVERSEAS LTD, INDIA[37]

The average farm family growing cotton in India comprises around six people subsisting on a smallholding of 3-6 acres. The farmers, who are both male and female, are often poor and 60% of them are illiterate. Most of the profits from the sale of their cotton go to middlemen; in addition, many of the farmers are tied into high-interest loans (e.g., 3% per month) that cost them more than they earn for their cotton.

Compounding the farmers' difficulties is that cotton, one of the most intensive crops to cultivate, accounts for 60% of all toxic chemicals used in India. Synthetic fertilisers and pesticides pollute the groundwater and exhaust the soil, requiring increasingly larger applications each year to ensure the same yield. In addition, the chemicals cause diseases (ranging from skin and eye irritations, to cancer) among farmers, farm labourers and their families. In contrast, organic agriculture using natural inputs balances economic profit with the safety of the natural environment and people's wellbeing, without compromising on the quality of the produce.

The Organic Cotton Programme India was started in 2003 by Netherlands-based fair trade company Solidaridad and environmental consultancy ETC. Other organisations working on projects to eradicate poverty, as well as manage watersheds and improve health in rural areas, subsequently joined them. The programme's objectives were to promote the practices of safe agriculture and to improve the farmers' quality of life and economic wellbeing. To this end, the partners worked to create a farmer-owned organisation (now the Chetna Organic Farmers Association, or COFA) that would sidestep the bureaucracy hampering the farmers' advancement.

Solidaridad, ETC and the other partners persuaded and motivated farmers from five states (Andhra Pradesh, Maharastra, Orissa, Tamilnadu and Madhya Pradesh) to join the programme. Currently, 9,000 farmers belong to COFA. The partners have also helped the farmers to obtain Organic Production Methods certification from Control Union, in the Netherlands, and Fair Trade certification from FLO-CERT, Germany.

Communicating across the Programme

The Organic Cotton Programme has a number of levels that need to communicate with each other:

- **Self-help groups.** The farmers are motivated to set up self-help groups of no more than 19 members.
- **Societies / Mutual Aid Cooperative Societies.** Around 20 to 25 self-help groups are federated into a registered Society or Mutually Aided Cooperative Society as the particular state laws permit. The societies are formed on the principle that working and negotiating in groups, rather than individually, produces better results. For example, the societies can more easily access government, banks, suppliers, buyers and certification agencies.
- **Farmer monitors.** For effective quality control, a farmer monitor is selected from within each self-help group. The farmer monitor not only provides day-to-day support to farmers, but also conducts internal audits of other societies.
- **Clusters.** Each state has been divided into geographic clusters that are overseen by cluster coordinators and NGO staff, educated local people who ensure that any communication is easy and understandable for farmers.
- **The central-level team.** The team keeps track of the project overall. It comprises a Team Leader, a Quality Control and Marketing Coordinator, a Monitoring and Evaluation Coordinator, and Technical and Social Consultants.

The Communication Approaches

The Organic Cotton Programme has promoted some creative ways to communicate despite the diversified groups of farmers and the wide range of languages (including Gondi, Telgu, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil and Hindi) spoken in the five states. The programme participants communicate in four main ways:

1. Wall posters and handouts
2. The ICS manual and farm diaries
3. Meetings and consultations
4. Training sessions and workshops.

1. Wall Posters and Handouts

Since many of the farmers participating in the project are illiterate, pictorial forms such as wall posters and handouts are used to convey information on a range of topics:

- **Quality control** – on following organic and fair trade standards in the fields, the farm buildings and the farmer's home; also on identifying major contamination sources via air, water and pollination, and applying control measures in their fields.
- **Technical information** – on using cotton stalks and other waste as organic manure (rather than burning them), improving the soil with organic inputs such as cow-dung slurry, producing

biomass for fuel and developing a biogas plant with multi-uses in cooking, heating and lighting.
- **Social challenges** – on preventing the use of child labour, providing equal wages for men and women, coaching other farmers and working in groups.

The farmers have reported that they find the pictures to be the most effective way of quickly understanding the information they need.

2. The ICS Manual and Farm Diaries

To ensure effective quality control, reduce inspection costs and create ownership of the organic and fair trade certification process among farmers, the project has established an Internal Control System (ICS). The system hinges around a written ICS manual, printed and distributed to farmers in their local language, that describes COFA's policies and standards and the specific requirements for certification.

In addition, farmers are given a farm diary in which to record their daily, weekly and monthly input expenses and costs during a cropping season, as well as the inspections completed, the volume of produce marketed and the payments received. The farm diary's main purpose is to encourage the farmers to develop the habit of documenting the relevant information. To satisfy certification requirements, the farm diary also includes details on the farmer and the farming operations.

Similar to the ICS manual, the farm diaries are printed in the local language so that those farmers who can read can fill them in. In some cases, a simpler version of the farm diary requires farmers to fill in only their quantities and prices. For illiterate farmers, other self-help group members assist them to fill in the details. Group members have also taken responsibility to teach the illiterate farmers to read and write.

3. Meetings and Consultations

To keep cohesion within groups and to solve critical issues, each self-help group organises a Local Farm Field School, which the cluster coordinators and NGO staff of that region also attend. If the attendees cannot resolve an issue, the farmer monitor communicates it to society members and cluster coordinators. If in turn they are unable to resolve the issue, the central-level team undertakes joint problem solving with representatives of the societies and groups.

4. Training Sessions and Workshops

The central-level quality control, technical and social consultants provide training and coaching. Each year, three training sessions – pre-season, mid-season and post-harvest – are organised for cluster coordinators, NGO staff and farmer monitors, who then deliver the same training to the farmer groups and individual farmers.

An annual workshop for cluster coordinators and NGO staff is also organised, to enable continuous improvement of the programme's policies and procedures and to take preventive and corrective actions. The workshop gives the central-level team an opportunity to learn more about the problems that farmer groups or farmers face in filling out the farm diaries, understanding and using the ICS manual, delivering produce and receiving payment. ●

Communicating Complexity

BY MICHELLE COMMANDEUR, HEAD OF GROUP COMMUNITY RELATIONS,
ANZ GROUP CORPORATE AFFAIRS, AUSTRALIA

Background

Some years ago, major Australian bank ANZ took the decision to align its community investment strategy with its core business (financial services). In adopting the new strategy, ANZ committed to addressing issues of financial exclusion and some of the negative social impacts that invariably follow, particularly for the most vulnerable in Australia. ANZ could offer only parts of the expertise and resources required, and it would clearly have considerable difficulty in reaching those people most in need. It was quickly evident that a partnership approach would be the appropriate way to develop and deliver on this commitment.

Fully acknowledging its limitations, ANZ set about identifying organisations that were better equipped to offer the skills, expertise and credibility in delivering community services relating to financial literacy and social inclusion. The key partner identified was the Brotherhood of St Laurence – a highly respected community services organisation with strong advocacy and research credentials. Working together, the two parties developed a financial literacy and matched savings programme – Saver Plus. In due course, ANZ entered into partnership with three other community services organisations[38] to develop and implement a pilot programme.

The Saver Plus pilot achieved excellent outcomes for participants, so in 2006 the programme was expanded, effectively more than quadrupling the operation. More recently, ANZ and the Brotherhood have entered into an arrangement with the community development department of the State Government of Victoria, to explore the potential of a tri-sector partnership approach to delivering Saver Plus throughout the state.

Five years after the start of the programme, therefore, ANZ found itself one of six partners from three sectors, each involved in a different way in Saver Plus, which resulted in a range of relationship types and levels. As the instigator of the partnership, the major funder of the programme and the hub of the growing network, ANZ recognised early on its responsibility to carefully manage the many communication elements underpinning what had become a fairly complex collaboration. The need to manage the collaboration well was twofold: to promote quality in both the partnering relationships and the programme outcomes for participants, and to ensure the best outcomes for all partners and their respective stakeholders. Meeting the two needs had both internal and external communication implications; what follows looks at the external.

External Communication: Considerations

The partnership faced three key communication challenges with regard to how it was positioned and presented externally:

1. Ensuring the two founding partners received appropriate recognition for their intellectual property and their work in designing Saver Plus.
2. Finding consistent and professional approaches to presenting Saver Plus to others, to ensure the integrity of the programme.
3. Accommodating the widely different styles and levels of communication skills, resources and capacity within the partnership, with each partner having a distinctive approach to external relations.

The partners also needed to ensure optimal positioning of the various aspects of the partnership – for example:

- Advocating for the partners' common interest of financial inclusion.

- Using the partnership as a demonstration of "best practice" (with the knock-on reputation benefits and opportunities for influence).
- Reporting on ANZ's commitment and performance within its corporate responsibility strategy.
- Giving full acknowledgement to the different partner relationships, to the unique contributions of each partner, and to specific organisational as well as partnership achievements.
- Appropriately representing each partner's role in the programme.

External Communication: Approaches

The partnership's external communication strategy had some key elements as it developed:

Seeking Agreement

The first step in navigating external communication challenges was for the partners to arrive at a common understanding of communication needs and opportunities. Following on from this understanding, ANZ decided to include communication as a key agenda item for all partner meetings.

Finding a Visual Identity and "Brand"

ANZ sought to clarify the branding requirements of the founding partners, and a detailed visual identity was developed for Saver Plus, taking their requirements into account.

Agreeing a Communication Framework

A formal framework for managing external communication was developed and agreed.

Formalising Communication Commitments

For the first time, specific and measurable communication indicators were included in the formal partnering agreements between ANZ and its partners.

Drawing in Professional Expertise

Lack of expertise in partnership communication was an issue for all the partners, so it was agreed to enlist the services of a professional communications agency to lead the development of a communication strategy and to provide implementation support for the partners. ANZ provided financial resources for this support as an in-kind component of its arrangement with each partner.

Mapping Stakeholder Needs

The agency selected[39] conducted a number of workshops to (1) review the communication needs of each partner's stakeholders and the partnership's own stakeholders, (2) craft key messages about the partnership and Saver Plus, and (3) develop clearer organisational and partnership communication objectives.

Understanding Sensitivities

Care was taken to arrive at communication outcomes that were appropriate for each partner and each stakeholder group. ANZ, for example, wanted to make sure that its role was not positioned purely through a commercial or marketing lens. Other partners had different but equally important sensitivities, and all communication needed to be conscious of any intrusion or negative impact on individual programme participants, especially since real-life stories are a key source of information about the reach and value of Saver Plus.

Building Individual Communication Strategies

In due course, the agency was asked to help each partner build an individual communication strategy for each of the bilateral partnerships operating within the overall programme. Communication calendars and targets were drawn up with each partner, and were used to monitor success over time.

Building Communication Capacity within Partner Organisations

ANZ facilitated training for programme staff from all partners in basic communication skills and in dealing with the media, and provided tools, templates and resources for local media activities.

External Communication: Highlights

The overall programme had a number of significant communication achievements:

- Considerable success using **local media** as recruitment channels for Saver Plus
- Use of the partner organisations' **existing websites and publications** (for example, annual reports) to publicise the partnership
- **National campaigns** around money management that helped to promote the programme's outcomes and to aid further recruitment and engagement
- National **radio, TV and print coverage**
- Exposure at **conferences and other events**
- Establishment of a **central library** of communication products – including press cuttings, transcripts, photos, case study files and testimonials from programme participants – for future reference and use by all partners
- Development of **branding guidelines** for a range of new programme marketing activities
- **Better equipped programme staff**, who are more confident about meeting communication challenges.

Outcomes and Impacts

Each partner has learnt a lot about the potential and the importance of communication activity, and this learning has enabled them to better represent their work and its wider context in appropriate settings.

Partners quickly embraced the calendar system of planning communication activities and had no problem in delivering against the targets set. They – and the partnership – have clearly benefited enormously from having dedicated and professional communication, especially support from the media.

Having a professional communications agency working strategically with the programme ensured a robust and consistent approach to implementing communication activities, and provided communication training and mentoring to programme staff for whom communication was not previously a core requirement.

One of the challenges for the partnership now is to ensure that partners internalise the communication lessons and do not become overly dependent on an external agency to design and deliver their communication activities over the longer term. Partners agree that failure to address this challenge may adversely affect the sustainability of the partnership and the growth and development of Saver Plus. ●

Simple Solutions

BY GREG BUTLER, EDUCATION INDUSTRY DIRECTOR, MICROSOFT EDUCATION SOLUTIONS GROUP, UK

Example 1: Convincing Your Colleagues

One of the challenges of working in a large multinational corporation is the constant internal noise. Working in the area of external CSR partnerships adds to the complexity of being able to draw stories from the field staff and communicate them in a concise and focused way. However, these stories are key in reporting on the impact of the work and in gaining internal interest.

In order to make it easy and rewarding for the field staff to contribute and thus enable us to deliver concise stories back to the company, we decided to embark on a strategy of using technology and a little old-fashioned competitiveness to promote "telling the story". Here's what we did....

We invested time in deciding what categories of information we needed to collect for the most impact and for use as evidence. Using these categories, we created a smart internal website that allowed our field staff to "fill in the blanks" with their evidence details. They could also upload digital photos. Before submitting, they could select whether they wanted their piece output as Evidence Sheet or Internal Newsletter Article, or both. With this tool, once a month an internal newsletter is *almost* automatically created (you still have to check spelling, language and details) and distributed to a subscription list that includes the field staff's managers. Beyond the newsletter, worthwhile evidence sheets highlighting a specific project event or outcome can be created, also almost on demand.

Since their managers automatically receive the newsletter, the field staff are motivated to submit content highlighting their work and giving them a higher profile. So there is never any shortage of contributions.

Example 2: Managing Breakdown

When my work first extended to multi-sector partnerships, I was responsible for establishing a partnership with an NGO that had developed a set of standards we wanted to use. The partnership was in the early stages of being established when, through a series of press releases, the partner heard about the total investment we were making, and stated that the contribution we were putting into the partnership with them was not nearly enough (even though it had seemed fine earlier on). I am sure there was a feeling that we were trying to short-change them, and this perception eroded the trust we'd established. It also led to many heated discussions and threats of withdrawal from the partnership. I honestly thought that the partnership was going to collapse and was looking at how to end it with dignity.

However, we pushed ahead with a whiteboard[40] session to go back to what the basics of the partnership were, what we each wanted to gain from the partnership and how working together would benefit each of us. Through the many iterations of diagrams, notes and charts, the discussion continued over several hours and grounded what we were trying to achieve. We finally seemed to reach some consensus around the benefits of working together outweighing the negatives. Much working together and four years later, this is a healthy and strong partnership that has delivered real benefits to each partner and the recipient stakeholders.

Never underestimate the power of the whiteboard! ●

Making Communication Choices: Three Fictional Situations

BY STEVE METCALFE, WEB EDITOR & MANAGER, AND JOE PHELAN, COMMUNICATIONS & PRODUCTION MANAGER, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS LEADERS FORUM, UK

The following three fictional examples are intended to show you how you might use your various communication options in order to produce different outcomes.

Situation 1

In Ardbeg, a small town in Slovakia, a community arts club and the local government have formed a partnership to bring art to more people through an exhibition.

Objective

The municipality wants to deliver on its commitment to local arts provision through an exhibition. The Ardbeg Community Arts Club wants to service its existing members and recruit new ones.

Audiences

1. The people of Ardbeg – specifically those who could be interested in art but aren't yet engaged
2. The members of the Ardbeg Community Arts Club.

The audience is half known (the members) and half unknown (the townsfolk). All, however, live in the same community, so issues such as language should not be a problem. The partners could narrow down the more general audience by identifying the target age range or interest.

Although the existing members are in some respects an internal audience, they are an important one, since all organisations are competing for the time and attention of their members or volunteers.

Message

The main message is simple: "You'll find our new art exhibition really stimulating!" But this message might need some tailoring for the two groups, as the potential new members may need an introduction to the arts club itself, whereas the existing members just want to know about the new exhibition.

Optional Approaches

Newsletter

The arts club can use a newsletter, either printed or email, to communicate with its members. Some people prefer to have a physical copy that they can hold and don't have to print out. However, print newsletters incur print and postage costs, which email and the Web don't.

Website

If the arts club has a website, then potential members could sign up to receive regular news and so be notified of the upcoming event. A news item about the exhibition can also be posted on the homepage.

The Media

Often, the media is an unfocused channel, because no one controls who actually reads the articles. In this case, a local newspaper should be a fairly targeted tool, as all of the potential visitors to the exhibition live in the same community. However, newspaper editors can be fickle people, and the partnership may need to attract the attention of the newspaper by offering an exclusive interview with an artist, or a sneak preview of the exhibition itself.

The partnership could decide to target groups within the general population that are likely to be more receptive to their art message. For example, the partners may try to get a story or place an ad

in a local theatre magazine, whose readers might be more likely to attend the exhibition than the population at large. The more thought that is put into audiences, the more focused the route to reaching them can be.

Possible Outcomes of Each Approach

By using a newsletter or the website, the partnership raises the profile of the exhibition within the arts club membership. However, approaching the media is a more successful strategy, despite being a broader and less targeted approach, as it helps the arts club attract new members.

Closing the Loop: How to Make This Communication the Start of a Conversation

When people are confirming attendance or while they are at the exhibition itself, the partnership has an opportunity to ask them for more information – for example:

- How they heard about the exhibition.
- What they liked about the exhibition.
- What other types of exhibition they would be interested in attending.
- What other services, functions or events the arts club could provide.
- How they would like to be communicated with in future.

Situation 2

An environmental partnership in Egypt (between a chemical company, an NGO and the government) with six years of achievements wants to raise its profile, in order to fit the partners' PR needs, and to attract more private sector and public sector funding.

Objectives

1. To generate favourable coverage of the partnership, and its partners, in the local media.
2. To reach companies that may be interested in funding the project.
3. To convince the government to grant more funding.

Audiences

1. Residents, workers and other stakeholders in the region
2. Decision-makers within local businesses (unknown)
3. Decision-makers within the government (known).

Messages

Three messages for potential funders:

1. "Funding this project fits in with the strategy of potential funders, be it the government or the private sector."
2. "The project will be sustainable after the funding finishes."
3. "The project partners have a track record of delivering on their commitments."

Two messages for the partners' broader audiences:

1. "The partnership has achieved something groundbreaking, and has made a difference to the environment and the local community."
2. "The partnership has been able to achieve something that the partners could not have achieved on their own."

Optional Approaches

Report

A report would examine the challenge that the partnership was set up to address, and describe how successful the partnership has been so far and what issues or challenges it still needs to address. A simple distribution strategy could be developed to ensure the report reaches the right people.

A report can give permanence and credibility to the project and is a useful tool to send to potential funders, the media and so on. However, a report can be expensive and time-consuming to produce and distribute.

Media Campaign

A media campaign would suit the partners' PR needs, as long as the partnership can ensure the following:

- There really is an interesting story to be told. (Journalists are usually sceptical of straight good-news stories, so you need to make sure before you start that you have something interesting to tell them. Can you link the project to an important and topical issue, or devise an unusual angle that will pique a journalist's interest?)
- The media tells the story the way the partners want it to be told. (This factor is far from guaranteed. You can be sure that with a good-news story, the journalist will be looking for the bad news.)
- The target media is interested in the story. (Again, this situation is far from guaranteed.)

A key challenge with a PR campaign is that the messages are quite different from the funding messages. So while the government may be interested in a local chemicals company developing a long-term partnership with an environmental NGO because the partnership fits with the government's strategy of building cross-sector relationships, this angle is less exciting for media people, who are seeking human interest stories.

Half-Day Workshop

The aim of a half-day workshop would be to bring together key stakeholders and decision-makers – e.g., department heads in the government and newspaper editors – to hear about what challenges the partnership has faced or is facing, and how it has tackled or plans to tackle them.

A workshop has the advantage of allowing the different partners to present their story and build up a much more convincing argument for why the partnership has been a success. In addition, the personal nature of the event would permit the partners to hear about some of their stakeholders' concerns. The face-to-face dialogue could pave the way for better communication in the future, or for a funding proposal addressing some of the issues raised. However, this option can require significant resources to organise.

Possible Outcomes of Each Approach

Report: The partnership project becomes a case study that is well used in academia and copied by other similar companies and NGOs, thereby building the partners' reputations in these sectors. The government is sufficiently impressed by the detail in the report to grant more funding.

Media campaign: As the general public finds out more about the project, the reputation of the chemicals company is enhanced and awareness of the particular environmental issue is increased. However, there is some concern among activist groups about the NGO link with the chemicals company; the concern may need more dialogue to resolve.

Half-day workshop: The partners build better contacts within their key stakeholders, but no media coverage comes from the event. However, three months later, when the government grants additional funding and two new businesses join the partnership, the initial contact with the editors results in some positive coverage.

Closing the Loop: How to Make This Communication the Start of a Conversation

The main conversation that the partnership is seeking to develop is one with potential funders. However as the media example shows, it is also possible to spark a much wider debate about the role that companies can play, and should play, in protecting the environment, and about the possibility of NGOs and the government working successfully with the private sector.

Situation 3

A global coalition of organisations concerned with women's education wants to raise the issue internationally of the limited opportunities for women in southern Africa.

Objective

By increasing international recognition of the development potential of investing in women in southern Africa, the coalition aims to gain additional funding for the issue and more commitment to action from all stakeholders.

Audiences

1. NGOs working in the area
2. Companies operating in the region
3. Governments – both donor (i.e., Western) and local (i.e., southern Africa).

Messages

An in-depth study by the coalition has concluded that improving women's education is critical if the economies in southern Africa are to develop – and the study identified clear actions that stakeholders can take to address the issue.

Optional Approaches

Because the project largely concerns communication, the partners will likely want to use most, if not all, of the suggested methods.

Report

A report would demonstrate the problem, a framework for a solution and some concrete examples of action. It could give credibility to the project and could form a base for other campaign-related communication work.

Online Campaign

The coalition could set up a new website with the key findings of the report, and invite people to sign up to support the campaign, or to register to find out more.

Regular email newsletters could pick up on specific case studies, tell readers about the campaign's progress and suggest how they can further support the project. The audience would in turn be able to feed in case studies, viewpoints and examples, therefore adding momentum to the research.

Speaker Platforms

Representatives of the various partner organisations in the coalition could speak at events around the world to raise the campaign's profile and invite delegates to support the campaign. An advantage of this approach is that all partners can feel involved in the communication work and can add their personal angle to the campaign without the messages looking inconsistent.

Media Campaign

A media campaign could be geared around the launch of the report and its findings. Ideally, the report would be written with this campaign in mind, and journalists would be given plenty of time to review the report and decide if they want to cover it. (Simply sending out a news release on the day is not enough!)

One possible approach is to offer exclusivity to one newspaper, and provide it with detailed feature or report ideas. This approach can work well with the weekend newspapers, which are less dependent on news and more features based. Getting a journalist out to the region to see the problems and the solutions can be effective – although the coalition might be expected to pay all costs.

Any number of factors can limit the coverage of a story. A particular limitation of the media campaign is the difficulty of finding additional news hooks if the report receives poor coverage at the launch.

Possible Outcomes of Each Approach

Some potential comments:

- "The report was well received, but was more useful for practitioners already working in the field of female education in Southern Africa. Within this group, the report is well known and used, but it did little to raise the profile of the subject internationally. However, it remains a definitive work on the subject and can be linked to future communication efforts; it also adds credibility to the campaign."

- "The online campaign has become a valuable resource for practitioners, who now feel they own the space. As well as contributing case studies, people started interacting with each other directly through the website – testing ideas, looking for other approaches and joining up efforts."

- "The speaker platforms involved a significant travel commitment from some key staff and were hit and miss, but overall they did raise the profile of the partnership and sparked debate of the issue with some key decision-makers. As a result, one major funder has adapted its grant-giving criteria and made more support available to programmes addressing female education in southern Africa."

- "Initially, the press campaign faltered because journalists couldn't see the news story in the report's findings. However, one journalist who attended the launch heard a young woman from Malawi speak about how she had benefited from the opportunity to study. When this journalist received a different press release two weeks later on the World Development Report, she was able to write a story with different but complementary viewpoints and included a case study."

Closing the Loop: How to Make This Communication the Start of a Conversation

The objective of this project is to raise awareness, making communication and conversation paramount. Therefore, the approaches that allow more room for dialogue – particularly the online campaign and the speaker platforms – should be more successful. However, neither of these approaches will make the impact that it potentially could without the research and backing that the publication will provide. ●

A Question of Credit

BY JUDITH NICHOL, PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MANAGER – KNOWLEDGE, BBC, UK

Four years ago, the public library sector in the UK successfully collaborated with the BBC on *The Big Read*, a summer-long project that encouraged the public to read and then vote for their favourite books. Despite the project's success, library representatives thought they had not been given enough on-air credit for their work and were also keen that the media reflect a more positive image of libraries.

Crediting was thus one of the big issues on the table the following winter when we began discussions on a formal partnership of the BBC and the UK's public library sector, which has more than 400 library authorities and over 4,000 branches. Since crediting was something that the BBC could influence up to a point, we agreed that we would endeavour to secure greater crediting for libraries.

Still a Problem with Coverage

Eight months later, we had finalised the wording of an agreement that all parties could sign, and then work began on the first campaign, on improving adult literacy. Only then did we become aware of disquiet within the library world about the partnership. Librarians were expressing disappointment that there were still no shots of libraries on primetime TV and that certain radio programmes continued to talk about failing library services. The crediting that the BBC was able to secure for libraries was limited mainly to online and in publications, and the on-air presence of the campaign was mainly on radio, not mainstream television as expected.

In discussions with colleagues and with the partner organisations, we identified two challenges: (1) how we could give libraries a better understanding of our role as a media organisation and (2) how libraries could use the partnership to their advantage. We needed to address these challenges and then communicate the solutions to a wider audience.

Increasing Understanding and Opportunities

Up to this point, we had relied on a monthly newsletter as the main communication tool between the partners, but we recognised it wasn't sufficient to get the message across. We therefore implemented three additional approaches:

1. A presentation to the professional body representing library heads of service
2. A set of workshops for library managers
3. Creation of a more regionalised management structure for the partnership.

First, in mid-2006, I gave a presentation to the Society of Chief Librarians on the role of my team and the extent to which we could credit partners. I wanted to manage expectations and also to confirm that this senior group was still signed up to pursuing the partnership – as indeed they were.

Second, over the spring and summer of 2006, we ran workshops for library managers on how news is constructed and what makes a story interesting to journalists. The attendees also learned how to proactively forge links with their local BBC centre. The workshops resulted in many more stories getting on air, both about the campaign and about libraries in general.

Regionalising the partnership is the third and most vital part of the strategy, but it will take longer to show results. Each regional partnership manager is tasked with creating a regional working group with local library representatives, so the group can discuss and plan upcoming campaigns and other developments.

An Update

We are now well into our second campaign (and the third year of the partnership), and have seen an increase in on-air mentions of libraries both nationally and locally. We have a range of communication tools to use with a variety of stakeholders. And since the partnership is now more widely understood in both the BBC and the library sector, we are able to present other partnering opportunities to libraries.

However, not all communication issues are fully resolved. I commissioned research over the summer of 2007 to find out how library staff (both managers and front-line staff) viewed the partnership and was disappointed to see that they continued to raise similar issues regarding on-air crediting and support despite the libraries' significantly increased on-air presence. The next step is therefore to review our current communication tools to find out whether they are read, how they are used and how information is then disseminated. Although we have significant support for continuing with the partnership, we need to find ways of improving communication within the complex partner structures so that all parties understand the partnership's achievements. ●

The Value of "Failure"

BY SEAN ANSETT, FOUNDER, AT STAKE ADVISORS, SPAIN

Example 1: Getting It Wrong

As Director of Global Partnerships at Gap Inc., I was responsible for developing human rights programmes with local NGOs to improve workplace conditions in the company's global supply chain.

In Cambodia, we worked with three local NGOs to train management and workers on their rights and responsibilities under Cambodian labour law and ILO conventions. We also developed communication channels between workers and management, as well as systems to handle grievances and resolve disputes.

The most challenging aspects of the work were maintaining active communication with each local NGO throughout the scoping of the project, ensuring that all the key players were in the room, setting realistic expectations and creating a strong internal communication structure. Problems arose that primarily related to difficulties in communicating needs. Four key factors illustrate these difficulties, as well as tactical solutions that might have improved the situation:

Having a Common Language

The local organisations lacked English language skills, while Gap Inc. lacked Cambodian language skills. The lack of language skills in the key players in the partnership led to confusion and misunderstandings, as well as delivery delays and difficulties in sharing feedback. For example, a meeting that typically should have taken two hours would run four or more hours. Gap Inc. did have two Cambodian vendor compliance officers and the coordinating NGO hired an English-speaking advisor, but these positions had the negative impact of adding another communication layer. Hiring a bilingual partnership broker would have ensured clearer and more effective communication.

Talking with All Key Players

In our partnership with multiple stakeholders, which included four organisations and five factories, we needed to identify the key players to whom to direct our communication. We failed to include factory managers in the partnership process on the front end. Their absence in the process led to distrust and a lack of ownership and project buy-in. The factory managers' early participation would have resolved many of the communication issues and made the partnership more successful.

Setting Expectations

This was the first time that the NGOs – some of which were advocacy groups and were sceptical of the for-profit sector – had directly linked themselves with a multinational corporation, and we had difficulty agreeing on the partnership's expectations. The lack of clear expectations from the outset led to difficulties during the review process, and enhancements were needed. We should have clearly outlined and agreed on our expectations for the partnership.

Ensuring Transparency

Due to the lack of sufficient trust, partners struggled with communicating in a transparent, honest and open manner. Internal stakeholders were hesitant to raise their concerns or give feedback, especially during the first six months of the partnership – perhaps the most critical period, as this was when we developed the partnership infrastructure. Partners were also reluctant to discuss the future and to tackle more difficult questions about the initiative, resulting in less innovation than might have been possible. A greater emphasis on developing trust would likely have ensured more transparent communication.

The communication issues resulted in a project that did deliver training and a public report, but that probably lacked the impact and innovation it could have delivered. However, we all learned a lot.

Example 2: Getting It Right

One of the key roles of the partnership broker is that of a "boundary spanner" – an individual with one foot inside and one foot outside an organisation.[41] Acting as a bridge or link, boundary spanners translate key information that they gather from external organisations and communicate that information internally, to encourage buy-in, embed learnings and insights, and drive innovation.

In one partnership with an NGO in Central America, the partners needed to develop a partnership MOU in order to structure an independent human rights monitoring process. We spent more than a year negotiating the MOU's content and tone before the monitoring began. The negotiation took as long as it did for two reasons: (1) needing to maintain active communication with the local NGO in order to develop respect and (2) assisting the legal team at Gap Inc. and senior members of the NGO to understand the other organisation's needs.

Five key attributes led to a successful agreement:

Knowing the Stakeholders

An analysis of the stakeholders with influence in both organisations – including the NGO's executive director and Gap Inc.'s internal lawyer – helped in understanding each organisation's nature and needs and protecting their respective interests.

Knowing the Sectors

Prior experience in both the non-profit and the private sector built the key influencers' confidence and assisted in crafting a communication style and vocabulary that was clear and appropriate to both organisations.

Possessing Bilingual Skills

The ability to communicate in both Spanish and English allowed for a direct dialogue that cut out an additional layer of communication, streamlined the process and captured institutional knowledge. However, partnership brokers should not expect local organisations with limited financial resources to have bilingual skills. Many times, the loudest organisations with the strongest English skills land multi-stakeholder partnerships for sustainable development, but they may not necessarily have the most extensive local knowledge or best represent local stakeholders.

Being Responsive

In the early stages when respect is being earned, delays in response can lead to problems and can erode what respect exists. We developed a calendar of regular calls and in-country meetings to ensure ongoing formal communication. By phone we discussed in advance each proposal to edit the MOU, thereby "pre-wiring" both Gap Inc. and the NGO and avoiding any surprises. Until we had built substantial respect, we did not write down or exchange sensitive information by email, to ensure no information leaks.

Investing in the Relationship

We invested heavily in the relationship, as we understood the cultural need for developing a good relationship. Because of this need, face-to-face meetings with the NGO were favoured over teleconference calls as the programme progressed, despite the greater expense. The investment paid off tenfold, with the resulting good respect helping out when any partnership crisis occurred. Communicating in a transparent, honest and open manner with the NGO led to a strong, productive and respectful relationship. ●

Time for Tea: A Partnership Story

BY SASKIA MERRIMAN, ENVIRONMENT LEAD, ACCENTURE UK

Some years ago, I participated in a multi-sector partnership between a UK-based charity promoting environmentally sustainable behaviour, a local housing association providing sheltered housing for older people and the local government where the sheltered housing was situated. The partnership set up a practical environmental project to reduce the tenants' energy use and waste production and thereby lower their utility bills. The hope was also that by participating in the project, the tenants would make new friends and view the housing association more positively.

The directors of the charity and the housing association already knew each other and had run a small feasibility study for the environmental project, which had enabled the staff of both organisations to get to know each other a little. The feasibility study, and the development of a common vision for a project, led to a funding bid. The local government helped pull together the bid and eventually agreed to fund the project through one of its branches.

The housing association had never taken part in a project like this one, and although the local government had experience of partnership work, the individuals representing government changed regularly. The charity therefore took a lead in the way the partnership worked, including writing a letter of agreement setting out all roles and responsibilities.

In the early stages, the partnership faced two main challenges. The first was the delay in agreeing on the funding. The process took an incredibly long time because of the changes in people and processes, as well as some bureaucracy and lack of action, and there was frustration all round.

Since the local government was a partner as well as a funder, the charity and the housing association needed to keep their frustration out of the discussions. In some ways, though, the frustration strengthened the relationship between these two partners and in turn their resolve to see the vision realised.

The second challenge was a misunderstanding between the charity and the housing association over payment schedules. The letter of agreement was clear, leaving no room for argument about the situation, but somehow there was confusion, which could have led to problems and bad feelings between the organisations. However, because of the personal relationships already developed and the strong desire to see the project work, the situation was resolved by talking it through, being tolerant on both sides and avoiding laying blame anywhere. Since the partners had been open from the start about their partnering experience (or lack of it), expectations were managed and assumptions were mostly avoided.

The project manager was responsible for the project's communication and was instrumental in maintaining good personal relationships among the partners. He worked from both the charity's office and the housing association's office and met regularly with the local government. He spent significant time talking with many of the housing association staff, to win their trust and engage them in the project, as it was asking them to become involved in something slightly outside their normal jobs. Sometimes, he simply chatted and drank copious cups of tea with them – which may have looked somewhat like a waste of time but was in fact vital in making the project work.

The project manager also devoted a great deal of time to visiting the tenants, talking with them and getting to know them before asking them to commit to participating in the project. Not a process that can be rushed through. This approach then had to be explained to the local

government, which expected measurable results within certain time frames. However, because of the regular meetings, the local government was confident that the project was being delivered, even when there were no immediate "results" to point to.

Interestingly, the relationships among the partners, which are ongoing, rest on mutual benefit rather than on mutual respect. Though not necessarily a partner of choice in light of the other two partners' somewhat difficult experience of working with them, the local government as the funder is a needed partner. The charity has a track record of reliable delivery and credibility and further built its reputation. The housing association provided a new and exciting target audience to work with, and had the expertise in the audience, as well as the desire to run the project. ●

Getting the Communication Mix Right

BY GEMMA MAY, COORDINATOR, SCIENCE ADVISORY COUNCIL SECRETARIAT, DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD & RURAL AFFAIRS (DEFRA), UK

My experience of the communication challenge of multi-sector partnerships has been shaped by international geography, as well as different professional work cultures and expectations.

One partnership I was responsible for coordinating comprised intergovernmental, NGO and private sector organisations, and entailed IT-related outputs. The partnership was a response to the private sector organisation's desire to communicate widely to internal and external audiences about the biodiversity research, knowledge and investment that were part of its day-to-day business.

The relationship went through several evolutions and obvious maturing. We did not get it right the first time; however, all the partners believed in the value of the partnership, and their willingness to try again won the day.

To begin with, we probably did not communicate enough, either virtually (via email, phone and teleconference) or face to face, the latter being particularly challenging. The funding partners had wanted to meet collectively despite the difficulty of bringing together the partner staff from different cities, countries and organisations. Finding a date that all could agree to even six months ahead was problematic, so face-to-face group meetings diminished or were devoid of some representatives.

In an attempt to have regular communication, every two weeks I distributed an email on the project's progress – recent milestones, achievements, requests, and communication and media outputs. I thought this approach was an improvement – but despite my repeatedly asking for it, feedback from other partners was limited, and it was hard to honestly judge whether the emailed progress report was useful or reassuring for them.

At times, the lack of response led to some delivery challenges, which was disappointing and worrying for me – not least as part of my job depended on successful delivery (as perhaps did theirs?). I frequently reflected on whether and how I could communicate more effectively. Was it me, my age, my sex, my institution or this whole idea? What could I do to get us talking, and making good progress? How could I reassure everyone that all was OK, while encouraging greater openness about our strengths and weaknesses and those of the partnership, and thereby seeing increased trust and transparency?

As a student on the Postgraduate Certificate in Cross-sector Partnership (PCCP) course, I had read some interesting articles about "virtual teams",[42] which is what this partnership was, and the ideas

in the articles resonated with much of my institution's approach to work. I was delighted to find written down some of the challenges, experiences and frustrations I had encountered as a member of such a group. It helped me to realise that the difficulties were not just me.

On a positive note, in my work with another partnership, my communication efforts were much more successful. All partners appeared to be happy, valued everyone's contribution, and demonstrated openness and trust. I asked myself why this difference. I'm not sure; maybe part of the issue was that the first partnership lacked genuine equality among all players.

On reflection, communication in all its guises is *absolutely* critical to partnerships. There are so many facets to it, and my more successful experience was a fairly easy one in some respects, in that we were all from English-speaking countries and were using the same language (English). What both experiences have taught me is not to be surprised if an approach that worked well with one partnership does not always do so with another.

As a partnership practitioner, you need to be as flexible as possible, remain optimistic but realistic, and seek to overcome barriers where possible. Communicating regularly matters, as does recognising individual and institutional differences – in language, style, communication format and organisational culture. Dealing with such differences will usually require compromise.

From time to time, also be open and transparent with your partners about your own shortcomings; doing so may strengthen the personal relationships in a partnership. And as one participant in the Lurey and Raisinghani (2001) virtual team study noted: "Knowing someone on a face-to-face level and creating relationships with them through social interactions outside of work really helps each individual understand the strengths throughout a team."[43] Obvious perhaps, but very, very true.

In an age characterised by so many communication gizmos, you need to go back to the basics, reflect on your communication style and manner, and think how to do it better or differently – and be brave enough to ask your partnership colleagues for honest, open feedback. Get to know them as best you can, and be patient and respectful, for the benefit of the partnership and its outcomes. ●





10. Talking the Walk

"Words are innocent, neutral, precise, standing for this, describing that, meaning the other, so if you look after them you can build bridges across incomprehension and chaos. ... I don't think writers are sacred, but words are. They deserve respect. If you get the right ones in the right order, you can nudge the world a little." **Tom Stoppard**[44]

It is tempting in a practical manual of this kind to slip into directive and "we know best" mode. But we hope we have avoided that trap, since we firmly believe that there are always many ways of seeing things and that each of us only glimpses bits of truth at any one time. What we have tried to do is to raise questions and share ideas, tools and frameworks. Everything we (including the many colleagues who have worked with us on this project) have produced here is drawn from actual experience – but that does not mean everything covered here is right or the only possible approach.

We have compiled this manual because practitioners absolutely must build their skills in this area and understand how to apply systematic approaches to both internal and external communication. But the manual is a starting – not an ending – point in exploring the value and potential of communication in partnering. We look forward to hearing in due course how practitioners have adapted, revised or replaced the material it contains.

Cross-sector partnering is becoming quite widely accepted and embraced as an important vehicle for achieving sustainable development and poverty elimination goals. But many challenges are still to be addressed if it is to reach optimal impact. As we have suggested in chapter 1, these challenges have a significant communication component.

Absorbed as we may be in meeting current challenges in our day-to-day partnering work, we also need to plan ahead. We need to anticipate new challenges so that we are as well prepared as possible to meet them constructively (see table below).

Potential New Partnering Challenges	**Communication Responses**
Decreasing attention span from key audiences	• Attentiveness to their boredom threshold • Consistent effort given to understanding their priorities • Compelling arguments and rationale tailored to their interests
Communication overload – too much information, produced too fast; too difficult to discern reality from spin	Communications will be more valued where they clearly demonstrate: • Restraint • Authenticity • Integrity • Modesty
Increasingly interdependent nature of most development challenges	Partnerships being assessed, articulated and presented as the necessary response to address increased complexity
Cross-border and international nature of most development challenges	Need for clear language and accessibility of information across cultural and linguistic barriers
Increasing urgency of need	Explaining (and illustrating) why partnering is not a "quick fix" option but is likely to produce more sustainable solutions

Good partnership practitioners need to be flexible and responsive as situations, challenges and circumstances change.

In our partnering skills training courses,[45] we often play a game called "Chairs".[46] A number of chairs (one for each player) are spread around a large empty space, facing in different directions. One player at a time ("the walker") is asked to vacate his / her chair and, starting from as far away from the chair as possible, to walk at a regular, slow pace to the chair. The task of the rest of the group is to stop the walker from sitting on the empty chair. The only way they can do this is by occupying the empty chair – but by doing so they inevitably leave their own chair empty for the walker to sit on.



The rules of the game are minimal:

1. The walker must maintain a steady pace at all times.
2. No one is allowed to physically restrain or intimidate the walker.
3. Once anyone has risen from his / her chair, he / she may not sit down on the same chair for the duration of that cycle of the game.

When the game works (see box below), the walker can be kept on his / her feet for 20 minutes or more! Once groups get to this stage of insight, they work out pretty quickly that playing the game successfully requires:

- **A prevailing sense of calm** (taking the pace of the game from the walker, who always walks at a measured, steady pace)
- **Acute observation** both of the walker and of each other (each participant being acutely attentive to all aspects of the game throughout)
- **Readiness to act,** but only when it becomes obvious that the player is the most appropriate person to do so (passing the baton of leadership between different members of the group).

Communication and the Chairs Game

Invariably, groups follow a similar pattern of behaviour as they seek to outrun or outwit the walker. Briefly summarised, the process runs as follows:

- *Inaction – as the participants are mesmerised by the walker and are bewildered about what to do.*
- *Panic – as several people get out of their chairs at the same time and cause chaos (this phase can be repeated innumerable times, even when the exercise starts quite calmly).*
- *Imposed strategy – as one or two people decide on the approach to be adopted and the rest of the group agree to follow it (usually breaks down within a few minutes, because the approach tends to rely on a preconceived formula rather than on observation of the walker's behaviour).*
- *Blame – where individuals are singled out for having messed up and the mood begins to get rather nasty (at this point, several people begin to opt out of taking any kind of active part – some people even walk out of the room).*
- *Imposed leadership – where one person offers, or is invited by others, to direct the response as he / she sees fit once the walker starts walking (the rest of the group sit back and wait to be told what to do).*

Each of these behaviours has a communication angle, and the whole game gets stuck repeatedly, because again and again the participants communicate poorly or inappropriately – not using their observation skills and not accomplishing anything in their conversations. In fact, it is worth noting how extremely slowly groups can learn, even when things are clearly not working out as planned!

A number of communication lessons can be drawn from the Chairs game:

- *Instructions do not provide a good basis from which to play the game.*
- *Panic is the worst possible state in which to make measured and intelligent decisions. Group panic can even be quite dangerous (in this case, people knocking each other over in their haste to sit on a chair).*
- *Formulas and imposed strategies break down quickly and leave people adrift because they have not understood the underlying rationale.*
- *Blame quickly destroys a group's capacity to trust each other and work together well.*
- *Handing over responsibility to one leader is not a satisfying solution. Even if this approach succeeds, it does so at the expense of actively engaging the participants, who then experience little sense of achievement or satisfaction.*

As the game continues – and it can take a long time to get to this point; sometimes in the time available, this point is not reached – a new insight emerges:

- *Growing realisation that the walker is not "the enemy" but "the teacher", and that the relationship between the group and the walker is not a battle but actually a kind of a dance.*



In discussing the experience once the game has been "won" (i.e., the group is successful in stopping the walker from sitting down over a long period), participants have likened their achievement to an orchestra working in harmony, an elegant dance, or the continuous ebb and flow of the tide on the seashore.

The analogy of collaboration and shared decision-making as a dance is one image. An equally pertinent one might be that of high-wire performers walking the tightrope in a circus. Partnering is always a balancing act between action and reflection; speaking and listening; focus on relationships and focus on projects; and leadership and follower-ship. Effective partnerships are those that achieve a reasonable balance between a number of complex and diverse elements.

This, we believe, involves mastery of the give-and-take of good conversation that underpins our partner relationships and our collaborative projects (the internal communication agenda).

Partnering is also always a kind of adventure into the unknown. As such, it requires courage, conviction and imagination from those involved. If our partnerships are successful in tackling the critical challenges we face, partnership practitioners will be like the heroes and heroines found in all mythologies and cultures who manage to win through against all the odds.

When our partnerships are successful, we will of course be fully justified in wanting to share our achievements as widely as possible (the external communication agenda).

> *"In the end, having stayed the course, fought over dragons, sailed triumphantly home, no-one is ever the same again. The experience has left its mark. Confronting doubts and working through difficulties has brought new learning, new strength and new understanding. In practising the art and craft of partnering we have transformed our organisations and ourselves – in other words – our world.*
>
> *This is always a story worth telling."* **Michael Jacobs**[47]

So good partnering is about dancing, balancing, conversation and storytelling. But these are not the whole story – something even deeper is required.

All efforts to get inside someone else's perspective require genuine interest in the other and finely honed communication skills in order to draw out each individual's uniqueness.

Cross-sector communication is not important simply for effective partnering. We are unlikely to find practical and lasting solutions to the worst horrors we face – whether in the form of pandemics, poverty, climate change or cross-cultural enmity – unless and until we learn how to collaborate. And we will never learn how to collaborate if we don't learn how to communicate.



Further Resources

Conversation and Dialogue

Acland, Andrew F (2003). *Perfect People Skills: All You Need to Get It Right First Time.* Random House, London, UK.
A contributor to this manual and a familiar face to PBAS graduates, Andrew shares his great wisdom on dealing with other people effectively, and does so in his engaging and highly readable style.

Bohm, David (1996). *On Dialogue.* Routledge, London, UK.
Considered one of the 20th century's foremost thinkers, David Bohm explores the profusion of practices, techniques and definitions that have arisen around the term "dialogue". In the process, he calls into question deeply held assumptions about thought, culture, meaning and identity.

Rosenberg, Marshall B (2003). *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life* (2nd edition). PuddleDancer Press, Encinitas, CA, USA.
Also subtitled "Create your life, your relationships, and your world in harmony with your values", this book contains tips on how to minimise escalation of disagreements by observing without giving negative judgements and by taking responsibility for what you say and how you say it.

Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton & Sheila Heen (1999). *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most.* Penguin, London, UK.
This well-regarded book will give you the know-how to tackle even the most challenging conversations, to help transform them into productive, problem-solving experiences.

Intercultural Learning

"Country Insights", Centre for Intercultural Learning, Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. www.intercultures.ca/cil-cai/country_insights-en.asp?lvl=8
This nifty "Country Insights" tool offers cultural information for dozens of countries on such topics as the land and the language, communication styles, punctuality and formality, governance, decision-making and relationship building.

Elliott, Candia, R Jerry Adams & Suganya Sockalingam (1999). *Toolkit for Cross-Cultural Collaboration.* http://www.awesomelibrary.org/multiculturaltoolkit.html
The toolkit discusses barriers to cross-cultural collaboration and provides methods for assessing and improving communication patterns and cultural competence of organisations and individuals, thereby also increasing trust and mutual respect.

Communication as a Function

The Communication Initiative Network. http://www.comminit.com/en/
With more than 20 UN and other partner organisations, the Communication Initiative offers a comprehensive database of development resources on communication and media, which the website states are "central to social and economic development". Well worth checking out if you haven't already.

Ferguson, Sherry D (1999). *Communication Planning: An Integrated Approach.* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
These days, the role of the communicator is not simply to write speeches and media releases but also to manage, plan, consult and advise. Sherry Ferguson takes a comprehensive approach to integrating these additional communication responsibilities into the modern organisation.

Media Trust. www.mediatrust.org/training-events/training-resources/online-guides-1
UK-based Media Trust offers online guides on such topics as attracting and keeping celebrity support; doing charity lobbying; communicating with young people; managing public relations; writing a news release; developing a communication strategy; generating local media coverage; giving a media interview; making the most of your annual report; and getting your website noticed.

Panos Pictures. www.panos.co.uk
An independent photo agency with an online development picture library. Half of the agency profits go to the Panos Institute for its work on issues around media and communications, globalisation, HIV / AIDS, and environment and conflict.

Public Relations

Dillard, James P, & Michael Pfau (2002). *The Persuasion Handbook: Developments in Theory and Practice.* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
Persuasion is at the root of public relations practice. This handbook provides depth and understanding in the study of persuasion and opens the door to further academic investigation.

Heath, Robert L, & Gabriel M Vasquez (Eds.) (2004). *Handbook of Public Relations.* Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.
This handbook contains a wide range of articles relevant to the practice of public relations. Institutions and individuals who need or want the currency of academic support can use this publication for solid background and grounding in the field.

Paul, Richard, & Linda Elder (2006). *The Miniature Guide to Critical Thinking: Concepts & Tools.* Foundation for Critical Thinking, Dillon Beach, CA, USA.
www.criticalthinking.org/files/SAM-Concepts%20and%20Tools.pdf
One of the 19 guides in the Thinker's Guide series of inexpensive and exceptionally helpful publications for practitioners in public relations and other fields, as well as global citizens seeking to develop critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills in a rapidly changing world. The Foundation for Critical Thinking is a valuable site to visit.

Plain Language

Human Resources Development Canada (1996). P*lain Language: Clear and Simple.* Ministry of Public Works and Government Services, Ottawa, ON, Canada.
A clear and straightforward explanation of government's efforts to make its publications readable and accessible to a wider audience. The principles of plain language are applicable to all types of writing, including academic and organisational writing. Watch out, though, as the book itself doesn't always practise what it preaches; don't use its writing style as a template to follow.

Plain Language Association International.
www.plainlanguagenetwork.org/Resources/
PLAI puts itself "at the heart of clear writing across disciplines and around the world". The association has posted some helpful resources on plain language on its website. See, for example, Peter Butt's paper on "Brushing Up on Fundamentals".

PlainTrain: The Plain Language Online Training Program.
www.web.net/~plain/PlainTrain/
PlainTrain is a user-friendly, step-by-step, online guide to plain language. You can learn how to organise ideas for a paper, print out a checklist summary of efficient and effective writing, and link to other sites that offer useful writing techniques.

Improving Your Writing

Cook, Claire K (1985). *Line by Line: How to Improve Your Own Writing.* Houghton Mifflin, Boston, MA, USA.
Claire has worked as a copy editor with the Modern Language Association (MLA) since 1976. She shares her experience in *Line by Line*, a readable book that helps you fix baggy sentences and faulty connections.

Lanham, Richard (1987). *Revising Business Prose* (2nd edition). Macmillan, New York, USA.
Richard's pet peeve is the excess verbiage that characterises many documents – what he calls the "Official Style." In this slim but valuable book, Lanham suggests a "quick and dirty" seven-point approach to cleaning up your writing. A workbook accompanies the book, and the material is also available on video.

Strunk, William, & EB White (2000). *The Elements of Style* (4th edition). Allyn & Bacon, New York, USA.
A timeless classic and still an enormously useful reference tool.

Williams, Joseph M (1990). *Style: Toward Clarity and Grace.* The University of Chicago Press, IL, USA.
Not always the easiest read, Joseph Williams' *Style* is a thought-provoking and challenging book that goes beyond the usual conventions of what constitutes clear and effective writing.

Plain Numbers

Bigwood, Sally, & Melissa Spore (2003). *Presenting Numbers, Tables, and Charts.* Oxford University Press, UK.
www.plainfigures.com/book.html
"Plain numbers" is the numerical equivalent of "plain language". This small book contains an excellent discussion of plain numbers, and shows you how to present statistical and financial data simply and clearly. (See also a review of this book at **www.timalbert.co.uk/shortwords_plainwords.htm.)**

Zelazny, Gene (2006). *The Say It with Charts Complete Toolkit.* McGraw-Hill, New York, USA.
www.zelazny.com/charts.html
As McKinsey & Company's Director of Visual Communication, Gene has assisted thousands of professionals to design more compelling visual presentations and written reports. This recent compilation of some of his earlier books also includes downloadable templates of more than 250 visual concepts and metaphors to stimulate your creativity and benefit your work.

Layout and Design

Burns, Michael (2007, March 7). "Black and White Design." *Digit,* IDG Communications, London, UK.
www.digitmag.co.uk/features/index.cfm?FeatureID=1571
Learn more about the possibilities in using a black and white palette from this article in *Digit*, an online resource on the future of digital design for creative professionals.

Hume, Andy (2005). *The Anatomy of Web Fonts.* **Sitepoint, London, UK.**
www.sitepoint.com/article/anatomy-web-fonts
A helpful article on using typefaces effectively on the Web. Andy clearly makes the point that the Web is not print and needs to follow its own rules.

International Society of Typographic Designers.
www.istd.org.uk/flash_content/index.htm
A good source of affordable publications on type and design.

Pentagram.
www.pentagram.com/
The website of this internationally known graphic design firm is itself an example of simple and legible pages with limited use of colour.

Williams, Robin (2003). *The Non-Designer's Design Book* (2nd edition). Peachpit Press, Berkeley, CA, USA.
Robin is an excellent writer and graphic designer who communicates clearly and simply. Her book will help you learn to recognise and identify elements of design so that you can use them well.

Sharing and Networking Practitioner Experience

The Partnering Initiative.
www.ThePartneringInitiative.org
TPI is a route to finding training courses and keeping in touch with new tools and guides designed specifically for partnership practitioners.

The Partnership Forum.
www.ThePartnershipForum.org
The Partnership Forum is a new platform operated by The Partnering Initiative on behalf of partnership practitioners from any sector and any part of the world, to enable access to and the sharing of knowledge, tools and experiences.

Endnotes

[1] For example, *The Partnering Toolbook* (2003), *The Brokering Guidebook* (2005), *The Case Study Toolbook* (2006) and *Partnership Matters* (2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006). These are available for download at www.ThePartneringInitiative.org. This website also gives access to further publications, action research and practice-based resources.

[2] For example, in the professional practice logbooks that participants compile as part of their qualification as partnership brokers in the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme.

[3] A one-year project undertaken by The Partnering Initiative (part-funded by Alcan) involving 12 partnership practitioners and case study writers from around the world.

[4] Published on page 36 of *The Case Study Toolbook* (2006).

[5] Practitioners came from different sectors and were all actively engaged in partnerships in Australia.

[6] Taken from a presentation given at The Partnering Event in Cambridge, UK, in September 2006. The ideas are also repeated in Michelle Evans and Leda Stott's think piece on page 15 of this manual.

[7] The tendency to look at and judge the world from the perspective of your culture, which you view as central and possibly superior to other cultures.

[8] Adapted from Leda Stott & Tracey Keatman (2005). Tools for measuring community engagement in partnerships. *BPD Practitioner Note*, BPD Water and Sanitation, London, UK.

[9] From page 33 of Paolo Freire (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* Seabury Press, New York, USA.

[10] Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme.

[11] Produced by participants of the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme – cohort 11, South Asia, March 2007.

[12] Produced by participants of the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme – cohort 11, South Asia, March 2007.

[13] From page 10 of Peter Senge (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization.* Currency Doubleday, New York, USA.

[14] Adapted from Seth Kahan (2003). *4 Steps That Improve Personal Performance in Partnerships.* www.sethkahan.com/Resources_04Steps.html.

[15] The Partnering Initiative's toolbook series is a case in point. To date, 11 partner organisations have contributed, from the for-profit (Alcan, ANZ Bank, Nike, Rio Tinto), not-for-profit (European Partnership for Sustainable Development, GAIN, IBLF, SEED) and public (IAEA, UNDP, University of Cambridge Programme for Industry) sectors. By placing their logos in a prominent position on the back cover of each toolbook, TPI has conveyed the toolbooks' relevance to all sectors and endorsed their value from a range of sector perspectives.

[16] See Andrew Acland's think piece on page 39.

[17] From page 523 of Laurie J Wilson (2004). Relationships within communities: Public relations for the new century. In Robert L Heath & Gabriel M Vasquez (Eds.), *Handbook of Public Relations* (ch. 44, pp. 521-526). Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA, USA.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Adapted from page 8 of Babatunde Folarin (2005, April 28). *The Public Relations Function and the Challenges of Democratisation in Africa.* Paper presented as part of a public lecture series at Covenant University, Ota, Nigeria. http://www.covenantuniversity.com/publications/pdf/prof_folarin_lectures.pdf.

[20] Adapted from Tool 5: Guidance for Partnering Conversations, in *The Partnering Toolbook* (2003).

[21] Adapted from Douglas Stone, Bruce Patton & Sheila Heen (1999). *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most.* Penguin, London, UK.

[22] This concept was first articulated by medical practitioner Donald Schon in his seminal book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983). Basic Books, New York, USA. The concept has informed much medical practice since. It has also influenced certain research methodologies (including appreciative, participative and cooperative inquiry) exemplified in the work of Peter Reason, School of Management, University of Bath, who edited *Participation in Human Inquiry* (1994). Sage, London, UK.

[23] Adapted from *The Prelude* by the English poet William Wordsworth. The line in the original is "emotion recollected in tranquillity".

[24] See Joseph M Williams (1994). *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (4th edition). HarperCollins College Publishers, New York, USA.

[25] From page 168 of Richard Lederer, Richard Dowis & Jim McLean (1999). *Sleeping Dogs Don't Lay: Practical Advice for the Grammatically Challenged.* St. Martin's Press, New York, USA.

[26] Adapted from pages 60-61 of National Managers' Community (2002). *Tools for Leadership and Learning: Building a Learning Organization.* Public Works and Government Services, Ottawa, ON, Canada. www.managers-gestionnaires.gc.ca/cafe-exchange/tools/toolkit/menu_e.shtml.

[27] In the US, for example, 40-44 million people (21-23% of the adult population) are estimated to be functionally illiterate – i.e., unable to use reading, writing and computational skills efficiently in everyday life.

[28] For example, according to Statistics Canada, one in five Canadians has trouble interpreting line graphs.

[29] The following principles apply primarily to text in a printed format.

[30] We use the term "publication", but the principles of layout

and design apply to any printed text – newsletters, marketing flyers, case studies or reports.

[31] Much of the material in this section has been adapted from Catriona Murray (2007). *Cultures and Cultivation of Communication: An Exploration of International Partnerships.* Final paper prepared as part of the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (PBAS).

[32] Adapted from Sharlene Smith (1999). *Types of Communication Plans* [handout]. CommPlan Canada, Victoria, BC, Canada. www.commplancanada.com.

[33] In his article "No Cause for Pain," in *The Times* (London), November 28, 1991.

[34] Much of the material in this section has been adapted from Catriona Murray (2007). *Cultures and Cultivation of Communication: An Exploration of International Partnerships.* Final paper prepared as part of the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (PBAS). Joe Phelan and Steve Metcalfe of IBLF have also contributed some of the information and ideas.

[35] For example, see Jakob Nielsen (1999, March 15). *Be Succinct! (Writing for the Web)*. www.useit.com/alertbox/9703b.html.

[36] For more on the Clean Business Programme, see www.czystybiznes.pl/eng/index.html.

[37] The writer formerly worked for the Organic Cotton Programme India, the programme described in this story.

[38] The Smith Family, The Benevolent Society and Berry Street Victoria.

[39] Buchan Consulting.

[40] A whiteboard, like a flip chart, is a way of recording what is said at a meeting in full view of the participants.

[41] For more on the concept of "boundary spanner", see Sean Ansett (2005, Summer). Boundary spanner: The gatekeeper of innovation in partnerships. *AccountAbility Forum, 6,* 36-44. Greenleaf Publishing, Sheffield, UK.

[42] From Jeremy S Lurey & Mahesh S Raisinghani (2001, October). An empirical study of best practices in virtual teams. *Information & Management, 38*(8), 523-544.

[43] Ibid, page 542.

[44] Adapted from Czech playwright Tom Stoppard's 1982 play *The Real Thing*. This slightly reworded version appeared in the August 25, 2007 edition of *Times Online.*

[45] See The Partnering Initiative website for details of these courses (www.ThePartneringInitiative.org).

[46] Those of us who now regularly use this game in our training programmes acknowledge with gratitude that we were introduced to it by our colleague Michael Jacobs, a great storyteller and facilitator of "serious games".

[47] From "Telling the Story", by Michael Jacobs, on page 34 of *The Partnering Toolbook* (2003).



Sue McManus

I have been rewriting and editing educational, scientific and organisational materials for more than 20 years, spending a number of these years in Hong Kong, where I gained broad sectoral experience ranging from editing medical journals for Southeast Asia and Korea, to teaching English to adults for the British Council, to working as a communications specialist for McKinsey & Company. In an earlier life, I spent a decade as a speech–language pathologist with a provincial government in eastern Canada. I now live and work (mostly online) on one of the beautiful Gulf Islands in western Canada.

In the academic sector, I edit theses and dissertations and also work as a writing coach. I have co-taught a "Professional Communication" course for an MA programme, and from time to time give writing workshops to postgraduate learners. I hold an MSc in Human Communication and a Certificate in Public Relations.

I have been an Associate of the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) since 1998, when I edited the *Managing Partnerships* book for Ros, spending many happy hours in the library at her North Wales home. *Talking the Walk* (2008) is my most recent IBLF project.

Ros Tennyson

I came from a background in theatre and in community development, and in my last role before joining the International Business Leaders Forum (IBLF) was chief executive of an NGO working to develop a new model of integrated health care. Leading IBLF's work in cross-sector partnering since 1992, I have undertaken partnership development and partnership-building activities in more than 40 countries, as well as developing and delivering tailored training and institution-building programmes for corporations, NGOs, the World Bank and other UN agencies.

In 2001, I was co-founder and am currently Associate Director of the Post-Graduate Certificate in Cross-Sector Partnerships (PCCP), a collaborative venture of IBLF and the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry. In 2003 I was co-founder and am currently co-Director of the Partnership Brokers Accreditation Scheme (PBAS), a collaboration between IBLF and the UK's Overseas Development Institute. Currently I am Director of The Partnering Initiative, a global programme of IBLF which aims to develop the "art and science" of cross-sector partnerships for sustainable development.

I have published several books on partnership issues, including *Managing Partnerships* (1998), *Institutionalising Partnerships* (2003), *The Partnering Toolbook* (2003), *The Brokering Guidebook* (2005), *The Case Study Toolbook* (2006) and now *Talking the Walk* (2008).

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Established in 2004 in association with the University of Cambridge Programme for Industry, The Partnering Initiative is IBLF's global programme dedicated to "developing the art and science of cross-sector partnership". The Initiative works with individual partnership practitioners and organisations from all sectors to build professionalism and organisational capacity in cross-sector partnering.

www.ThePartneringInitiative.org