



How to start your Community Engagement activity right

If it's time to set yourself up for success and learn how to start your community engagement activity right, then you need to learn how to create a great engagement question. Your engagement question is the foundation of an engagement activity. In fact, having a good question can be the difference between frustrated, angry stakeholder or a successful process.

Working to understand your stakeholders and, what you want to achieve by engaging with them will help you develop the best question to start your engagement process. It involves running through the first stages of the engagement planning process. Here's the steps:

1. Define your outcome

It is important to identify what you want to achieve from the engagement process before you set out. The more planned you are about the outcome and the engagement process to more confident you will be with stakeholders.

Your outcome can be as simple as:

- a. Develop relationships
- b. Get (insert infrastructure name) built on time and budget
- c. Solve _____ and have an approach for the future

2. Research the background of your project/issue

Your aim is to develop an understanding of the history and current context for the project/issue. This will help you plan your activity and ensure the starting point is set right for you and your stakeholders

Focus on the history of stakeholder interaction with the project or project. Here are some questions to guide you:

1. Is this a new project/issue or have stakeholder been involved before?
2. What was their experience (likely positive or negative) ?
3. Is there any 'outrage' associated with the project?
4. What is the likely 'position(s)' of your stakeholders?
5. What is the likely 'interest(s)' of your stakeholders? (interest is the values behind their position)
6. What is the nature or the impact on stakeholders? (ie physical, financial, behavior impact).
7. What is negotiable and non-negotiable in the project? (ie is there a definite budget...?)

It is also important to know the current context of your project and organization. This is especially important if stakeholders have been engaged on the same issue in the past, but it has remained unresolved. What has or hasn't changed that will help you be successful this time? It's also a great idea to document the political and social context.



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3. Identify the stakeholders

Who are the stakeholders who need (or are demanding to be) involved in your project? Make sure you brainstorm the range of stakeholders who are involved and need to be involved in the process. Take some time to map out the relationships between stakeholders, including internal stakeholders

4. Draft your question

Now you have a good understanding of your outcome, the history of your project and who the stakeholders are, you have enough knowledge to draft your question.

To develop the best question, you will need to know each of your stakeholders and their 'position' and 'interest' in the project. Paying attention to finding the overlap in the interest of your stakeholders as this is where you will find common ground between your stakeholders and you!

A question with the formula:

How can we
and

Is what you want to aim for!

How do I set myself up for community engagement success in 2018?

Glad you asked! It's easy just register your interest to join **"Community Engagement -Questions Change Everything!"**

Questions Change Everything is an online course developed by Susan Carter of The Community Studio and Max Hardy of Max Hardy Consulting. We will lead you through the step-by-step process and provide you with the tools, so you can set the foundations of a successful community engagement program – developing the best question for you project or issue.

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