With the Local Government elections just around the corner, many elected members and aspiring participants will turn their thoughts to the upcoming campaign. For many, this will pose a significant challenge. It will also provide an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their abilities to represent their communities’ best interests.

Where to start

When considering an election campaign it’s often difficult to know where to start and candidates may turn to a communications consultant for assistance. As a rule, however, there are strong ethical reasons why consultants are reluctant to assist with specific political campaigns, as it can place significant conflicts of interest on any current or future dealings.

However, for those seeking office, there are a number of things that candidates can do to maximise their opportunities.

Get out and meet your voters

Probably the most important factor for campaigning in Local Government elections, especially in Tasmania, is to get out and knock on doors.

Put simply, using a bit of shoe leather is the best tried and true path to any elected office, as it gives the community an opportunity to meet the candidate, air their views and, just as importantly, it gives potential representatives a feel for what the community is thinking.

Over the years, I’ve seen many aspiring and successful representatives spend many thousands of dollars on lavish campaigns with expensive posters, flyers, direct mail and even television advertisements. The reality is much of this money could have been saved by a bit of hard work knocking on the doors of the municipality.

That is not to say that a good poster and other communications tools such as flyers and direct mail are not effective and for those also holding down a full-time job in the lead-up to a campaign, it may not be practical to spend the time that door knocking requires.

Credibility is everything

The second most important factor in campaigning is to ensure you’ve taken the time to build up credibility among your electorate.

At a conference in Canberra a number of years ago, I heard a speech by a battle weary ALP staffer who had just finished work on Mark Latham’s unsuccessful tilt at the top job and he probably provided the best indication yet as to why the campaign failed so dismally. He stated that six to eight week election campaigns weren’t about what was said and done during that time, but more about reminding the electorate of what had occurred over the last number of years in the lead-up to the election.

The subtext being that elections are not about the campaign itself, but are rather about forcing people to actually engage in the political process and make a decision on the actions of the various political aspirants over many years in the lead-up to the poll.

For Latham, who only had a short run as leader prior to the election campaign, this meant he was unknown to the electorate and was therefore watched very closely during the campaign. Meanwhile, John Howard had been Prime Minister for many years, and so the community knew exactly what they were getting, and while perhaps they were tiring of him, they didn’t know enough about Mark Latham to make the switch.

Build a good track record

The bottom line is if candidates simply bob up six to eight weeks before a poll, they are unlikely to get anywhere. The real secret to success is to build a profile and a track record in the lead-up to a campaign.

For elected members this is fairly straightforward as they can use their position to get out and about, as well as make comments on particular matters. For unelected members it’s a bit more difficult, but the principal is the same – build up a track record over time so the community has an idea of who you are and what you stand for, and you’ll be surprised how much support you have when the campaign starts in earnest.

Getting your name in the media is important, as is getting posters and flyers out there. But at the heart of any successful election campaign are a proven track record and an ability to engage with the community. Follow these two simple rules and you’ll be surprised at how successful you’ll be.

Becher Townshend is the Managing Director of public relations consultancy Beyond PR and prior to that spent nearly a decade as a State Political Reporter for the Advocate Newspaper and Southern Cross Television. He has also worked for a number of years in Dublin, Ireland for a change management consultancy and now specialises in effective and crisis communications. He also conducts media training seminars for the TCCI’s College of Management.
people and performance

Developing Human Capital
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ANDREW REIMER
LG Performance Tasmania

Although we live and work in the knowledge era, we still have industrial era accounting and reporting systems resulting in many organisations (and councils) playing a knowledge era game by industrial era rules. One of the more serious long-term implications of this historic focus, is a chronic pressure to under-invest in the development and management of people. Consistently effective organisations are those that:

- Have superior strategies for managing and developing people
- Focus on both individual capability and organisational capability
- Have learned to measure people as assets
- Are able to withstand the short-run pressures that cause chronic under-investment in people

A common cause of corporate malfunction when reviewing current enterprise performance and developing a roadmap for the future, is the failure to properly integrate the many diverse activities that combine to enable the organisation to function.

Many serious problems are caused by busy senior managers looking at critical factors (including future plans) in isolation rather than reviewing them in the overall context of business effectiveness. The integration of corporate strategies and human capital programs and initiatives is frequently canvassed in the boardrooms but not very often implemented.

Extensive research around the world and recently in Australia, has shown that the following categories of human capital management factors provides a core set of measures that senior management can use to increase the effectiveness of their investment in people and improve overall corporate performance:

**Leadership Practices**
Leadership practices include managers’ and leaders’ communications and inclusiveness, performance feedback, supervisory skills, demonstration of key organisational values, and ability to instil confidence. Leadership is the foundation for ensuring that human capital is developed, sustained, and deployed successfully. Leadership practices thus lay the foundation for the achievement of all organisational goals. Many researchers have concluded that this category is the most important driver of an organisation’s ability to retain its top performing people. Low scores in leadership practices are associated with difficulties in motivating employees and problems in retaining top performing employees.

**Employee Engagement**
Employee engagement is an organisation’s capacity to engage, retain, and optimise the value of its employees. It hinges on how well jobs are designed, how employees’ time is used and the commitment shown to employees. The most successful organisations are those proactively managing talent retention by creating desirable work environments, including designing jobs purposefully, ensuring that employees’ time is well used, recognising and valuing employees and their work, and providing opportunities for employee advancement. Low scores in employee engagement reflect an environment where employees are unlikely to contribute their best efforts, causing problems in the important area of customer or community satisfaction and loyalty.

Continued Page 34
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July 2007 LGAT News
Knowledge Accessibility

Knowledge accessibility is the extent of an organisation’s collaborativeness and its capacity for making knowledge and ideas widely available to employees. Organisations that capture, apply, and re-use knowledge and best practices among departments and divisions and have successful, collaborative team structures are best able to leverage their knowledge and talent for business results. Low scores in knowledge accessibility are associated with redundancies within and across departments and reflect factors that cause difficulties in getting cross-functional work completed in a timely and effective manner.

Workforce Optimization

Workforce optimisation is the organisation’s success in optimising the performance of its employees by establishing essential processes for getting work done, providing good working conditions, establishing accountability, and making good hiring choices. Since human capital represents a major portion of most organisations’ total operating costs, the quality of the practices, systems, and processes for ensuring that employees are effective is a foundational determinant of business results. Low scores in workforce optimisation reflect inefficiencies and unnecessarily high costs.

Learning Capacity

Learning capacity is an organisation’s overall ability to learn, innovate and ultimately, to achieve a continual level of improvement. Hence, training, development, and innovation must be valued and supported in order for an organisation to have the capacity to respond to changing conditions and consistently achieve strategic goals.

Low scores in learning capacity reflect an organisation that has failed to take the steps necessary to enable learning and innovation. Such organisations are poorly equipped to respond effectively to constantly changing conditions in the market and the economy.

By focusing on and measuring these key attributes, organisations are able to:

- Link “human capital” to their business results
- Pinpoint with considerable precision the specific aspects of the work and learning environment that drive organisation results - both for good and bad
- Create road maps for the human agenda - the development and management of people - that will have the biggest impact on their success
- Shift their focus from cost cutting to value creation
- Become stronger organisations and better places to work - “Employer of Choice”.

LG Performance Tasmania works with local councils to assess these five key organisational attributes to develop leadership and management strategies. These strategies then drive manager skill development programs to improve current and future council performance. Succession planning becomes linked with such strategies to support councils in developing future leaders. Contact LG Performance Tasmania on 6236 9055 for information about assessment and customised program development for your council.
Once known as the “slacker” generation, Gen Xers are now becoming the focus of many communities. This generation, aged 25 to 40, is being targeted by communities big and small, whether to recruit newcomers, attract the ones who have left to come back home, or to keep the homegrown Gen Xers from leaving.

This generation is one who enjoys living as much as they do working. Actually, many Gen Xers believe that work is secondary to their life outside the office. They do not choose a profession based upon pay, but strive for creativity and flexibility. They enjoy diverse cuisine, outdoor activities and being surrounded by family and friends. The community in which they live is very important to them. Charlotte and Laura Shelton, co-authors of The NeXt Revolution, say that 51% of Gen Xers would leave their current job for the chance to telecommute, therefore Xers can choose the community in which they live based on the quality of life, instead of job location.

Many Gen Xers want a community where they can be involved. They enjoy not only the social atmosphere but they are willing to fight to keep their communities striving. Some questions asked when Gen Xers are looking for a place to call home are: What is there to do after work? What continuing education opportunities exist? How diverse is the community?

According to Rebecca Ryan of Next Generation Consulting, Gen Xers want to live in “cool communities.” The seven indexes which constitute a “cool community” are:

- Vitality - parks, trails and recreational areas.
- Social Capital - How well do people play together? Diversified?
- Cost of Lifestyle - Can I afford to live here?
- After Hours - What is there to do in this town?
- Around Town - How easy is it to get around town and out of town?
- Earnings
- Learnings

Consider some of these ideas to help your community become more attractive to Generation X:

- Promote the arts - Gen Xers tend to be more open-minded and enjoy activities that expand the mind.
- Support cultural projects - Diversity is important to Generation X.
- Rethinking Main Street - Recreate Main Street as the premier entertainment destination with sidewalk cafés, outdoor seating and a diverse mix of dining establishments.
- Recreate the parks - Designate a section to construct a dog park and add walking and biking trails throughout the area. Dog parks are a huge attraction for this generation. Since the Gen Xers are waiting until later in life to get married and have children, they tend to have dogs first.

Generation X can be marketed to in a variety of ways and will actively seek out information before making the move. Therefore, community information should be readily available for them to obtain. Websites are particularly important to this generation. Make sure you have a web presence that is up-to-date and your community’s information is easy to navigate and obtain. Research what factors this generation considers when searching for a home town and market to them accordingly.

Focus on Gen X

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www.boomtowninstitute.com
Program Logic - the Key to Effective Evaluations

BY CHRISTINE STIRLING, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - WORKFORCE
University Department of Rural Health

We evaluate to learn and improve. Evaluation is increasingly important in understanding the value of the public programs and events that all levels of government run.

Most people have heard of the need for evaluations and now understand that evaluations should be embedded within a program as early as possible. But at the same time, the diversity of evaluation methods and terminology can make the idea of ‘doing’ an evaluation very daunting indeed. There are so many program aspects that could be evaluated such as the idea, the plan, the delivery, or the results. This article looks at one approach to evaluation that helps evaluation decision-making for programs or projects that work to a set of objectives and outcomes.

The approach is called ‘Program Logic’ and I have used it on many occasions to answer the question “What should we evaluate?” This question is important because any program presents an enormous potential for evaluation and yet, most programs have very limited resources for undertaking evaluations. Therefore, an early decision in evaluations is deciding the focus of the evaluation. This can be done by choosing a prominent aspect of the program, by copying something that others have done previously, or by choosing something familiar. However, the Program Logic approach provides a decision method that will be specific to your program and your organisation’s resources.

The Program Logic approach is simply a case of answering the question “What do we expect to happen in this program?” In order to answer the question, evaluators need to identify all the aspects of the program including:

- The community need or policy that led to the program;
- The aims and objectives of the program;
- The people and other resources that go into the program (inputs);
- The processes that lead to the delivery of the program; and
- Expectations of the program (expected outcomes).

Identifying some of these components can be surprisingly difficult, but once it has been done, all of the potential elements that could be evaluated become clearer. All of the processes, outputs and outcomes that are within the program design should be documented in this first stage of the evaluation planning and linked together. For example, a community need links to an objective, to inputs, processes, outputs and finally, to program outcomes.

Objectives often link to other objectives because achieving one might rely on achieving another objective first. For example, ‘increasing the use of a community park’, might first rely on ‘raising awareness of the park amenities’. This is called an objective hierarchy and it is important to identify these links because evaluating the last objective in a hierarchy will be pointless if some of the program has not been delivered. Identifying this type of linkage in the program can save a lot of time and resources in evaluation.

There are four key program points to identify:

- The community need or government policy that gave rise to the program. For example, a community need might be opportunities for community interaction.
- The program objectives (these are likely to be hierarchical). These will often be stated in program documents but it is worth checking to see whether they are clear and link to the community need. To follow the previous example, this might be ‘to raise awareness of the community park facilities’, and ‘to increase use of the community park’.
- The processes that are used to meet the objectives must be identified, and often need to be clearly differentiated from the objectives and outputs. These might be ‘develop promotional messages and literature for local newspaper’, ‘develop posters’, and ‘organise local events’.
- Finally the results, that is the outputs and outcomes that are expected, should be described. These might include outputs such as ‘five newspaper articles’, ‘twenty posters’, ‘twenty community services displaying posters’ and ‘two park-based events’. Outcomes might be ‘20% increase in usage of the park’ and ‘four new community groups holding events at the park’.

The key benefits of the program logic approach are that it helps:

- Clarify program objectives and community need;
- Identify and map major inputs and outputs;
- Place outcomes in a hierarchy;
- Identify how each outcome can be measured; and
- Define factors likely to affect each outcome.
Once all these program points have been identified, it is easier to see what needs to be measured, important stages in the program delivery and how outcomes link to outputs. It is also easier to see where the program will already have data available, such as the number of posters, and suggests points for evaluating outcomes, such as seeing how many people were exposed to the posters and what they thought of the messages.  

This program logic process facilitates the evaluation design but also performs a ‘formative evaluation’ process, as it allows gaps or problems in the program design to be identified early, before any time (or money) is spent evaluating outcomes. It is surprising how often it becomes clear that the planned program processes are unlikely to lead to the expected outcomes, or that the community need does not link to the objectives.  

Another saving is gained when it becomes clear that not all the objectives will have been met because not all processes were delivered. The program logic can therefore justify not measuring all of the outcomes, because it may show they are unlikely to have occurred. Evaluating our programs, in the most cost-effective manner possible, is important in this age of limited resources. The Program Logic approach provides an early, ‘thinking through’ process that can save time and money and can also help to target evaluations to the most important part of a program. I highly recommend it!  

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Tasmanian Labour: Supply v Demand

Presently, there is much debate about the ‘skills shortage’ in Tasmania.

The tightness in the Tasmanian labour market can be illustrated by considering the contrast in the number of unemployed persons per advertised job vacancy in recent years. In 1993, the peak number of unemployed persons per vacancy was around 53 persons. In February 2007, there were 5.4 unemployed persons per advertised vacancy. In reality, it is likely that these unemployed persons do not meet the skill requirements of the vacancy. Therefore, the supply of labour in Tasmania is not equal to the demand for labour. It is also likely that the actual number of unemployed persons per vacancy is less, as more and more vacancies are not being advertised.

The straightforward economic implications of this are:

- Stronger wages pressures
- Staff turnover
- Increased difficulty finding appropriate staff
- Continuing upward pressure on interest rates

From an individual organisation’s perspective, the immediate issue is that it is more than likely that the person you seek to fill a vacancy is already in employment. In this climate, the focus needs to change from ‘selling jobs’ to ‘marketing employers’. As an employer, what do you offer a potential new employee as an incentive to join your organisation?

To attract the right candidate in this economic climate, greater emphasis needs to be placed on marketing, communication using the right channels and being receptive to the needs of the potential employee.

Skills in Demand

The chart below illustrates the employment categories advertised with tasmanianjobs.com during the first quarter of 2007. This chart can be used to assist government, industry and training organisations to identify the skills shortages and high turnover areas in Tasmania and plan for retention and/or appropriate training or up-skilling programs within the organisation or industry sectors. This chart correlates quite closely with the employment categories sought by registered job seekers with tasmanianjobs.com and also includes employment categories with known significant skills shortages, eg hospitality (particularly chefs), accounting, trades, IT and engineering.

For further information, please contact Lisa Taylor on 0400 190 964.

Source: tasmanianjobs.com January to March 2007

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**Tasmanian Vacancies by Employment Category**

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**SEARSON BUCK - PEOPLE PERFORMANCE**

Nancy Swain

Nancy is our HR Services Manager focusing on assessment and development strategy along with the coordination of Searson Buck’s specialist career transition organisation, The Denington Group. Recently returning from five years in London with an international psychometrics company she has considerable experience with Local Governments, implementing a range of restructure and change initiatives.

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Brett Smith

Brett is our HR Compliance Manager, he assists local councils to take a proactive approach to HR management, including risk exposure. His strategic and operational experience in enterprise bargaining, OH&S, HR planning, performance management, and compliance audits make his services uniquely valuable.

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Recent Bosslifts to Malaysia, the Solomon Islands and East Timor have given employers first-hand experiences of reservists’ roles in overseas military deployments.

Employers are taken to the “coal-face”, giving them the chance to see their employees in action. Bosslifts provide a unique insight into the benefits that Reserve service brings back to the civilian workplace.

Exercise Executive Stretch (EES) is another activity run by Defence for employers and potential employers of reservists.

“EES gives bosses an insight into the rigors of military training,” said Director of Reserve Support Steve Williams.

Another major incentive is the Employer Support Payment Scheme, administered by the scheme’s director, Doug Stedman.

“The Employer Support Payment (ESP) Scheme helps offset the costs of releasing employees on defence service and is paid to employers at a set weekly rate of $1070.40 regardless of their employee’s salary,” said Mr Stedman.

For further details of these and the many other programs run by Defence visit the website at www.defence.gov.au/reserves or call the toll free information hotline on 1800 803 485
Local Government Communicating with All Tasmanians

TRICIA COONEY, BUSINESS MANAGER
Vision Australia

The assumption that printed information is accessible to everyone is fundamentally flawed. Approximately 3.5 million Australians (as set out in the statistics that follow) experience a print disability, which means they have difficulty accessing standard printed material for a variety of reasons. As sensory loss is an inherent part of ageing, Local Government communicators can safely assume that the ageing population will increase the need to make information more accessible to people with low vision, manipulatory difficulties or other age-related issues.

What is a print disability?

Print disability means difficulty accessing standard printed information. The causes of print disability vary, but may include:

- Vision impairment or blindness
- Physical dexterity problems such as multiple sclerosis, Parkinson’s disease, arthritis or paralysis
- Learning disability, such as dyslexia
- Brain injury or cognitive impairment
- English as a second language - the ability to understand spoken English but not process written English
- Literacy difficulties
- Early dementia

A person experiencing a print disability is typically denied a broad range of information and services that the majority of Australians take for granted. Absence of such information will result in no action or sole reliance on the advice of a third party.

The Statistics

Research commissioned by Radio for the Print Handicapped (RPH), now Vision Australia Radio, in 2002 to establish the size of the potential audience provides the following data. This total figure is recognised as a conservative estimate, as not every individual who suffers any form of a print disability would acknowledge themselves as such.

Print Disabled Population of Australia by Impairment Type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impairment Type</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Literacy</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>193,300</td>
<td>205,723</td>
<td>2,607,400</td>
<td>298,216</td>
<td>3,304,639</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Print Disabled Population of Tasmania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impairment Type</th>
<th>% of Total Australian Population</th>
<th>Print Disabled Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>99,117</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Risk Management - Disability Discrimination Legislation

The Disability Discrimination Act makes it ‘unlawful for a person who, whether for payment or not, provides goods or services, or makes facilities available, to discriminate against another person on the ground of the other person’s disability or a disability of any of that other person’s associates’ other than where such provision would ‘impose unjustifiable hardship on the
SOLUTIONS - BREAKING DOWN THE BARRIERS

Information providers need to be aware of the special information needs of the diverse audience and convey material in a format that is accessible to all members of that audience.

Communication Strategies

Communication strategies will typically address:

- Readability - Plain English and easy to understand text
- Legibility - fonts, contrasts, stock etc
- Accessibility - are accessible format materials required and available?
- Useability - can your audience access and understand your communication?

Communication strategies that include choice in the way information is delivered will ensure people with a print disability are not inadvertently marginalised and also reach a greater audience in a more effective way.

Accessible Formats

In the experience of Vision Australia, people with a print disability will have a preference or particular need as to how they receive information. The channels used include:

- Audio - CD, DAISY CD, cassette, MP3 files for website
- Large print - accessible PDF or printed
- E-text - coded for computer generated speech e.g. rtf, html & ASCII
- Plain English - simplified text
- Braille - only format for people who are deaf and blind
- Tactual graphics - tactile diagrams and maps
- Accessible websites.

There is new technology emerging, particularly in the audio sphere, which will significantly impact on the ways in which information can be accessed.

- Broadband is increasingly available
- Digital delivery of a range of audio formats is now mainstream, through websites and podcasting
- New devices are becoming available, revolutionising access to a range of file types and formats

- Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) are widely used by people across the board including many people with disabilities.
- MP3 players are almost ubiquitous with people under 40
- Specialist devices like Bookports and DAISY⁴ players are becoming available to people with a print disability and pilots are underway at Vision Australia.⁵

Accessible Websites

Equal access for people with a disability in this area is required by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), where it can reasonably be provided. This requirement applies to any individual or organisation developing a Worldwide Web page in Australia, or placing or maintaining a Web page on an Australian server.⁶

Local Government communicators are well placed to ensure the provision of clear, concise and effective information to people with a print disability, by delivering this information in accessible formats. People with a print disability will have difficulty participating, negotiating or making informed decisions unless all relevant information is accessible to them in a format of their choice.

Vision Australia works with local government across Australia on strategies surrounding accessible information and produced, in conjunction with the Municipal Association of Victoria, a webcast seminar on accessible information which can be accessed at www.mav.asn.au/bcpr/accessible.

For further details, please contact Trisha Cooney at Vision Australia on (03) 9864 9607.

1 Print Disability Review  Department of Community Services and Health, 1989
2 Secondary Research to Determine the Size of the National Print Disabled Audience commissioned by Radio for the Print Handicapped and conducted by Market Equity, 2002, www.rph.org.au
3 Disability Discrimination Act 1992 Part 2, Division 2, Section 24 Goods Services and Facilities
4 See www.daisy.org for details - DAISY is the new standard in audio being rolled out at Vision Australia
5 Contact Vision Australia on the details at the foot of this article

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