



Imagine that!

Town of Stratford Engagement Strategy

October 2012

Town of Stratford Engagement Strategy

Introduction

The Town of Stratford has embraced the concept of Sustainability and has a vision of a future where:

residents social, physical and spiritual needs are met, where our culture is diverse and thriving, where our heritage is protected and celebrated, where our natural environment is protected and respected, where there is a thriving local economy and where there is an open, accountable and collaborative governance system

In order to ensure that we move continually towards that desired future, the Town has developed a Strategic Performance Management System. The system is a blend of the Balanced Scorecard, a widely used strategic management tool, and the Town's sustainability values. We call this system *Sustainable Stratford – Results Matter*. Within this system, we have identified 16 corporate strategic objectives, two of which are:

- To increase Communications – Stratford will improve communications to and with residents and stakeholders and increase awareness of the community outside of Stratford; and
- To Increase Community Engagement – Stratford will engage significantly more residents and stakeholders in the decision making process based on collaborative planning principles.

To address these objectives, we held a roundtable session on engagement, communications and branding in the fall of 2011 with members of the local marketing community. From that session, we drafted a Request for Proposals (RFP) to engage the services of a consultant to develop a communication and branding strategy for the Town. In the RFP, we asked the consultant to develop a strategy for the Town to enable us to:

- better communicate with present and future residents and stakeholders;
- increase awareness of the leadership, innovation and improvements to the democratic/governance process that we are undertaking; and
- inspire residents and stakeholders to participate more fully in their governance, to think and act collectively instead of individually and to define and achieve a collective vision of the future.

The contract for this work was awarded to the Sharp Group and the executive Summary of their report is included herein as Appendix B. Through research and discussion with Town officials and residents, they have developed a strong communication strategy and unique and complementary brand that form the strong foundation upon which this engagement strategy is built.

Town of Stratford Engagement Strategy

Engagement

Government organizations around the world have recognized the value of increased engagement of their citizens in the decision making process. This is particularly true at the local government level where there are many examples of communities who are using new and innovative ways of engaging their citizens. A review of the literature reveals that there are many benefits of increased engagement which include:

- more empathy by citizens for other perspectives and for the decision faced by the governing body;
- greater buy in of the decision and more effective enforcement where it is regulatory in nature;
- increased social capital in the community (improved trust and relationships);
- citizens who are more involved and invested in their community; and
- increased efficiency in municipal service delivery.

The Institute of Public Participation (IAP2) describes public engagement as a continuum from:



A complete description of the IAP2 spectrum and values can be found in Appendix A. The Town has made a commitment in *Sustainable Stratford - Results Matter* to collaborative engagement which means engaging fully from the beginning to the end of the decision making process and trying to ensure that all viewpoints are fairly represented. This will start with clear and frequent communication with residents and stakeholders to enable residents to fully participate in community life. As the complexity and impact of decisions increases, the level of engagement will increase from communication to consultation to collaboration. We call this the Triple C approach to engagement – communicate, consult and collaborate. We will use many different communication methods and processes to ensure that residents and stakeholders can access information and participate in decision making in the way that they are most comfortable. Residents and stakeholders, for their part, will be asked to commit to respectful and thoughtful participation in the engagement process. Together we will create the best community possible.

The following table illustrates what the goal, application guideline, resident commitment and potential tools are for each engagement approach:

Town of Stratford Engagement Strategy

	→ Increasing Engagement →		
Level of Engagement	communicate	consult	collaborate
Goal	To provide information to residents and stakeholders	To communicate and seek feedback from residents and stakeholders on options or alternatives	To communicate, consult and collaborate with residents and stakeholders to frame the question, design the process and identify solutions together
Application Guideline	<p>This approach will be used when no decision is required and it is for information only or when the decision has a minor impact on resources and/or on residents and stakeholders and it includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies • Minor Purchases* • Events • Programs • Policies • Non-Discretionary Planning Decisions • Operational Reports and Data 	<p>This approach will be used when a decision has an impact on resources and/or residents and stakeholders or where a decision must be made but alternatives are available and it includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Studies and Plans • Discretionary Planning Decisions • Major Purchases* • Bylaw Amendments • Policies 	<p>This approach will be used when developing future visions or when a decision has a major impact on resources and/or residents and stakeholders and it includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Planning • Official Plan • Studies and Plans • Annual Budgets • Major Purchases* • Bylaws
Resident Commitment	To become informed	To become informed and provide considered feedback	To become informed and contribute meaningfully to the discussion with an open mind and heart
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media releases • Newsletters • Website • School Notices • Sign Board • Email Distribution • Council Meetings • Field Trips • Social Media • Demonstrations • Mobile aps • Bill stuffers 	<p>In addition to the methods under communication,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Meetings • Open Houses • Surveys • Focus Groups 	<p>In addition to the methods under communication and consultation,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizen Panels • Discussion Forums • Decision Making Systems • Plebiscites

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* Major Purchases are significant new programs which have an annual cost in excess of \$100,000 per year or a new capital project with a one time cost to the municipality (after funding from other sources) in excess of \$1,000,000. Minor Purchasing includes all items contained within the approved operating and capital budgets below those thresholds.

A more detailed guideline is being developed for each engagement tool which will include a description of the steps to follow, templates to use and messaging to include. All of the Town staff will be responsible to ensure that engagement becomes a fundamental part of how the Town operates. To ensure success, the Town will identify and remove barriers to participation to ensure that all voices can be heard, subject to available resources.

Communication Guidelines

Our positioning statement is:

Stratford, Prince Edward Island is a vibrant, growing, welcoming community where the best of PEI's land and water resources blend with a mix of urban and rural living to create the **balanced lifestyle** people are looking for and engaged residents actively share the responsibility of **innovative governance** with their elected officials.

Our key messages are:

- *The Town of Stratford is building a better community where every person is respected and has the opportunity to reach their full potential. **Imagine that!***
- *The Town of Stratford encourages all members of the community to share their views and ideas to help make Stratford the best possible place to live. **Imagine that!***
- *The Town of Stratford is committed to building a strong local economy, preserving our heritage, celebrating our diverse culture and respecting the natural environment entrusted to us for present and future generations. **Imagine that!***

Brand Implementation

Following the Sharp Group consultation with Town Officials, review of the Town's vision and initiatives and consultation with residents and stakeholders through focus groups, the following is the new logo and tagline for the Town:



Imagine that!

The rationale for the logo and tagline is as follows:

Growth: *in the sense that the shape is largely representative of flora with leaves and even seeds. Further the symbol also suggests radiating, explosive growth, or the dispersal of energy from a central point. The placement of the "seed pods" is also suggestive of fireworks, which perhaps subliminally, has the effect of representing explosive or exciting movement.*

Vibrancy: *If the concept of a living growing community were not represented fully in the flora theme, it is definitely driven home by the colour palette, which was suggested originally by the Town crest. While the colours are natural earthy tones representative of a seaside Prince Edward Island community, they are also representative of the colours of life and growth: earth, water, and living greenery.*

Geography: *As mentioned, the colours of the geography of the community are represented. The shapes and location of the colours are important too, with the flora and land elements rising from the water.*

Typestyle: *The script is important as it is friendly, and humanistic without being too formal. It also balances the very slight formality of the serif font, which in itself is still humanistic and personal.*

Conclusion

The implementation of the full engagement strategy is an ambitious but fundamental part of the Town's journey to build the best community possible. The benefits accrue not only to improving the formal governance of the community, but also to improving the lives of the residents of Stratford. We invite residents and stakeholders to join us on this journey!

Appendix A - IAP2 Spectrum and Values

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



Increasing Level of Public Impact

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Public participation goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
Promise to the public	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fact sheets Web sites Open houses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Workshops Deliberative polling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen advisory committees Consensus-building Participatory decision-making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Citizen juries Ballots Delegated decision



International Association
for Public Participation

IAP2 Core Values of Public Participation

As an international leader in public participation, IAP2 has developed the “IAP2 Core Values for Public Participation” for use in the development and implementation of public participation processes. These core values were developed over a two year period with broad international input to identify those aspects of public participation which cross national, cultural, and religious boundaries. The purpose of these core values is to help make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.

Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognizing and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

For more information, visit the IAP2 Web site at www.iap2.org.

Appendix B – Sharp Group Communications and Branding Report
Executive Summary

Town of Stratford
Strategic Communication and Branding Strategy

Executive Summary



October-2012

1.0 Executive Summary

Project Objectives

The Sharp Group was commissioned by the Town of Stratford to develop a strategic communication plan anchored by a new branding strategy that would allow the Town of Stratford to:

- *better communicate with present and future residents and stakeholders,*
- *increase awareness of the leadership, innovation and improvements to the democratic/governance process that the Town and its citizens are undertaking together; and*
- *inspire residents and stakeholders to participate more fully in their governance, to think and act collectively instead of individually and to define and achieve a collective vision of the future.*

Best Practice

In general, best practice research pointed out the need for a framework, guiding principles, clarity on the continuum of engagement and selecting appropriate approaches for engaging the various segments of the public on specific issues. There is also a general agreement that in order to establish a leadership position in community engagement investment must be made to strengthen internal government capacity.

Steps for Improving Community Engagement



Communication Plan

Communication Objectives

The plan starts with a definition of five communication objectives, essentially a summary of what needs to be communicated, to whom and for what result.

Target audiences

Key target groups are defined, internally and externally, as well as key influencers who will help spread the message.

Positioning Statement

This is a concise statement that encapsulates who we are, how we are different and “what’s in it for me as a stakeholder”. This is the core principle that will guide all Town communications:

Stratford, Prince Edward Island is a vibrant, growing, welcoming community where the best of PEI's land and water resources blend with a mix of urban and rural living to create the **balanced lifestyle** people are looking for and engaged residents actively share the responsibility of **innovative governance** with their elected officials.

Brand Strategy

Results of focus groups held internally and externally to pre-test the branding approach are outlined in the plan and detailed in the Appendix. Resulting from this process is the following recommendation:

Recommended branding approach

Alternate versions are recommended for application to light and dark backgrounds.



Detailed rationales and specifications are included for the branding approach.

Creative/message Strategy

Suggestions are offered for implementation of the new brand in a variety of applications, internally and externally.

Media Strategy

This section covers detailed recommendation for online and offline communications, which are summarized in the Timeline chart below.

Implementation Guidelines

Recommendation are made for how to manage the communication function and budgeting guidelines offered.

Original Timelines

Suggested phasing for getting it all done

Task	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
MANAGEMENT								
Approve Communication Plan								
Assign communication responsibility								
Launch branding								
Internal communication training								
Establish Mayor's Citizens Advisory Group								
Manage Mayor's Citizens Advisory Group								
ONLINE COMMUNICATION								
Website upgrades								
Establsih Brand Barn								
Set up <i>Virtual Doorstep</i>								
Launch <i>Virtual Doorstep</i>								
Manage <i>Virtual Doorstep</i>								
OFFLINE COMMUNICATION								
Establish Media Relations Strategy								
Manage media relations								
Implement signage , vehicles, etc.								