



Engagementworks

Community Engagement Basics

Session 4 – Video 1

**What is meant by the Engagement
Mind-set?**

What is meant by the Engagement Mind-set?



Introduction

In this lesson we are going to be talking about three things -

- First we will explain what we mean by the term “engagement mind-set”.
- Then we will state why it is important, and finally
- We will talk about what we describe as the engagement continuum which is really about continuing improvement

What do we mean by “Mind-set”

Here are some dictionary definitions of mind-set -

1. an attitude, disposition, or mood.
2. an intention or inclination.
3. the ideas and attitudes with which a person approaches a situation, especially when these are seen as being difficult to alter

In an organisational context what we are talking about is the culture – “the way we do things” our values and behaviours.

Why the right mind-set is important?

Ok, so now we know what it is why is having the right mind-set so important?

- Having the right organisational culture is essential for successful community engagement.
- If the mind-set is one that does not value public participation in decision-making then no matter how good the strategies and plans are, they are much less likely to deliver positive results.

Public perception is really important here. If people in your community can see that your consultation is not really genuine then they won't participate.

In the public sector, the reality is that over the years people have become de-motivated and have been conditioned to switch off. What this shows is that the mind-set in the public sector is not in the right place.



The Engagement Continuum



Better relationships, more trust,
quality decisions, better
outcomes



Beyond legal
compliance

Legal Compliance – have to consult

Much of the consultation undertaken today is done to comply with legislative requirements. However, good practice community engagement is much more than legal compliance.

If your systems and processes are focused on minimal legal compliance, then they will be seen by the public as superficial and not regarded as a genuine attempt to involve them in decision-making.

They will simply walk away and in most cases not participate. All you will hear from are the regulars who enjoy a confrontation with the organisation, especially with councils. The “squeaky wheels” .



What we are suggesting here is that if you want to build better relationships with stakeholders and communities that will improve the quality of your decision-making and give better outcomes, then you need to aim much higher than minimal legal compliance.



Ask yourself “where are we on the engagement continuum?” . If you have a positive engagement mind-set and culture in your organisation then you will probably be off the bottom step and well on the way to good practice.

From our experience in local government, since the special consultative procedure was first introduced into the Local Government Act, which was late 80s early 90s, people have become conditioned to switching off when the council comes calling for input.

The typical reaction, which I think a lot of you can identify with from your own experience wherever you are working, is;

- it's not genuine,
- the decision has already been made,
- it's a waste of time,
- there are better more important things to do,
- you won't change anything anyway so why should I bother getting involved!



So there is a lot of baggage that has to be dealt with, which takes time and effort.

There is no magic bullet; people won't change their attitudes overnight.

They need to see that their involvement will actually influence decisions, before this demotivated mind-set will change.

And if we want the public mind-set to change, first we have to change our own, so that the public can see and feel a real commitment.

They have to feel as though their views are really important and will make a difference.

And this all takes time and a lot of effort on your part.

Conclusion

In this lesson we have -

- Defined what we think the engagement mind-set is
- Explained why we think the right mind-set is important
- Talked about the engagement continuum moving from minimal legal compliance to good practice

