

Campaign Strategy Newsletter 64 September 2010

From DADA To Values: Consultations Issue

From DADA To Values: Consultations Issue

Campaigners and those who are the targets of campaigns will often meet over 'consultations'. Community activists, NGOs or even these days, campaign groups themselves, may be authors of consultations, and in a country like the UK, thousands of consultation exercises are held by public bodies every year. All these are intended to be exercises in communication, although they often have unintended effects, and don't produce the results hoped for. Nowhere are these trickier than in 'scientific' fields, where knowledge is often incomplete or indeterminate, and people often resort to 'reflexive' unconscious decision making, based on heuristics, framing or values, rather than the analytic reasoning which is normally pre-supposed in a consultation exercise.

Back in February the UK government agency Sciencewise (www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk) asked me to suggest ways in which values analysis might be used to make 'consultations' more effective, and the results of that project have now been published at <http://www.sciencewise-erc.org.uk/cms/consultation-and-communications-in-relation-to-motivational-needs/> in the form of a report *'Consultation and Communications in Relation to Motivational Needs'*. There's also a comment piece by me at that page *"I'm Afraid it's a Values Problem Minister"*. Even if you are not very interested in consultation as such, it's probably the most comprehensive summary I at least have written of values analysis so you may find that of use.

Big Bad DAD And Better Ways

The standing joke in UK consultation circles is that DAD gives way to DAD(A). That is consultation exercises which start out as part of Decide-Announce-Defend end up as Decide-Announce-Defend-Abandon. Often 'defend' starts when a campaign is launched, perhaps prompted by the Announcement, and 'Abandon' follows if a campaign is successful. "Good" you might say if you are a campaigner but no-one I know campaigns for the sake of it, and in reality most consultations are at least in part genuine attempts to make democratic processes work, even if they can never be truly objective or impartial. On balance I'd suggest it's in everyone's interest if consultation exercises are well designed, rather than structured so as to be bound to stir up opposition or create avoidable apathy, frustration or despair.

Campaign groups ought to take an interest in consultation design because it's often where their hopes for change are dashed. A campaign may succeed in generating sufficient pressure and support for the principle of a change in policy, for it to be accepted by a government or corporation. Then the process of implementation starts but this is no longer conducted in the public realm, or at least is much more obscure. The initial supporters of the project are not involved, the media's attention has long since moved away, and even the campaign group which counted it as a victory may not be devoting more than minimal resources to following through. Limited NGO resources and the desire of official institutions to do things their way and bring along 'key stakeholders' can all play a part. And then there's pure politics - your cherished policy change may get hybridised or linked to something else, re-framed and re-contextualised, and when it finally emerges once again into the public sphere as a plan for implementation, it may get wrecked on the rocks of public controversy.

As conformist Settler dominated nations gradually transform into more questioning societies dominated by Prospectors and Pioneers[1], Governments' mandate to implement what it decides, even things that were listed in its Manifesto, diminishes. Consent has to be won and re-won, at each stage in the process. Consultation exercises which assume 'authority' will simply get its way - the old Decide-Announce-Defend model - are less and less likely to fly. This applies to most 'western-developed' nations and will increasingly apply in countries like India, China and Russia, which are shifting their centre of gravity from Security-Driven 'Settler' to outer directed esteem seeking 'Prospector'.

Campaign Strategy Newsletter 64 September 2010

From DADA To Values: Consultations Issue

As government has suffered repeated painful experiences in winning public backing for implementation, in Britain a large industry of 'consultants' and other consultation professionals has grown up to try and help officialdom oil the wheels of consultation. Most of this 'consultation expertise' rests on detailed, inter-personal communications skills and techniques, deployed at the individual, group or community level. [See for example the extensive Dialogue By Design 'Handbook' free online at http://designer.dialoguebydesign.net/Docs/Dialogue_by_Design_Handbook.pdf].

Both these professionals and government have generally yet to develop methods and strategies for doing the things which campaign groups have become good at, such as changing the balance of forces by making new alliances, or making instrumental changes to social or commercial processes which are necessary before implementation is possible. For instance the UK Government is trying to implement EU regulations designed to protect marine biodiversity and has accordingly launched 'consultations' [2] but without first achieving some sort of political settlement with at least a critical mass of fishing interests, these may well fail.

Disputes over safety of vaccinations (such as MMR - the government was almost certainly right but managed to create the opposite impression by the way it handled public discussion), the introduction of genetically modified crops (ongoing), and major infrastructure projects such as a fifth runway at Heathrow (abandoned), frequent disputes about new wind farms, and responses to rising sea levels due to climate change (such as Natural England's climb-down over flood control/ coastal realignment policy on the Norfolk Broads[3]), are all well known examples of consultation controversy. There are many others[4], as well as some where this has been avoided. In the case of 'disposal' of nuclear waste in the UK for instance, after decades of high profile conflict the parties gradually converged on 'solutions' more in line with the original case of the critics, and part of that involved a recognition by government that it was not simply a 'technical' issue [5]. At a community level and in terms of sequencing, the basic alternative to DAD is to talk and listen a lot before making a decision or firm proposal. My version is share-consult-decide, (share the problem and the information, and then consult on options that emerge, then decide). Lindsay Colbourne and colleagues use EDD - Engage-Deliberate-Decide [6].

A key stage in this process is, as Colbourne says in her report on the Shaldon (Flood Risk) Project with Ed Straw posted at this website [7], involved members of the community in *'considering whether there was a problem to solve, and in framing the scope or the task. This was done as 'shared sense making' – it was about sharing views of risk and concern between the community and the Environment Agency rather than simply educating the public about the Environment Agency's concern'*.

The Shaldon project followed an unsuccessful Environment Agency attempt at DAD, and after a long process of EDD, a revised plan went through with wide local support. Colbourne and Straw's report is well worth reading because it spells out the pro's and con's of their approach as seen from both their perspective and the Agency (a large official agency in England and Wales responsible for waste, pollution and flood risk management), which was concerned at whether community communication of this sort was 'affordable'. It is these sorts of issues which in practice often determine what government actually does, and campaigners need to understand these processes if they want to see policies implemented rather than just agreed with as theories.

Campaign Strategy Newsletter 64 September 2010

From DADA To Values: Consultations Issue

In communications terms, the 'shared sense making' that Colbourne and Straw talk about is equivalent to the 'alignment phase of the campaign motivation sequence spelt out briefly at this website [8] and in my book *How To Win Campaigns* [9]:

awareness > alignment > engagement > action

What invariably fails is an attempt to jump straight from awareness to action, whether the awareness is of a problem demanding a new approach (as in many 'issue campaigns'), or awareness of a problem demanding implementation of public services (as in the flood risk case). Alignment is the phase where the audience(s) and the author of the message come to see the problem, and the possible solution, in the same way, or at least in the same terms. Engagement in the case of a campaign, requires an action mechanism (such as the clicks in 'online activism' discussed in edition 63 of this Newsletter), or in the case of consultations, attending meetings or other facilitated processes to give your views.

Why Alignment Often Fails

There are many possible reasons why campaigns or consultations go awry at the 'alignment' stage, where you need to seek 'shared sense'. I may not be 'aligned' with your 'message' because:

- I may not be hearing/ seeing you - there may be problems with: attention, opportunity, language, filtering, channel choice, or competition/ communications pollution
- what interests you may not interest me - factors of context, personalisation, immediacy
- I may be using a different frame - leading to problems with recognition or resolution logic
- I may already be undertaking a behaviour in conflict with what you say - leading to dilemma or discomfort
- I may perceive I lack the means to act - problems with ability and agency
- and lastly, emotional (psychological) rewards: it may not meet my (unconscious) needs, or it may be in conflict with them - motivational values

Using Values in Consultation

In general public bodies and NGOs are familiar with factors like attention, opportunity, language or pollution by conflicting 'messages' but are much less competent at dealing with 'reflexive' communications factors like values, framing or heuristics. If anything scientists and politicians are even worse, being unwilling to accept that they cannot win any audience over just with the power of their ideas, arguments or what they perceive as 'facts'. I discuss some of these in the report *Consultation and Communications in Relation to Motivational Needs*.

Without repeating in detail what that report says here, if those involved with designing consultations were to take account of the unconscious motivational values of those they wish to reach, as well as learnings such as EDD rather than DAD, they might be more successful and save a great deal of time and money. Take for example the three main Maslow Groups mapped by Cultural Dynamics (CDSM <http://www.cultdyn.co.uk/>): Settlers (Security Driven), Prospectors (Outer Directed) and Pioneers (Inner Directed).

The different underlying unmet needs of these three big groups lead them to have different assumptions about why you might consult, how to decide right and wrong, what the role of authority is, who they would like to hear from, how they would like to be engaged, what the outcomes should be, and what their role in a 'consultation' should be. And that is just for starters. They also tend to have different roles in communities and the dynamics of communities.

Campaign Strategy Newsletter 64 September 2010

From DADA To Values: Consultations Issue

Of all these the most obvious factor is that Settlers are change averse and dislike complexity, and so do not welcome any new project (as it is change), and want authority to lead. In this respect they are almost diametrically opposite to Pioneers who love making things more complicated and will want to contribute 'ideas' and ask questions that do this, and liking innovation, are quite likely to be the authors of consultations, and even more likely to be the facilitators hired in to help 'make them work'. On the other hand if it is a Prospector (results oriented, target driven) and or Settler organisation which is promoting an initiative, they will be reluctant to let go of DAD, and reluctant to admit 'defeat' (hence getting to (A) abandon may take 'forever'). As consultees Prospectors are a hard nut to crack but for different reasons: they are busy getting on with life looking to succeed, and so don't want to be bothered by 'irrelevant' issues, up until the point where it looks as if those might impinge on their interests. At that point they will demand 'proof' and interrogate a proposal by 'what's in it for me' (or for our community, group or country in so far as it affects advancement and status), and if they organise opposition it may quickly grow and professionalize as they apply their reflex to make things 'bigger and better'. See the report for many other examples.

Lindsey Colbourne looks back at the Shaldon experiment and comments:

"This was a flood risk consultation, a pilot scheme with the Environment Agency involving three years' of work with a 'community/statutory agencies liaison group'. It was 'open invitation' to join in, with regular public exhibitions. Everyone in the community received personal invitations to these. The community had a huge influence via the liaison group and open exhibitions on what was considered the problem to be solved, the geographical area involved, the type of solutions considered. Discussions were deep and complex, and many options were considered. Individual concerns were raised and addressed, but these kept coming back to what is for the 'good of the village environment and people' (ie mainly a Pioneer perspective). Lots of work was done with individual householders who were to be affected, including going with neighbours to visit those (Settlers) who wouldn't talk to those they didn't know. But when the scheme went to planning, a loud protest emerged, with the protagonists making computer generated projections of the shadow of walls on people's properties (Prospectors). This of course was of huge interest to the local papers etc, and got lots of coverage. In the end the final amended scheme was unanimously adopted by council but the controversy was upsetting to the Environment Agency. If I'd had had a working knowledge of Values Modes I think we could have anticipated it and adjusted what we did".

Readers in other countries or working on other subjects might ask: "Well, what has this to do with my country or issue which is very different from this quaint English seaside town threatened by a hard to pin down risk of sea-level-rise?" I would say that the fundamentals apply to almost any such exercise, whether in a democracy or not, and whether or not there are a large number of Settlers, or Prospectors, or Pioneers. The point is to take into account the motivational values of the population, and the cultural and social dynamics that occur between them as a result.

Book - How To Win Campaigns - Second Edition

The Second Edition of my book 'How To Win Campaigns', is to be published by Earthscan later this month - due on 28 September. Updated and extended. You can order it here: <http://www.earthscan.co.uk/?tabid=102418>

Earthscan have two special offers currently: a 20% discount (code **HTWC20**) and/or a 25% discount and entry to a competition to win a Flip video camcorder (code **HTWC25**). Just enter the code in the voucher box when you order. Valid until the 15th October.

Campaign Strategy Newsletter 64 September 2010

From DADA To Values: Consultations Issue

[1] Essentially the process mapped by Ron Inglehart and colleagues at the World Values Survey - see for example Ron Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy: The Human Development Sequence* published Cambridge University Press, 2005

[2] <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/marine/protected/mcz/index.htm>

[3] See <http://savethebroads.blogspot.com/> for one side of the story, and http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east_of_england/ourwork/climatechangeproject.aspx

[4] eg at <http://www.rkpartnership.co.uk/documents/Conflict%20or%20Consensus.pdf>

[5] For instance <http://www.srp-uk.org/servcurtis.pdf>

[6] Encapsulated in the new approach of the Environment Agency, '*Building Trust with Communities*', <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/ihs/research/environment/rehmarc/pdfs/workingwithothers.pdf>

[7] *Evaluation of the use of Working with Others - Building Trust For the Shaldon Flood Risk Project*, [For the Environment Agency] Ed Straw and Lindsey Colbourne, Lindsey Colbourne Associates, March 2009, posted at www.campaignstrategy.org here <http://tinyurl.com/33r9fjz>

The Campaign Strategy Newsletter - Copyright Chris Rose.

You are free to reproduce all or any part of this newsletter if you credit the source.

<http://www.campaignstrategy.org> is a non-profit website on campaign techniques & strategies, designed to help NGOs. To subscribe to this free newsletter visit <http://www.campaignstrategy.org>.

To offer contributions or comments contact the author chris.rose@campaignstrategy.org

HOW TO WIN CAMPAIGNS pub April 7 2005 Earthscan by Chris Rose see

http://www.amazon.co.uk/exec/obidos/ASIN/1853839620/ref=ed_ra_of_dp/202-6151204-2796606 or from <http://www.earthscan.co.uk/?tabid=102418>