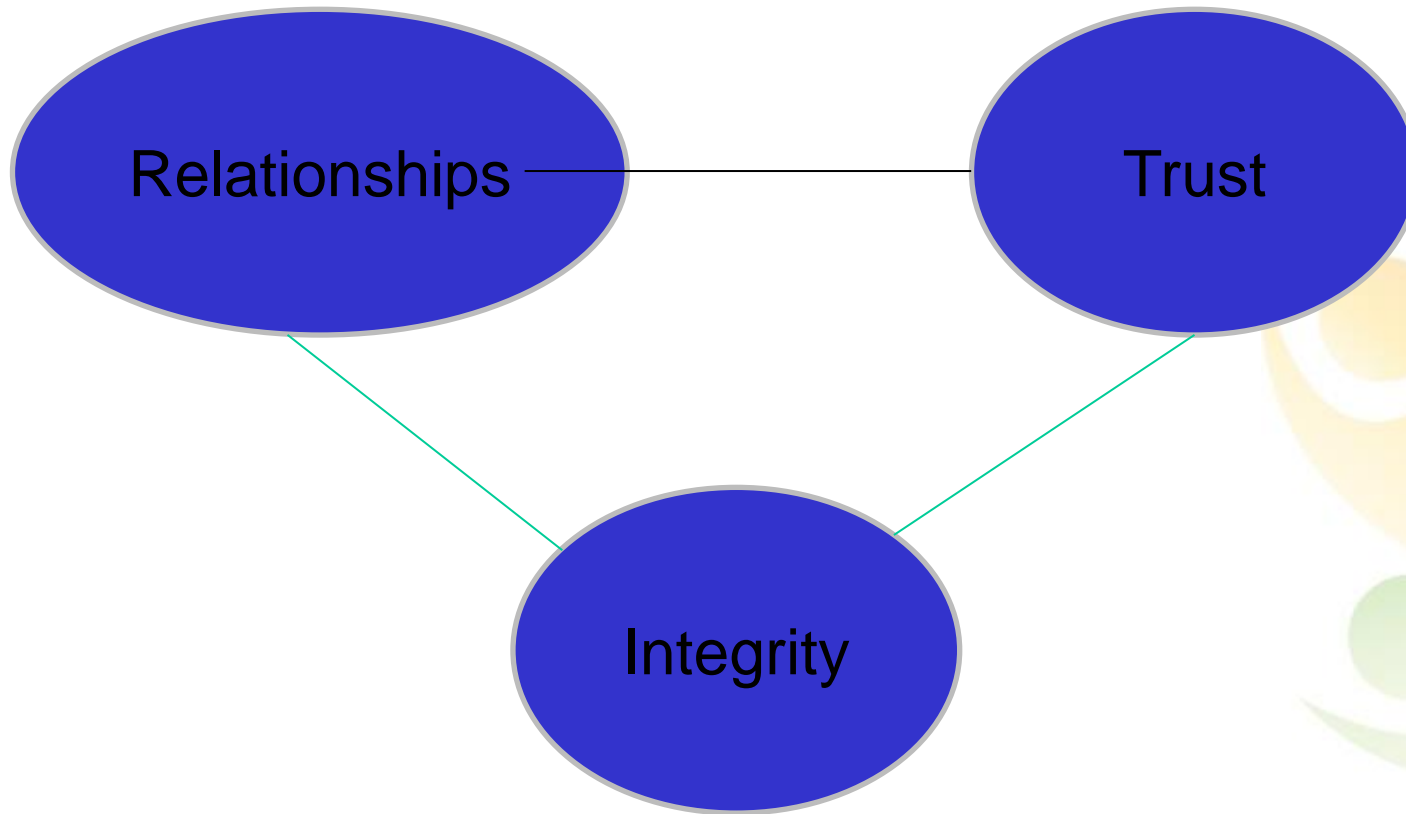
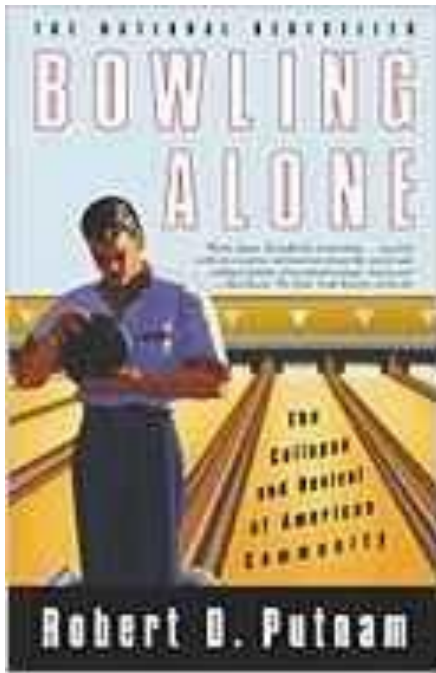


Engaging the ‘*seldom heard*’ and ‘*seldom online*’

- Where are we now (Feb. 2021)?
- Post-Covid implications for Engagement?
- tCI survey of Consultors
- New techniques
- Old tricks refreshed
- Prospects for 2021







Building social capital

Bonding and binding social cohesion



Engagement = values,
respect and self worth



1. What have we learned (Consultors)

- Much concern re immediate future
- Many public bodies with redeployed staff or changed priorities
- NHS particularly hit; many overwhelmed (inc. Consultation Teams)
- Better news for planning & infrastructure projects – but not airports
- Even where there is capability, a sense of *Now is not the time*
- A minority view that some organisations simply have to consult
- When vaccine programme works, public bodies will consult heavily – but may be less prepared?

Digital Engagement

2. What have we learned

- Minority sport (Teams, Zoom, Webex) became mainstream
- Digital deliberation has confounded many sceptics
- Quality of input & representativeness both improved?
- But only when done well with *the right people*
- Will there be a backlash - *Back to the Future?*



- Geographical spread
- Access to Managers

3. What have we learned

- Optimism about #BuildBackBetter #GreenRecovery
- Pre-consultation:
 - Add value to consultations in late spring/summer
 - Undertake practical planning if consultor too busy in short term
 - Refresh stakeholder mapping, dialogue planning & document review
- Pursue digital engagement issues vigorously
- **GREEN RECOVERY**: huge opportunity leading up to COP26
- Leverage home-working – especially online services inc. e-learning

4. Additional Benefits

*“Research shows that greater access to public information together with effective public engagement helps **reduce isolation** and enhance socio-economic development”*

*“...engagement by civil society groups can **augment the analytical skills** available and boost social cohesion...”*

Transparency and Accountability Initiative

2016



5. Why do people not take part?

- What prevents people from going online?
- Do we create some of the barriers?
- What must we do better?

Please use chat
room

Why do people not take part?

- Interested **but** no trust in the organisation or your processes (previous experience, reputation)
- Interested **but** are put off by information overload, extreme views being expressed and dominating echo chambers
- Interested **but** don't think they have the skills or confidence to make a contribution or their views aren't that important
- Interested **but** not in consultation or engagement (as we see it), just positive action (as they see it) or protest
- Interested **but** feel they don't have access to the tools to participate
- Interested **but** would feel pressured by peers
- Not interested as they don't think it impacts on their lives.

6. Meaningful (e-)Consultation

Right people

Right questions

Right methods

Right time

Right feedback

7. Who to Consult

- Stakeholders, Consultees...
- Patients, Carers, Service users
- Seldom Heard (Sec. 75)
- Third sector, charities, NGOs
- Business, unions, community
- Experts
- New actors!



The '*due regard*' requirement

N Ireland Act
1998 S.75(1)

The public sector Equality Duty (PSED) requires public bodies to have '*due regard*' to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities

- Strict test
- Needs dialogue
- Often challenged with JRs.

8. Risks of not doing it?

- Public anger (inc media)
- Political rows
- Operational pressures
- Leadership failure
- Legal challenges
- Morale slump

N Ireland Act 1998
S.75(1)



Dialogue methods

- Feedback Forms
- Surveys (Mail, Telephone, Internet, Face2Face)
- Documentary
- **Focus Groups**
- **Discussion Forums**
- **Stakeholder 1-2-1s**
- **Seminars & Workshops**
- **Consultative Committees**
- Deliberative events
- Citizens' Assemblies
- Citizens' Panels
- Public Meetings
- Public Exhibitions
- Social Networking

Mainly
quantitative
data gathering

Mainly qualitative data
gathering

Mainly participative

Gunning Principles

From R v London Borough of Brent ex parte Gunning 1985

Four Necessary elements of statutory consultation

- When proposals are still at a formative stage
- Sufficient reasons for proposals to permit *'intelligent consideration'*
- Adequate time for consideration & response
- ...must be conscientiously taken into account

Integrity

Visibility

Accessibility

Transparency

Disclosure

Fair Interpretation

Publication



**tCI's
Consultation
Charter**



