

Making government work better by...

Putting our **AUDIENCES** first



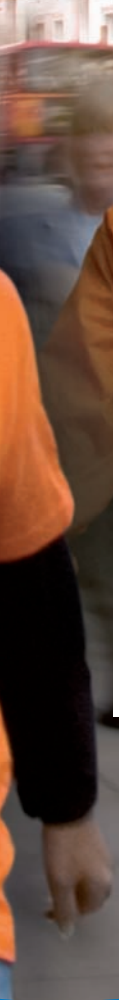
Today's media landscape is increasingly competitive, and the public can be more selective than ever about what they do and don't tune into. The challenge for government communicators is how to ensure our messages cut through the clutter to reach often cynical or indifferent audiences.

This explosion of new channels, new media and new ways of communicating demands fresh approaches and tools, and this is what the Engage programme provides.

A small team from government communications worked with private sector marketing experts, colleagues from all the major departments and the Central Office of Information, to create a common framework for strategic communication in government. Embracing techniques such as segmentation, targeting and insight, the aim is to help government communicators deliver more effective communication that puts the audience first. The Engage framework is supported by an online knowledge bank of practical guidance for communicators and best practice case studies.

The core of Engage is based on gaining deep insights into what motivates people.

By basing your communication on genuine insight into your audience, real behaviour change can happen. The Department for Transport's rear seat belt campaign illustrates starkly how effective this can be. Research and analysis into why people in back seats didn't wear seat belts unearthed a key insight that would shake the audience out of their complacency: as an unbelted passenger you could end up killing or injuring the person in the front seat. The resulting campaign was extremely effective, delivering rapid behaviour change, with a 23% increase in seat belt wearing just one year after the campaign launched. Taking the time to gain true insight into their audience really paid off.



Designed as a three-year change programme, Engage was launched in April 2006, and since then over two thirds of Government Communication Network (GCN) members have been on an Engage learning event, and over 100 policy specialists have attended the Strategic Communications course at the National School of Government. The Chartered Institute of Marketing, the Chartered Institute of Public Relations, the National Social Marketing Centre, as well as Cranfield University, have all endorsed the Engage approach.

Engage principles are now being applied to a number of departmental communications projects, as well as on major cross-government communication strategies, such

as planning for a Winter Warmer Campaign (a joint initiative with the Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health and Department of Trade and Industry). And recent research, in January and February 2007, has shown that Engage is off to a great start among government communicators. After its first year, 80% of GCN members are aware of the programme and over a third of those members who were aware of Engage had a detailed or good knowledge, largely due to all the events and training courses that have helped spread the word.

The GCN Engage Knowledge Bank was launched in April 2006 (www.comms.gov.uk/engage) and comprised 40 subject areas, 24 case studies and nearly 70 tools (checklists, guides, charts).

Cabinet Office Communication

Good communications require speed and coordination in a media world which never stops. The Cabinet Office Communications Group provides carefully targeted, specific communications to journalists, broadcasters, the public and its own staff.

The Press Office operates a 24/7 service to the media providing information, press notices, statements and speeches. It also handles publicity campaigns and supports ministers at events and launches. It works closely with the No.10 Press Office to coordinate government messages across Whitehall departments.

The Corporate Communications team communicates internally and externally with responsibility for internal web pages as well as the Cabinet Office and Civil Service websites. *Inside*, its weekly staff magazine, won the Communicators in Business Award of Excellence for its e-mail newsletter/e-zine for 2007.

The team published the government's Capability Reviews covering 11 departments and the Policy Review, announced by the Prime Minister in October 2006, and described as 'one of the most ambitious and demanding exercises ever conducted within Government'. Three papers covering public services, security, crime and justice and Britain in the world have been published so far.

We need a much more strategic approach to communication to ensure that communication is at the heart of the policy process.

Gus O'Donnell,
Cabinet Secretary
and Head of the
Home Civil Service