One Size Doesn’t Fit All (or Even Most)
Lessons Learned in Effective Communication

Laura Lawlor, M.Sc., C.E. | GHD
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The imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium.

The successful conveying or sharing of ideas or feelings.

Oxford online dictionary
Reference Projects

• Replacement of a water supply line in Coastal British Columbia

• River and wetland remediation and rehabilitation in North-central Ontario

• Infrastructure pre-construction monitoring and detailed design in Central Ontario

• Creek realignment and rehabilitation in Southwestern Ontario

• Creek rehabilitation along north shore of Lake Superior
1. Know Your Audience
Client/Proponent
• Public or Private
• Business or Individual

Agencies
• Provincial
• Federal
• Advisory

First Nations
• One or multiple
• Direct or third party

Public
• Local
• Media/online

Project Team
• Internal
• External
Public may include one or a combination of:

- Immediate neighbours
- Broader public (municipality, web)
- Public Task Force
- Public Advisory Committee
- School or recreational organization

Public Task Force
Trails Committee
Public Safety Review
Nearby School
Private Landowners
Neighbourhood Landowners
Technical Expertise
2. Identify Objectives and Drivers
Define Project Success

Client:
- Cost savings
- Competency
- Schedule
- Innovation

Agencies:
- Adherence to regulations
- Support planning objectives

Public:
- Broad-ranging (objective, emotional)
- Supportive of improved quality of life
- NIMBY

First Nations:
- Meaningful engagement in review and development of projects

Project Team:
- On time
- On budget
- Trusted advisor
3. Engage a Diverse Project Team
A multi-discipline team provides better opportunity to connect with all stakeholders

Utilize the strengths of team members

Engaging stakeholders in the process can provide what may otherwise be gaps (particularly in emergency response scenarios where knowledge of site baseline conditions may be unknown)
4. Apply Relevant Communication Method(s)
Examples of Communication Methods

Public Information Centre (in-person)
Public Information Centre (on-line)
Client-hosted webpage
Webpage hosted by others
Reports, letters and memos
Mailings (email and/or hard copy)
Site Visits
Visioning and kitchen-table sessions

Factors to consider:

Accessibility of the site
Duration of the works
Seasonal impacts
- PICs
- Dedicated local phone number
- Client-hosted webpage and mailings
- Site tours
- Engagement with First Nations
5. Communicate Early and Often
• Establishing lines of communication at the outset is critical; equally important is maintaining effective communication through the duration.

• Perception is reality – in the absence of communication, assumptions are made.
“And will you succeed?
Yes! You will, indeed (98 ¾% guaranteed)"

Dr. Seuss, Oh the Places You’ll Go
6. Be Prepared to Adapt
... because sometimes plans change

- Rely on the communication plan and approach that’s been implemented throughout the project; revise as needed
- Leverage the diversity of your team to address the situation
- Stay in contact with stakeholders
Take Aways

1. Know your audience
2. Identify objectives and drivers
3. Engage a diverse team
4. Apply relevant communication method(s)
5. Communicate early and often
6. Be prepared to adapt