Engagement Lab
Innovating irresistible community engagement

Presented by Les Robinson
Changeology
Phone 0414 674 676
Email les@enablingchange.com.au
www.enablingchange.com.au
The engagement dilemma

When it comes to community engagement in local government,

either

Lots of people want to be there because they are unhappy about something.

or

virtually NO ONE wants to be there because the issue doesn't interest them, or the engagement method is boring, or it's a poor fit for their lives.

Does staff engagement have similar challenges?
But first, let's unpack 'engagement'

Let's let 'engagement' stand for 3 things:

1) **Being noticed.** Something about your effort causes people to pay attention.

2) **Buzz.** Something about your effort causes people to talk about it, positively, in their circles.

3) **Come and play.** People are attracted to your offering, make time for it in their schedules, come along, and 'play'.
Four ways of looking at engagement

'Schedule breaking'
What do people break their habitual schedules for?

'Delight'
What grabs attention and draws people in?

'Virality'
What do people talk about?

'Designed to fit'
What would make your initiative like a comfy outfit?
1) Schedule breaking

What did you last 'break your schedule' for? (that wasn't an emergency)
What motivates people to break their schedules (apart from emergencies)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nice food (and drink)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nice location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People they'd like to see</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An important, or interesting, purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In short, the promise of a **rewarding personal experience**.
There's going to be food? Okay, I'll come.
2) Delight

People love to be pleasantly surprised.

And they love to pleasantly surprise others by talking about things that are pleasantly surprising.

Delight is attractive, motivating and contagious.
3) What goes viral?
People like to share positive and unexpected news

The most common feelings elicited by viral content were:

• Curiosity
• Amazement
• Interest
• Astonishment
• Admiration

Content that elicited negative feelings rated poorly.

http://blogs.hbr.org/2013/10/research-the-emotions-that-make-marketing-campaigns-go-viral/##!
4) Designed to fit

'Hard to reach' often means 'not reached by the methods we've used so far'.

An engagement activity should fit like a well-designed suit:

--> Times that are convenient

--> Places that are close, comfortable, familiar, friendly

--> Activities that are familiar, enjoyable, non-judgemental.

A good question is: "Would we go if we weren't being paid?"

A design question: If 'coffee with a friend' was the paradigm: how close could we get to it?
The practice of creativity

James Webb Young's 1940 short classic book on creativity:

1) Gather raw material (on topic and off-topic).
2) Digest the material ("feel it all over")
3) Sleep on it
4) An idea will come when you don't expect it
5) The hard work of testing it and making it fit.

"A new idea is nothing more nor less than a new combination of old elements." - James Webb Young
Innovation thinking and design thinking mean pretty much the same thing

Behaving like a professional product designer:

1) becoming immersed in clients’ realities,
2) creatively generating new solutions,
3) prototyping them, redesigning them, and
4) prototyping them again until they become market-ready products.
What's your practice?

Curiosity

Question: How many designers does it take to change a light bulb? Answer: Why a light bulb?

“...only 15% of managers prefer the exploratory modes (inquiry, probing and diagnosing). That is not to say that managers are incapable of inquiry. Rather, that only some of us have a natural inclination towards inquiry, most of us have to work hard at it.”

– SA Partners 2013. Summary Paper of the webinar titled Thought Leadership in the Area of Lean Culture, based on research project with 250 manufacturing managers.
Time and space to imagine

Innovation depends on times and places that are free from the creativity-killing restrictions of Gantt charts and deadlines.

It doesn’t all happen in structured workshops. It benefits from a number of different spaces, from stimulating and imaginative, to structured group processes, to private reflection time, to playful experimentation.
Getting out of the meeting room helps

Where could you go to stimulate thinking outside the box? A park, a town square, a child care centre, a hospital, a sports field.
Sometimes a special room helps

Mandy and Bec's innovation corner at Boroondara City Council
Safety and positivity

“There are no [negative] judgments in design thinking. This eliminates the fear of failure and encourages maximum input and participation. Wild ideas are welcome, since these often lead to the most creative solutions.”

- Fast Company, Design Thinking... What is That?

Being innovative feels personally risky because new ideas seem weird, wild or wacky the first time they're uttered.

New ideas are fragile and need a “nursery” where they can mature protected from destructive criticism.
Diversity

The ‘who creates’ matters greatly. Having a diverse mix of people with different life experiences and competencies is immensely valuable.

“Lab A was headed by a brilliant research scientist but a rather self-similar research staff. Lab B was filled with diverse scientists: a chemist, a medical doctor, a geneticist and so on. Two members of Lab B solved the problem in two minutes at a meeting and Lab A was still working incrementally on a solution 2 months later.” - David Eagleman, Resilience
Permission to experiment

Innovation needs organisational support and authority.

Can managers be given “permission to place small bets on unproven ideas”? 
Playfulness

It’s valuable to remove our expert hats, lay aside our professional knowledge, and see the world afresh, like children with “beginners minds”.

The simplest way to think like a child is to practice playfulness.

Facilitation with fun props, games, and a light touch helps create a mood of playfulness.
Some innovation props

+ PRIZES for wildest ideas
Let's create an engaging project idea!
Choose your facilitator

The facilitator’s job is to:

• crack the whip!
• keep everyone focused and on topic
• ensure everyone gets a fair go
• deadlocked discussions = ‘tag and park it’.

This may require stern measures.

N.B. max 5 per team
Our project

"Our project contributes to:

The desired future

Location and scale

at

by enabling

The actor(s)

The desired actions(s)

to
Feeding the imagination

Don't start until you've been excited by possibilities. Google up a slide show of engaging ideas.

Conversation starters, or “what engages people?”

April 2016

Here’s a collection of buzz-making ideas from around the world.

Creating opportunities for people they don’t know are a precondition for positive conversations.

Whether the aim is to stimulate or strengthen community relations, they’re good in itself.

Anything with food

To start with the obvious... a BBQ, a picnic, a garden party, anything with food in a nice place...
Feeding the imagination 2

What could classic fun activities tell us about engagement?
Could yours be a mash-up?
Let's get innovative
If not, then what?
This is a rapid brainstorming method that generates a tremendous diversity of convention-busting ideas very
The "If not, then what?" method

Step 1: Agree on the 'standard model' of doing this type of engagement project

Step 2: In silence, each person looks at each item and asks themselves “If not, then what?” [3 minutes]

Step 3: Share ideas in each group [15 minutes]

Step 4: Circle the most interesting/different ideas and report.

RULES:   - At least one wacky, ludicrous idea per person.
          - Minimal discussion. Get those ideas down!
          - No destructive criticism.