

EFFECTIVE CONTENT INITIATIVE WORKSHOP 16.11.2006
TRANSCRIPT

Introduction

1. **Wayne Drew** introduced for IVCA, stressing the importance of communication in adding value. Chatham House Rules to apply to the day's proceedings. **[NOTE: For the purposes of this transcript, comments have been marked "Public" or "Private" to indicate whether the speaker was from the public or the private sector.]**
2. **Mervyn Levin** introduced for DTI, stressing that HMG needs skills from the private sector. Broadband changes the way you can deliver services.
3. **Angela Law** chose four public sector delegates to say what they wanted from the day:
 - "We're looking at digital media and how to use it more on marketing campaigns, including what the website can do for us; budget is a barrier".
 - "We have a drive to move over to ICT – one contract for major procurement across the whole country".
 - "There may not yet be real clarity across government on digital media".
 - "I'm responsible for e-comms projects, including transfer to a new platform with eGov and another government department. NB HMG can't cherry pick who it talks to, it has to talk to everyone – but how do we make it work for everyone? I want to learn how to take something as exciting as effective content and really make it work".

Engaging 'The Citizen' session – what is the relationship to be between Public Sector and Citizen?

4. **Stephen Watson (CTN Communications)** gave the first remarks. Broadband was very pertinent to the debate on providing public services and the perception of the quality of those services. All this was deep at the heart of the political debate – the poorest in communities relied on these services, so it was especially vital that they work. The demands of communication-oriented citizens had to be kept well in mind. Professional staff in the public sector tended to be idealistic, while service users were increasingly savvy and articulate. The tectonic plates of communication were changing rapidly. Only one in thirty people aged below 35 read a national newspaper every day. It was now all about embracing a new language of communication and using these tools to deliver it.
5. **Peter Cowley (Endemol)** explained that his company's work straddled both private and public sector media, including, for example, Big Brother and Teachers TV, plus some streaming for the Scottish Parliament. In the last two years they had been seeking to engage more with younger people and doing so by engaging with the area of mobile 'phones – more pervasive than the internet; some had more than one mobile 'phone. It was all about communities, interest groups and the like, getting young people interested and then "keeping them there".
6. **Léonie Watson (Nomensa)** was asked specifically if she had comments on the issue of inclusion. She said it was all very well saying that 70% of Internet connections were broadband when just 57% of households actually had Internet access. Rich media broadband was indeed fast and new, but this tended to be how younger people saw it. Many still thought it

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was almost black magic! It was essential to engage with everyone. The latest (2001) census had indicated that there were more over 65s than under 16s. Leonie said we needed to help those older people understand what was familiar about broadband and the Internet – e.g. you can pay your Council Tax via it. The Internet was “a crazy place”, so Nomensa tried to join it all together – accessibility and usability.

7. **Bernard Guly (View)** said their objective was to engage across the broad spectrum of citizens. Broadband coverage now reached over 90% of households and over 70% of internet users were on broadband; there were more mobile ‘phones than people in the UK and almost 40 billion text messages were sent each year. The digital divide was still there, but closing as the digital generation started to come on line. It was necessary to work with the way the landscape was evolving. View worked with FTSE companies, helping with their digital engagement with all stakeholders. This included striking the right balance between Government messages and services; looking at barriers to uptake and how to overcome them; changing people from passive consumers to content creators – “the participatory web”. Sites must meet the highest accessibility standards. But there was also a need to get the basics right and to research needs first. Other issues were channel strategies re mobile Internet, IPTV etc and new models for creating public value – they were looking at the digital landscape 2-3 years in advance – a future focus model. Young people were disengaged with the political process in society. The London Borough of Lewisham was one authority which was trying to address this by having “youth mayors” to engage with young constituents as to how society should be run and so forth – a sort of “Future Focus” model.
8. **Katy Eyre (Jacaranda)** said it all came down to rich content – some ran before they could walk. By way of contrast, in Doncaster, for example, 30% of people did not have access to PCs and many were over 65. Some threw out what they had now without setting up a replacement. Jacaranda worked with e.g. BP and Rio Tinto who wished to engage with all people, including – for example – indigenous populations high up in the Andes. The sort of questions which needed to be asked were: “What are the objectives?”; “What are we trying to say?”; “To whom?”; “How can we do it most cost-effectively?” HMG was bad at this. The starting point should be the effective content, then the delivery should be expanded “as and when” to the appropriate audiences. The public sector should look to the private sector for possible partnerships – we needed to get content companies and technical companies to work together.
9. **Comments from around the table:**
 - The public want simple services, e.g. checking where traffic jams are or booking a doctor’s appointment. The services fail because the service provider fails to think about the supplier – e.g. think about the resource requirements if the whole town wants to talk to the nurse at the same time!
(Public)
 - Supermarkets like Tesco who take Internet orders and deliver them do this partly in order to increase demand for their products. HMG needs to bear in mind that rich content is not just about meeting need but potentially about fuelling demand **(Private)**

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- We should use what we have now and integrate it with effective content and communications. Resourcing barriers and implications also need to be looked at as they may rise before they fall. Strategic priorities need to be reviewed/looked at with regard to allocation of funds for effective communications. **(Public)**
- Integration will cost more before it costs less – no good if just done via broadband, must be all media, including TV and “ordinary” channels like e.g. Hello magazine. HMG struggles as to what its priorities should be, e.g. reaching lone parents or getting people into the broadband space by the use of e.g. Hello or TV. **(Public)**
- Question is how can the private sector help the public sector e.g. build its business case – how to sell the messages upwards. The private sector can do much to help re return on investment. **(Public)**
- There isn't always such a gulf between the public and private sectors. Sometimes the public sector is ahead on communications, using integrated communication campaigns – note the creation of Howell James' post of Permanent Secretary with responsibility for communications across Whitehall. Business planning is needed from the start as to how to get this new policy out to the general public. **(Public)**
- The public sector is leading the way on accessibility. **(Public)**
- There is reluctance among IT governance people to use small companies, they tend instead to use big, “safe”, IT companies. We are now dealing with a small web agency with just 10 people – this has been refreshing, they have more “agility”. We went to tender, but it was below the OJEU level – however we are managing the project internally. **(Public)**
- We have noticed, when working with large corporates, that content is being taken away from internal IT and put with Directors of Communications or technical people. **(Private)**
- A small agency will not necessarily charge for each and every ‘phone call and will indeed be more agile. **(Private)**
- Regarding return on investment, there may be lessons for the public sector from the private sector. In the private sector, transactional services are a commercial proposition – about perception, perceived accessibility etc. **(Private)**
- We are talking about messages and content – who do we want to receive the message? This challenges the fundamental aspect of communication, namely the relationship between the message and the recipient. **(Private)**
- Segmentation is an important issue. The broadband and media environment helps us to talk to different segments – talking in different ways, giving out “tailored” messages. The public sector needs to get much more savvy about segmentation, which the private sector already does well. It involves identifying who the market and stakeholders are. **(Public)**
- The idea of Direct Gov is to move all content to one online platform. It is, however, difficult to decide how to give broad messages to such a wide audience. **(Public)**
- Even if you use Google, it can be hard to find the “right” place on government websites for what you are seeking. We need to link the Effective Content Initiative with GCN. **(Public)**

Effective Procurement & Working Relationships section

10. **Angela Law** opened by giving a plug for Anthony Lilley of Magic Lantern's document "Delivering a Successful Project using Broadband Content: A Practical Guide", which had been issued in draft form to all delegates. **Mervyn Levin** added that the Effective Content Initiative aimed to stimulate innovation in procurement. OGC had been contacted and had given their commitment to attend workshops like this.
11. **Paul Cowan (Clever Media)** said he ran a SME covering four main areas: film/video; live events; digital media; strategic communications. Prior to that he had worked in advertising. A problem with the way procurement worked was that it focused on costs and not (necessarily) on value. The crucial question "what strategic value will be gained?" should be asked at a much earlier stage. He spoke of the impact of digital content, giving examples of issues, e.g. Clever Media was on the events lists for a government department. The web was needed in order to start dialogue with event attendees in advance of their actual attendance. The present structural set-up drove a procurement reality, which needed to be disassembled. Digital media would help. Video was important, but as part of digital media only. He would start procurement further up the chain – that way one could be sure that value was built in.
12. **David Seers (COI)** said COI was a specialist procurer of creative services. He made TV, radio etc communicators on behalf of government. There was no obligation for government departments to use COI; hence the government message could be fragmented. His own background was in the production of TV commercials. In the private sector one had a unique service to draw on "we're fast, but easy – and always on"! HMG was not all a dinosaur any more – e.g. Direct Gov – government was different.
13. **Bryan De'Ath (BDP)** said his company was a specialist in learning communication, having a turnover of £11m and 55 staff. They had frameworks with various government departments, also with organisations such as Stonewall. Three years ago they had become a media supplier, e.g. for Teachers Learning and Change programme. Consultants understood their work streams well but not project management – they needed to integrate as a team.
14. **Comments from around the table:**
 - Procurement guidelines (OJEU) are needed for digital media. The focus on cost should not be overstated. Contract length can be difficult with framework agreements, e.g. problems from contracting agencies re the length of HMG contracts on offer. Frameworks are meant to enable fair and open competition. **(Public)**
 - The HMG organisational structure militates against efficiency. Process is king. It's about budgeting (before we start talking about procurement); annual budget setting does not help. We are usually selling changes in attitudes/behaviour – a much more complex process than selling e.g. baked beans! The communications directorate in my Department has

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been restructured to make it much more citizen/end-user-focused. That needs to be translated into policy. **(Public)**

- Our statistics are used by many and in many totally different ways. Organisations are not as customer-focused as they should be – this has to come from the top. **(Public)**
- We are trying to get all government departments to come out of their silos and work together. **(Public)**
- We need to talk to people about what they are trying to achieve and then make recommendations as to how they can do so. **(Private)**
- I agree on the need for involvement at the very start in a communications project – but a consultant thus involved might then be excluded from bidding for the implementation part. There is a case for more education of purchasing departments in this area. **(Public)**
- We usually deal with the private sector at director of communications level nowadays. In the public sector, however, we would have to deal with a project manager who is responsible up a long chain. **(Private)**
- There is a need for *specification* and *scope* – ineffective process leads to ineffective delivery. **(Private)**
- It is not easy to educate procurement people, especially about communications or digital communications projects. They expect a finite period for each piece of work. I would like to see a private sector perspective to educate our procurement people. **(Public)**
- Once involved as part of the client team, we work at the top of the strategy team. I have a public/private sector “take” on this – I used to be a procurement officer in a government department. For my company there is no incentive to work for government since we cannot build up a relationship. You win one contract in three, there is free pitching for all – it is not like that in the private sector. **(Private)**
- One in three like that can be a wasted opportunity. **(Private)**
- But it does ensure that all get equal opportunities to work. **(Public)**
- We have done successful work with COI, though it is hard to build up a sustainable relationship with the public sector. With the private sector you can get to know exactly how a company works, its needs etc. There is complete mutual understanding and full value for money. **(Private)**
- It is all about changing the landscape of communications. It is not so hard for SMEs to deal with HMG, but you have to do what is asked. **(Private)**

Measuring Success section

15. **Stewart Lewis (Ipsos MORI)** said the keys to success in communication of this sort were credibility/trust, access and the whole service which lay behind, e.g. what factors were driving one's credibility/trust plus the context of the beliefs in which one was operating. What was delivered to the public by e.g. nurses was well seen, but this became “bad” when it emerged as something government-funded. The “who do you trust?” issue was important. Things which government needed to improve in its communications with the public included ease and speed. Maybe there were things for government to learn from the likes of Easyjet and Ryanair. Government had lots of labels but very few powerful brands.

16. **Peter Christopherson (Echo Research)** referred to his background in the Association for Media Evaluation of Communications. Web 2.0 involved using the web as a two-way device – using the web to listen to people was a good target to aim for right now. One powerful verbatim comment would hit the spot. He pointed to the way people were increasingly taking charge of their own space/lives – even children, by the use of e.g. My Space.
17. **Angela Law** invited public sector comments on how success measurement was built into projects:
- We measure the effectiveness of our web presence every year.
 - We do not want just to use more traditional statistical methodologies, but to extend this to “insight” – but this does spoil the box-ticking process!

Closing session

18. **Angela Law** commented that it was unusual to have private and public sectors present together in a forum like this – and people seemed to be appreciating it. In conclusion she invited all delegates to suggest (i) a key thought which they would take away from the day and (ii) – re the Effective Content Initiative – anything, which DTI could do to move things on.
- (i) Web 2.0, sharing information etc is a key development – it is fairly key for HMG to help understand its audiences and shape responses back to them. (ii) When working with government, the missing thing is being part of a team, the lack of an ongoing relationship – how can this be addressed? **(Private)**
 - (i) Emphasising the food chain: what the private sector can bring in value added from the start of a project and research after that project. (ii) More of this – and please bring back Whitehall creative meetings. **(Private)**
 - (i) The Transformational Government agenda is a centrally driven initiative on the current 14,000 government websites. This is too many and causes confusion, leading to a need for government – both central and local – to review its e-communications strategy to see how services can be joined up more. I would also draw attention to the Heads of e-Communications Meeting, run bimonthly by GCN. It already has some private sector involvement. **(Public)**
 - (i) I especially note, between private and public sectors, the openness to review the procurement process. **(Private)**
 - (i) There are too many silos; we need a wider awareness of possibilities. (ii) Regular discussion will enable more to be got out of effective content – need cases studies of best practice and use of the GCN network. **(Public)**
 - (i) Keen to see more workshops like this. (ii) A supplier’s request to the public sector: “we put a lot of effort into tendering and bidding – we need more feedback than we currently get”. **(Private)**
 - (i) We are currently doing a pilot – it would be good to get some of the companies present today involved. (ii) A request: “tendering needs to be integrated into e.g. local council processes”. **(Public)**
 - (i) I take away the number of opportunities presented by digital media and the need for traditional techniques too. We should not look at digital in isolation – HMG use of the Direct Gov brand. **(Public)**
 - Please try to change the definitions of projects. **(Private)**
 - I support the aggregation of information through DirectGov. **(Private)**

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- DTI should keep its foot on the pedal of internal communications, I see a need for a resonance beyond this group. **(Public)**
 - A more integrated approach is needed. **(Public)**
 - We have touched today on many divides – young and old, dial-up and ADSL. We need to take the strengths from both and make them work. The private sector has many strengths – we need to build relationships between private and public sectors. **(Private)**
 - We must not forget about the people “at the end of the line”. **(Public)**
 - We need to communicate much more – only a multi-channel strategy works. Discussion is needed between private and public sectors, but also between suppliers. **(Private)**
 - I am encouraged by the synergy of ideas today. HMG needs to change and to be re-energised. I look forward to discussing with DTI how the ideas from today may be taken forward. **(Private)**
 - There should be a “government” button on Google search. **(Private)**
 - However exciting broadband content may be, it is not for everyone. **(Private)**
 - One aim of my agency is to reduce the harm done to people by the problems, which our agency targets. We would like you to stay involved, including checking who accesses the Effective Content Initiative website. **(Public)**
 - HMG should remember that the Prime Minister has drawn attention to the need to use the style of the most successful companies. **(Private)**
19. **Mervyn Levin** concluded for DTI (i) We would like to see rich conversations like this happening many times over; (ii) Advocacy to public and private sectors about future such events would be most welcome; (iii) Anthony Lilley’s new Effective Content CD would be available soon *and* (iv) “Please keep the feedback coming!”