

NOTES FROM 2/19/15 NCDD Confab Call

“Newcomers, Latecomers, and Disruptors”

=> *Feel free to contact us with comments or questions!*

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Problem definition: Late entrant into a process

Defining the types of "late entrant":

newcomer (accepted invitation as soon as able)

latecomer (accepted invitation late, but delay was "authentic")

disruptor (accepted invitation late, delay was "strategic")

Other Key Definitions:

“System” - an orderly arrangement of related parts that (ideally) works together harmoniously and productively for a purpose (Note: in dialogue and deliberation that includes (we hope) making wise and sustainable collective decisions. This requires legitimacy of process!)

“Process” - series of actions, functions and procedures designed to produce a result. For dialogue or deliberation processes, the result may be consensus on some issue or, for instance, improving skills and relationships, sharing information, generating or evaluating options, etc.

“Procedure” - a method used to accomplish a particular task or action. For example, “orienting” a newcomer is a procedure.

Key Points:

+ In an ongoing collaborative process, newcomers, latecomers and disruptors can be planned for. Planning ahead makes it easier to integrate them into the process.

+ Processes exist within a system. Need to look at how well they are integrated, and for alignment of purpose when planning for disruptions.

+ You can use the ongoing nature of an issue to plan linked processes that help you manage late entrants.

+ Planning ahead allows for monitoring and ongoing "harvesting" of information and narrative building all of which helps you to anticipate and manage. See <https://buildingdialogue.wordpress.com/2011/03/08/setting-yourself-up-for-evaluation/>

PROCEDURES TO PLAN FOR

+ON-RAMPS - help get new entrants up to speed, integrate between processes. Examples: orientation packages, timelines, summaries, invites, evaluations or other reports and "check-ins" at defined periods (during and post core process) with follow-up dialogue, question and comment before scheduled meeting for newcomers or online "orientation package"; "neighborhood" outreach (ambassadors, "pulpit packages", other); layered resources; skills building workshops; facilitator recruitment and training

+OFF-RAMPS -preserve collective knowledge gained through the process, capture individual input, or link to other processes (including 'everyday talk') in a coherent way as process winds down, as people exit, or as other processes are integrated to allow for information gathering or to meet other needs of overall process. Examples: archives (accessible-may need more than one host to preserve), "homework" assignments on data or other issues with reports back at scheduled times, evaluations, interim or end of process reports (include purpose, process, participation, info received and considered, options generated, recommendations made), data retention and open data sites, feedback loops;

+ CONNECTORS - connect processes and parts of the overall "system" and help ensure alignment of purpose, information flow, integration of working parts, ongoing process improvements. Consider these examples:

=>system "links": connections to other decision-making processes: reports back - examples: scheduled hearings on report, implementation plans, accountability trackers, "visioning note"; education on existing legal or regulatory constraints and required steps during a public dialogue or deliberation; process and progress maps [identifying and linking with the intersecting, parallel or formal processes needed for implementation that are regularly updated and accessible]

=>issue links: issue maps, briefs, worksheets, discussion questions that highlight intersecting issues and policies directly or indirectly related to the one being discussed

=>people links: leaders, networks, hubs, participants, decision-makers, media

Note: dialogue and deliberation processes often fail because of a lack of "connectors" or failure to build enough on or off-ramps, undermining public trust.

THREE SCENARIOS

1. ZONING Your county had a visioning process, ongoing for about a year, with broad public input. Your staff has spent a year putting together a plan for implementing a key part, which you just presented to the county board. During the board meeting, several groups, who were invited to participate but refused, showed up in organized protest on a

key component of the original public recommendations. The chamber president, who started 6 months ago, has also contacted the chair of the board and indicated that she is sure some of the "prospects" she has been courting would not be too comfortable with any new zoning efforts, a key part of the overall plan. Your county has been experiencing rapid growth, and many of the existing residents are unhappy.

- + Planning steps that would help you navigate: Monitoring who and who is not participating in the community; intentional, sincere, and repeated outreach; monitoring of issues being raised by public outside of process and discussion of those within process. Summary document for decision-makers of steps taken, #s participating, issues and options considered. Monitoring plan. "Orientation" of and dialogue with key constituent (new chamber head but could be a new elected official) at earliest possible opportunity, well before meeting. Evaluation and monitoring plan that latecomers can be asked to participate in.

2. TRANSMISSION LINE You had six public meetings on routing a new transmission line. Notice was published in the paper and attendance was limited. Civic leaders agreed on the route and the council approved. Bid documents are being drawn up. Following a lengthy article in the paper, several neighborhood groups along the route packed the council meeting and expressed concerns about health, inconvenience, delay. They also questioned the need for the transmission line.

- + This scenario raises questions about the legitimacy of the overall process. Was outreach adequate? Were key stakeholders intentionally excluded? Is an immediate decision needed? Sometimes a process needs to be redone. Depending on the facts, it may also be there is more concern over the issues of health, inconvenience and potential delay than the need for the line. Consider making only the immediate decision that needs to be made (and explain reason and common interest in making it) and implement processes on the related "neighborhood issues" - what can be done to mitigate concerns, related accountability and follow-up), and improvements in future engagement.

3. PARKS AND REC Your Parks and Recreation Board held 16 meetings and one hearing on new trail locations. The new path was approved unanimously by the parks board and sent to the city council. The head of a local organization that participated in all the meetings (and who himself participated in the hearing) appears at the council meeting and announced there had been "no notice" of the final recommendation, that he was personally surprised, and asks for additional hearings. He is related to a member of the council who immediately condemns the process and demands that other options be considered. Several citizens whose houses would abut the new trail also appear and express concern.

- +As a facilitator or a decision-maker you might raise the question of "what are our obligations to those who participated all along? What approach would best

respect their time and input, help us make wise choices, and keep the public involved and informed as we move forward? Again prior planning and documentation would help reinforce deference to public involvement. New facts or information might justify a look at a portion of the project while still preserving much of the work done. If a clear statement of purpose of the public process and how it would be integrated with other info at the time of decision-making had been made by the ultimate decision-makers at the outset of the public process, that could help to forestall derailment here. If there is no clear commitment or link, what is the facilitator's responsibility to let participants know that during the process, or when handing off to the next step? An "off-ramp" can be an intro to the next-step process with tips on how to get involved and why it's important.

In addition to "obligations" to participants, what are obligations to late entrants? The following are suggested:

- + Newcomers: hear, inform, link**
- + Latecomers: hear, inform, address concerns as able that are not already addressed w/o reopening process, link**
- + Disruptors: hear, reflect choices made and why and opportunities presented, invite for future (monitoring and processes)**

BENEFITS OF PLANNING AHEAD

+Confirming your purpose(s); thinking about system/process links helps you to better manage expectations about a process and build trust.

+Defining your purpose helps you to communicate, inform, and set boundaries

+ Looking at intersections helps you to building and sharing knowledge (process and substance)

+ Planning for evaluation, monitoring and "fine-tuning" gives you opportunities for future dialogue, allows for the incorporation of new information and ideas, and to introduce change in a politically acceptable way

Handling Late Entrants Even If You Haven't Planned Ahead

+RESPECT respect the speaker and their concerns. Reflective listening, invitation to next step, intro to information. If there were flaws in the process like a failure to adequately engage can apologize and invite input on how to do better.

+BOUNDARIES

In framing your response, consider the overall narrative both for issue and for process; "Unpack" a concern and address part relevant to current issue and stage of process;

+LEGITIMACY OF PROCESS

What best ensures legitimacy of decision to public? What will encourage broader and more productive participation in the future? What best fits with the narrative of "we need to work together to make wise decisions". Can refer back to purpose of process, "ground rules", and provide alternative ways to be heard through working groups, on-line comments, etc.

++Note: several questions were raised about participants who just want "to disrupt process." Sometimes a late entrant simply does not understand the process or the protocol for interacting and confirming that no decision will be made and that all will be heard and there are many voices resolves the issue. Other times you may need to change the procedure at hand –

I (SJR) use a post-it technique that can help bring more voices out and sequence the dialogue in this kind of situation. If disruption is truly what they are intent on, bring that out in the open with a question like "so you are saying you do not like this process and do not want it to go forward. Is that correct?" If yes, you can invite them to observe, and confirm you are there to conduct that process and the related ground rules and check in with those who do want to participate. In this situation I have also given the "disruptor" paper or note-cards to record their thoughts and promised those would be reflected. Often the answer will be "no" and you can confirm that all are to be heard and then check in with others. Again you may need to change the procedure for discussing (move to small groups, homework etc.) to help others feel "safe" in speaking up.

Allowing for sequenced and time-separated dialogues that separate dialogue and deliberation and allow time for new information and ideas to "gestate" between sessions may be needed. Too often dialogue and deliberation are conflated in ways that encourage disruption. See for further info:

<https://buildingdialogue.wordpress.com/2013/04/12/planning-for-civil-discourse-about-gun-violence/>

<https://buildingdialogue.wordpress.com/2014/03/15/teaching-the-navigation-of-difficult-dialogues-intro/>

Online tools [CMB]

Blogs – use tags or categories, search, and summary posts to create “on-ramps” more easily. Example: at <http://bagshaw.seattle.gov/> (Seattle city councilor website), one can focus on just budget history via a category link to <http://bagshaw.seattle.gov/category/budget-and-economic-development/>

“Explainers” as on-ramps: Online news sites are pioneering a new tool, “explainers”, to bring readers who come late to a story up to speed quickly. Vox.com provides “cardstacks” on issues in the news that allow readers to get a quick overview, and then delve into definitions and detail by clicking. For instance:

<http://www.vox.com/cards/charter-schools/what-is-a-charter-school>

Web-posted spreadsheets as off-ramps and connectors:

Spreadsheets can be used to document commitments that arise from public engagement, and then track progress (or not) against those commitments. E.g. the results of a visioning process in Columbia, MO: <https://www.gocolumbiamo.com/CMS/vision/reports/tasks.php>

Archiving, off-ramps, and connectors: if web content documenting public engagement results has been lost or has disappeared, the “Wayback machine”, aka archive.org, may have taken a relevant snapshot. E.g. envisionprincegeorges.org used to document a 2010 planning project for Prince George’s County in Maryland, but now provides only French spam of uncertain origin. However, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100305045444/http://envisionprincegeorges.org/> provides a snapshot of the same page as it was on March 3, 2010.

Lessons from game and gamification experts: “Onboarding”, a new term, describes good practices for introducing new participants to an ongoing multi-player game, which could be online or “in the real world”.

Onboarding best practices suggest goals for effective public engagement on-ramps as well. Asking a latecomer to review the process to date and consider what may have been missed could

provide the latecomer with a **"quick win"**, which strengthens their connection to the process. Linking the latecomer with a group of similar participants who entered earlier, matched via geographically (neighbors) or demographics (other young parents, or other retirees), bolsters the latecomer's **"relatedness"**.

More: <http://www.yukaichou.com/gamification-study/4-experience-phases-gamification-2-onboarding-phase/>

FURTHER READING

Sarah has two publications that can help you plan, a workbook <https://buildingdialogue.wordpress.com/about-our-civic-health-diagnostic-workbook/>

and an e-book published by ICMA

http://www.amazon.com/Civic-Engagement-Question-Shape-Effective-ebook/dp/B00JS3ULSG/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1398279718&sr=8-1&keywords=Civic+Engagement%3A+10+Question+to+Shape+an+Effective+Plan

We also recommend:

The Creative Problem Solvers Handbook For Negotiators and Mediators published by the ABA is good for facilitators too! Full of real-life situations and interventions to move things forward.

The Speed of Trust by Stephen Covey

Helps to think through individual, process and system legitimacy

The Magic of Dialogue by Daniel Yankelovich

(see chapter on the "10 Potholes of the Mind", many of which you will encounter as a facilitator and all of which can be addressed with some advance planning!)