

The Facts about...

Promoting your online consultation

Letting people know about the opportunity to get involved in your project is critical to the success of any community engagement process. Online community engagement is no different from traditional methods in this respect. Here are 20 ideas to get you started. If you have any others, please tell us so that we can grow this list.

The Top Three

1. Direct Traffic

Some 30% of your traffic will go directly to your site by typing your domain name into their browser, so pick a pithy URL and promote it everywhere.

2. Corporate Homepage Link

Another 30% of your traffic will find their way to your consultation portal via your existing corporate website. So ask your website manager very nicely to add a link to your corporate site homepage.

3. Organic Google Search

Yet another 30% of traffic will arrive via an organic search. These are people who have heard something about your project but don't have your collateral to hand. To make it easy for them to find your site amongst the hundreds, if not thousands of search results, you need to include the project keywords in the descriptive text for the project.

And a few more...

Traditional Media

1. Distribute a traditional media release with a snappy headline to your local media outlets.
2. Write an opinion piece for the local newspaper – chances are that they are desperate for content.
3. Get on the local radio and talk the issue up... remember to mention the URL.
4. If you are in a regional area and the issue is big enough, get on regional TV – WIN, Capital, NBN – and talk up the project.

Social Media

5. Search the net for groups – including Facebook, MySpace and dedicated forums - with a web presence and ask the administrator for permission to promote your consultation through their forum.
6. Distribute a social media release complete with rich media content to relevant bloggers in your subject matter.
7. Consider paying for Facebook advertisements.

Direct Mail

8. Direct email your EngagementHQ database (and any other databases you have at For Councils and Water Authorities, consider putting a note in with your next rates notice.
9. Direct email your entire staff to let them know about the project – make the URL prominent – and ask them to pass on the email to their friends and family.
10. Direct email local community organisations.

11. hand).

Collateral

12. Hand out leaflets with the URL prominently displayed at public events, in the mall, at railway stations, and places where people meet in your community (clubs, pubs, libraries, corner shops).
13. Hand out flyers at your public meetings, open-house days, kiosks etc.

Integration

14. Integrate you web consultation with your face-to-face processes – e.g. give your “community reference group” privileged access to the forum by making them part of the “project team”. Ask them to tell their friends and family.
15. Ask local libraries, cyber cafes and other places where people access the web to display signage and/or instructions for joining the consultation.

Advertise

16. We put this one last because it is the least effective but... advertisements in the local paper, on public transport, on public seating, etc. can be effective.

Persistence

17. Use online engagement tools repeatedly to build a community of people you can contact every time you launch a new project.