



A case study

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and The Leading Change Partnership: providing information, Marketing And Take Up.

Introduction

Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council have joined up in partnership with The Leading Change Partnership to develop an innovative and effective application of ICT in the form of promotional digital footage on CD-ROM, promoting e-government in general and raising awareness to citizens, staff and members in particular.

With supporting research and consultation from MORI, the council identified that council services can be confusing for citizens because of a lack of distinction over who is responsible for specific services. The council were aware of a strong link between residents' satisfaction with their council and how well the council keeps citizens informed of services and improvements. In reaction to this, the council wanted to raise awareness of their services to achieve higher levels of satisfaction and an increased take up of services.

The council joined in partnership with The Leading Change Partnership after Dorcas Bunton, Director of Corporate Resources, contributed to their e-Champions Newsletter and consequently became aware of existing promotional CD-ROMs and partnership workings they had with other local authorities such as Worcestershire and Warwickshire County Council.

The council felt that promotion and 'buy-in' of e-government is the key to success and part of the IEG2 strategy became an e-government promotional video aimed at providing information, raising awareness, gauging views and encouraging usage". (Basingstoke and Deane BC 2002, IEG2)

To achieve awareness the following objectives were identified:

- to inform the local community about the impact that e-government will have regarding service provision;
- to inform members and officers and keep them constantly updated;
- to inform all audiences about the continuous and future developments;
- to keep the citizen informed to avoid misperception; if the technology fails to deliver improvements expected by citizens, this will lead to customer dissatisfaction.

The solution, why did it work?

The digital video on CD-ROM is capable of display across different channels including two large plasma screens that have been installed in Basingstoke and Deane's main reception areas. The plasma screens are used as a 'notice board' & have enabled the council to deliver messages with the innovative benefit of using the technology to demonstrate the technology and simply, because a picture speaks 1000 words. It also means that it is understandable to those who may be unable to read. The digital video on CD-ROM can also



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be used in a number of different ways: played on laptops for trailer exhibitions or for demonstration of progress to date to auditors, played on kiosks throughout the Borough, on the councils website, PowerPoint presentations, Internet and intranet, e-mail etc....

Basingstoke and Deane have established technology to deliver awareness of the council's e-Government initiatives, such as the kiosks, which were already in place as the council had implemented a comprehensive ICT strategy since 1999. The new initiatives were the plasma screens, enabling the council to deliver a number of messages for citizens and the whole organisation and to act as a notice board. These were probably the most expensive outlay but are seen as an investment for the organisation.

All visitors to the council reception areas including citizens, staff and members view the promotional digital video. The staff and members are delighted to see themselves in action and the citizens are interested to find out what is going on, and hear from other citizens demonstrating the council services. The digital video has enabled the council to build trust, internally and externally by simply providing more accessible information and thus increasing awareness and encouraging ownership across the organisation.

It is worth noting, as with all communications strategies, the video footage will become dated and there is a need to follow up the content keeping it up to date to maintain interest and relevance. The Leading Change Partnership therefore offer a pick and mix library service to keep the existing CD-ROM footage up to date without the cost of producing another CD-ROM to sustain change. As in the case of Basingstoke and Deane, at the time of filming the deputy Leader was Deputy he has since been promoted to Leader and those changes will be implemented.

Critical Success Factors

- demonstrates progress to date
- demonstrates future progress
- informs citizens, staff and members
- instantly briefs and informs viewers due to the highly visual nature of the medium - because of this, there is a strong responsibility to ensure the message is absolutely correct before it is released. The Leading Change Partnership is using proven tools and techniques and working with an appointed Basingstoke and Deane e-government steering group, to ensure the correct message is achieved.
- the media ensures no single grouping is excluded – basic skills are not required and the digital video is narrated throughout and there is no discrimination against the visually impaired



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- the digital footage is a historical record of milestones achieved, a benchmarking system and can be used to measure before and after markers
- demonstrates all that is going on behind the scenes.

Irene Cook, E-Government Co-ordinator at Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council, believes that the initiative was successful because “it is a very portable and simple technology that everyone involved could relate to.” She goes on to say “people are feeling much more at ease with dealing with technology and experimenting as to what can be achieved. The CD-ROM is certainly a cost effective medium for getting some complicated messages over. In addition the staff had a big buzz from the contribution, so this wasn't a complicated or costly solution to getting a very important message over, especially to our residents when visiting the offices or the kiosks, we felt it was important to let them know what the technical solutions will provide for them.”

Partnership

The partnership was quite a leap of faith for both organisations. However, working closely with the project's steering group and with guidance and coaching from within the partnership using proven tools, techniques and methodologies, the collaboration was a success.

Summary

The purpose of the digital video on CD-ROM is a broad but polished appraisal of the council's e-government plans and shows the ultimate benefits to everyone at all levels, both internally and externally. The digital footage demonstrates the sophistication and potential of technology whilst remaining personable, informative and inclusive. The final product remains modular in order that it can be augmented to keep up with continual developments.

Irene Cook said, “It is refreshing to work with a company who takes a partnership approach. The benefits to the council are by involving staff and members across the organisation, which encourages ownership of e-government and now provides us with the ability to inform our citizens in an effective manner on an easy to understand media. The technology is a means to an end not the end – its just another building block, as e-government is just better government. It gives people more options, and the CD-ROM demonstrates that.”

With thanks to Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council and The Leading Change Partnership for providing much of the information found in this case study.

<http://www.basingstoke.gov.uk>

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