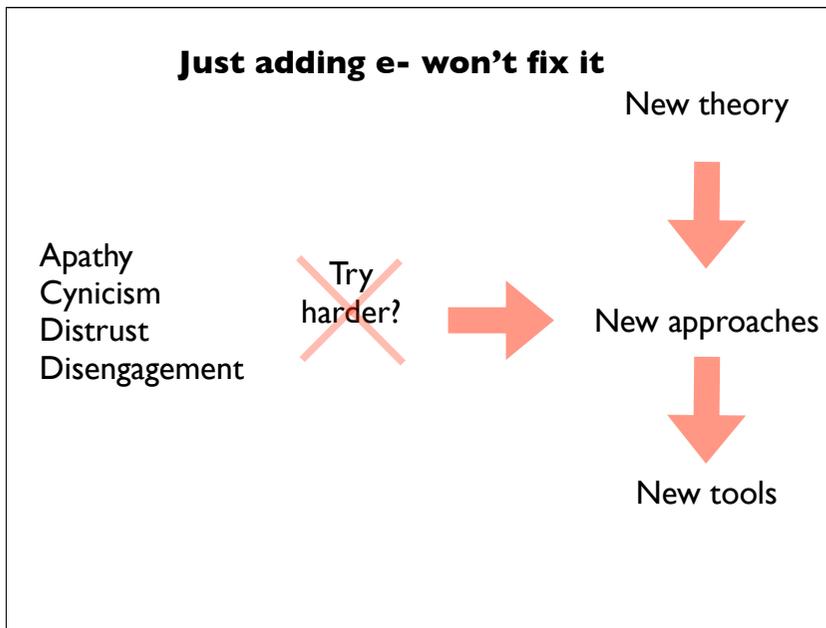




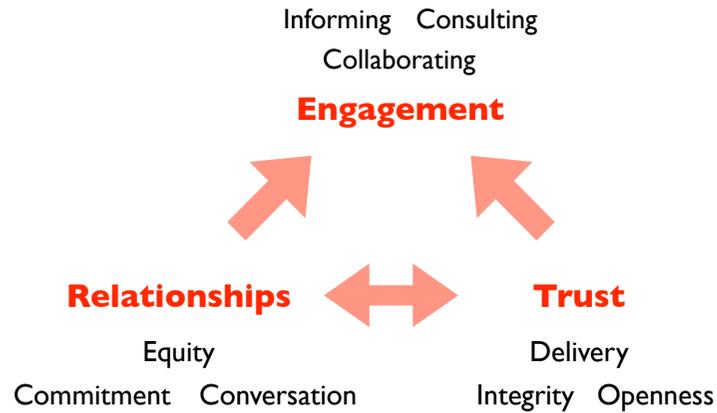
Public agencies want to engage stakeholders to deliver improved services and projects ... but may have to overcome the cynicism and distrust of participants.

This presentation and more by David Wilcox at <http://partnerships.typepad.com/civic/>. david@partnerships.org.uk. 020 7600 0104.



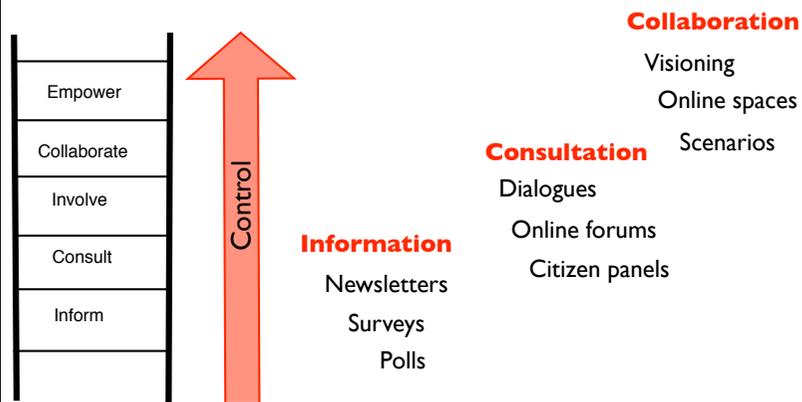
Where engagement isn't working, "try harder" is unlikely to fix it. Nor will just adding some e-tools. We need new theory, new approaches - and then some new tools.

Engagement is about people



It is people who engage - or don't. The foundation of any type of engagement is trust, which comes from developing a good relationship with the other party. We believe in trusted sources of information; we will listen and respond to options if we believe they are put forward in good faith; and we will only collaborate if we have confidence that the other party will deliver on their promises.

Conventional theory is about control



The ladder of participation - originally developed by Sherry Arnstein in 1969 - has been modified over the years to give practitioners a way of thinking about how much control they are prepared to offer to participants. It provides a useful way of cataloguing tools that might be appropriate for different levels of engagement. It puts the agency and the practitioner in charge - in theory. But the tools won't work if people decide that they won't play - because what's on offer is boring, and/or because they don't believe it will make a difference.

New theory is much messier (but life is too)

Context is crucial

People are different

Communication has changed

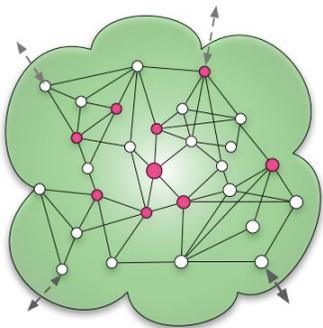
Relationships take time ... so keep in touch

Trust has to be earned ... deliver

Most people want a quiet life ... or some fun

People will be interested in different things at different time. Their communication and engagement preferences will depend on personality and skills. Networked communication means people can find out in different ways – and can find their own voice. One-shot engagement won't work well unless there is a basis of trust.... and that takes time.

Networked engagement



Create open culture

Support connectors

Foster conversations

Build fluid groups

Maintain relationships

How? Co-design ... use networky technologies

Networked engagement is a way of thinking about the connections needed to develop and maintain relationships. The task is then to build the capacity of the network.

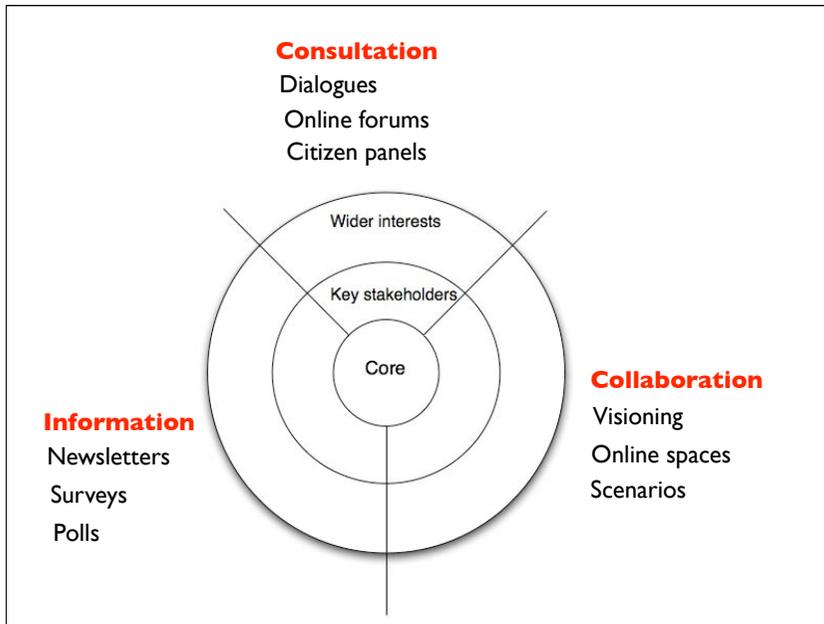
Co-design with participants

Teams work through engagement stages, with cards for **people** and **methods**, after defining the **context** and **purpose**



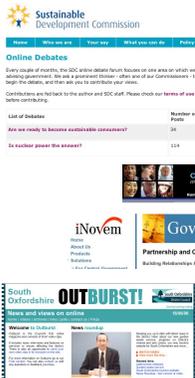
The Department for Constitutional Affairs has funded Drew Mackie and David Wilcox to create a game for planning engagement processes. It means key stakeholders can join in the planning process. More about that and other games at <http://usefulgames.co.uk/main/>

From the co-design exercise it should be possible to determine which interests may wish to be more or less involved, and so what tools to use.



Use the full range of tools (with offline too)

Official Controlled



Intermediary Contained



Personal Connected



Can public agencies develop places of trust, dialogue and collaboration ... or will people prefer to create their own?

Suggestions in summary

- Think networks, conversations, relationships, trust
- Develop key relationships early: co-design
- Purpose, people, context - then process
- Use openness and reach to build trust
- Integrate personal media - blogs, video

Online tools and culture are changing the engagement landscape. Agencies must continue to develop online consultation and collaboration ... but inevitably their methods will reflect their culture. Intermediaries can offer trusted spaces – some national, some local. But if people want their own voice they can now publish their own text, audio and video using commercial or nonprofit tools. The ability to tag and aggregate items means individual voices can have global impact. It isn't either-or. We need all the tools.

In summary: think first about what you are trying to achieve, who that will involve, how much influence they will have, and the context in which you are doing this. Then choose methods, depending whether you aim to inform, consult or collaborate. Consider involving key interests early in planning engagement. Use the strengths of technology to build trust - openness, reach, flexibility. Look at what's happening in the mainstream, where people are using personal technology to create online identity and voices. Plan to integrate personal media - or expect a challenge as people develop their own voices online.