

Science Communication Conference 24 and 25 May 2004

Workshop 2 - Industry Engagement with Stakeholders

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John began the workshop by presenting the BNFL's National Stakeholder Dialogue process. The BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue was set up in 1998 to try to change the way that BNFL engaged with stakeholders who had issues and concerns with their operations. The aim of the dialogue is to inform BNFL's decision making on how to improve environmental performance but it has actually covered much more than purely environmental issues. Since starting, it has involved over 200 stakeholders and the process is independently managed and facilitated by The Environment Council. The output of the National Stakeholder Dialogue is treated seriously by the company with Directors taking personal responsibility for the recommendations and regular reports on progress being given to the stakeholders.

A copy of John's presentation is available online at www.the-ba.net/scicomm

The discussion after John's presentation highlighted the following points.

How can Industry promote greater openness and public discussion?

- Be genuine, prove the process is not just talk
- Get buy in/endorsement from the top (Board/Director/upper management level)
- Actively listen
- Take a holistic and dynamic approach
- Go beyond the usual suspects
- Do not get bogged down in legislation
- Adequately budget for the activity/process

How can science communicators work more effectively with Industry to do this?

- Understand our own discipline
- Talk to each other
- Help form common, appropriate and accessible language for different groups
- Do not reinvent. Network effectively to see who is working in the area already and maximise on what people already do. Actively build and share these networks
- Share the knowledge and 'shout about' what we have done
- Help those in industry make a business case for science communication activities

How can the sector reach socially excluded audiences?

- Ask what audience wants, let them set the agenda
- Make things issues based which in turn brings in the science
- Let the audience ask the questions
- Opportunity for business to highlight social opportunities

The five key points for industry to facilitate change were considered to be

- Be audience driven
- Science communicators to present a business case
- Offer honest brokered facilitation
- Develop a common/appropriate language
- Be genuine