

**WESTERN SYDNEY**  
UNIVERSITY



# Achieving Effective Change Management Through a Dynamic Communication Strategy

Presented by Dr Ann Cheryl Armstrong

# International Context

- Over the last 25 years of C20 universities have been under pressure to change the way they operate
- New demands from government, industry and societal groups
- Governing bodies began to include members from the business sector

# Australian Context

- Learning from the mistakes of others
- Learning from the successes of others
- Building an internal TEAM (**T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore)
- Developing our own strategies based on our organisational needs – fit for purpose

## Internal Context

- Development of a third teaching session branded as UWS Summer.
- Schools and Organisational units needed to adapt existing business processes and collaborate in ways that had not been considered before.
- Communication became the key element to this change strategy.
- Relationship building also played a major part.

## Background

- Conducted focus groups with students to support the development of strategies based on their needs and expectations.
- Needed to provide flexibility and choice for students while remaining feasible in terms of teaching.
- The initiative was launched in 2013 with a marketing and communications strategy.

## Communication Strategy

- The model supported the management of the change process with a continuous improvement approach.
- The methodology needed to be non-threatening and pragmatic.
- In the first Summer cycle the focus of communications was on launching the concept of a full scale summer.
- In the second Summer cycle the focus was on the consolidation of previous activities.

## Communication Strategy (cont'd)

- Recruitment of a Communications Manager who became the central coordinating hub for all communication.
- Messages were developed and aimed at clearly communicating the University's vision and mission.
- Communication was consistent, frequent and utilised multiple channels.
- Both staff and students were encouraged to engage in dialogue.



## Communication Strategy (cont'd)

- The communication was bi-directional so we developed a strategy that engaged and enthused staff and students.
- The change management process was located in the context of a strategic initiative.
- The strategy was designed to communicate with key stakeholders to support organisational transformation and growth.

## Communication Strategy (cont'd)

- In the second Summer cycle a Summer Marketing and Communications working group was formed. This strategy formalised cross-unit relationships previously developed by the Summer Team.
  
- This working group also engaged in:
  1. Identifying and managing issues and risks
  2. Capturing and reporting student and/or staff feedback
  3. Measuring the success of marketing and communication activities

## Internal Staff Communications

- Internal communications were detailed in the Communications Activity Schedule.
  
- Staff communication focused on two areas:
  1. Keeping staff up to date with the logistics of Summer
  2. Building enthusiasm among the staff population

## Internal Student Communication

- Communication to students focused on:
  1. Encouraging students to consider Summer as a viable study option
  2. Advising what units were available and key dates for enrolment and tutorial registration
  3. Promoting Summer events
  4. Operational matters such as SSAF and exams
  5. General information about campus life.

## Student Feedback

- In spite of using a multi channel approach to communication we received some suggestions for improvement from students that indicated we needed to improve our marketing and communication.
- An example:

*“Advertise, advertise, advertise; there has been a limited amount of information relayed to students about what is happening in Summer. Although flyers, emails and the website were available, they were used in the first couple of weeks and nothing happened after that. Although there may have been a social media presence, it was not strong.”*

## External Communication

- Promotion to prospective students focused on attracting cross-institutional students to study during Summer
- In the first Summer cycle above the line marketing was executed via Mx transport press, digital advertising and radio
- In the second Summer round marketing was focused on Mx transport press and an extensive digital campaign

## Conclusion

- Most change management strategies fail or are not properly executed due to a lack of recognition of a well designed communication strategy.
  
- Communication should be:
  1. Authentic
  2. Perceived to be relevant
  3. Consistent with action
  4. Continually monitored and evaluated.

