



HARROGATE DISTRICT STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP

Report on the Harrogate Business Engagement Event

Held on 25 September 2007
Sun Pavilion, Harrogate



Volunteer Centre
Harrogate & Area

Business in the
Community

Harrogate
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Working for you



Volunteer Centre
Ripon

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1 Introduction

The Local Strategic Partnership in Harrogate are keen to see a greater level of engagement between local businesses and the voluntary and community sectors. As part of their approach, they asked Harrogate Borough Council to lead on the staging of an event to promote business engagement. Nigel Avison, Head of Economic Development, chaired a group consisting of

- Ann Duncan, HBC Partnership Development Officer
- Hazel McGrath, Chief Executive Harrogate Council for Voluntary Service
- Joanne Crossley, North Yorkshire Development Officer Business in the Community

The group engaged Steve Hinton, QED Consulting, to assist on the detailed planning for the event, to facilitate on the day and to prepare a report of the proceedings.

2 Approach

2.1 Purpose

To help delegates from businesses and from the voluntary and community sector to identify how engagement between them can lead to benefits for both sides.

2.1.1 Objectives

1. Inspire delegates to take action on engagement.
2. Give delegates information to identify suitable intermediaries to help achieve these actions.
3. Raise the profile and reputation of the LSP.

2.1.2 Outcomes

1. Delegates committing to action.
2. Report on the event, including case studies.
3. PR opportunities for the LSP.

2.2 Structure

2.2.1 Keynote Speech

The keynote speech was delivered by Jonathan Wild, Chairman of the Bettys and Taylors Group. He set the tone for the event by illustrating the ways in which businesses are trying to be more “sympathetic” and organisations in the voluntary and community sector are trying to be more “target driven” and “bottom line focused”. The point that he reinforced which was reiterated throughout the day was that businesses and the voluntary and community sectors can benefit from engaging with each other in so many ways that may well be overlooked if people only focus on the financial aspects of the relationship.

2.2.2 Case Studies

Two case studies were presented. The first was built around the work that Bettys and Taylors do with a range of educational and training organisations, Forest School and Jennyruth Workshops, that work with people with learning difficulties. The main conclusions were that

- The positive internal PR benefit for Bettys and Taylors was considerable. Staff wanted to be involved and felt proud to be part of something that committed to these kinds of engagements.
- The participants gained a huge amount through being exposed to business in a positive and supportive manner. They gained confidence, knowledge and motivation from their interactions.

The second case study was based around the local restaurant Rajput and their fund raising activities with Henshaws, society for the blind. The key lessons from this example was the multiplier effect that a successful event can generate and the energy that is generated by a strong relationship between the business entrepreneur and the voluntary and community leaders involved. It was also very interesting to hear about the knock on benefits for the business of making contacts through the project – they set themselves very ambitious targets for the event and this drove them to find new people and organisations to help. These new contacts were then very valuable to subsequent business opportunities.

2.2.3 Rapid Networking Sessions

After the break, there were two cycles of rapid networking. Delegates were identified by coloured stickers on their name badges and were split into three roughly equal groups – businesses, voluntary and community organisations and social enterprises. Delegates were asked to find other people with different colours and form groups of 3 or 4 people to look at a number of questions. These included

- Ideas for Future Engagement
- Sources of help, advice and encouragement
- Would you like any further information about potential “matches” to support your ideas?
- Any other comments that you would like to share with the group?

The groups were asked to make a note of their discussions and conclusions on recording sheets which were collected in for analysis. From the two cycles a total of 20 recording forms were submitted. A summary of these submissions is given in the next section.

3 Findings

3.1 Future Engagement

The key message from the whole event was the enormous range of possibilities for engagement that are available – the limiting factors being the imagination of the people involved. The following ideas and examples were the main ones to emerge from the networking sessions and plenary discussion.

3.1.1 Communication

A number of delegates made the obvious but frequently overlooked point that if other people and organisations are not aware of your organisation's needs, priorities and resources they are unlikely to be able to come up with ideas or offers that are relevant and appealing to you.

Community organisations need to think about how they ensure potential partners are aware of them and what they do. There are many ways to achieve this using low cost techniques – web based, through partners and using network contacts were some examples quoted.

3.1.2 Events

The Rajput case study highlighted the multiplying effect of developing an event. Approaching such an exercise with ambition tends to produce many other opportunities and contacts, probably which were not envisaged at the outset. This example illustrated very neatly the scope for spin off benefits to businesses when they become involved.

3.1.3 Visits

A common theme throughout the discussions was consideration of how to increase awareness and generate ideas for engagement. The use of visits to existing projects or organisations that are doing interesting and valuable things was recommended – providing stimulation for developing new relationships and conceiving new projects.

3.1.4 Marketing

Many of the comments and suggestions during the session related to the issues surrounding the raising of awareness and making sure the benefits of engagement are clear. In business terms this is achieved through marketing – which covers the whole range of activities including

- Defining the “offer” – what is it that we do and what opportunities are there for engagement
- Developing the brand – make sure that we present ourselves consistently and professionally – without having to be “glossy”
- Identifying the market – which businesses/community organisations are we looking to engage?
- Communicating – using PR, focused advertising (funds and opportunity permitting), website, e-bulletins, attendance at events and exhibitions, leaflets and flyers, developing links with member organisations etc.

3.2 *Who can help?*

3.2.1 Delegates and Presenters

Many of the delegates found useful contacts on the day and there was a great deal of business card exchanging going on. The delegates also identified the case study organisations as extremely valuable sources of advice, guidance and contacts.

3.2.2 Brokers

The umbrella and brokerage organisations were identified by many as being the most effective way to short cut the process of finding appropriate partners and contacts. Both the CVS and BITC were able to tell the group about their services and reinforce their capability to fulfil this key brokerage role to bring potential partners together and provide information and contacts to them.

3.2.3 Business Organisations

The role of business organisations was also recognised. The Chamber of Commerce is an excellent source of information on local companies and is also a possible partner in helping to organise and initiate events or projects.

4 Recommendations

The following is a summary and synthesis of the ideas and suggestions put forward from the delegates during the rapid networking sessions and in the plenary discussion.

4.1 *What can Harrogate Borough Council and the LSP do?*

- Stimulate visits – fulfil a “match-making” role by encouraging organisations to see what is going on across the Borough and make contacts and connections that could spawn new relationships and projects.
- Bulletin board – set up a simple web-based forum to enable
 - o People and organisations to post ideas for projects etc
 - o Requests for assistance or information
 - o Reports on projects or programmes which could inspire and stimulate others
 - o Straightforward networking and finding contacts
 - o Awareness raising by organisations and partnerships
- Run more events – many delegates asked for the event to be repeated, possibly in the evening and for a regular opportunity for these organisations to get together and network etc.
- Case studies – these were universally seen as a great way to stimulate ideas and to celebrate the achievements of local partnerships etc. The Council could facilitate the production and distribution of these – possibly through the bulletin board website – see above.
- PR – connected to the case studies above, the Council could continue to use its PR clout to make sure that as much publicity as possible is obtained for engagement projects across the Borough.

4.2 *What can brokers do?*

- Marketing – making businesses and voluntary and community sectors aware of
 - o That they are there in first place!
 - o The services and opportunities that they can offer.
 - o The benefits of getting involved.

- Capacity building – using local business people as resource where possible – e.g. sales training, fund raising, accounting, marketing etc.

4.3 What can businesses do?

- Secondments – offering staff the opportunity to work in/for a voluntary or community organisation. Managed properly this could provide valuable development opportunities for staff, increasing confidence and improving networking skills, as well as providing professional resource for the recipient organisations.
- Discuss engagement - get the topic on the Board Agenda and explore opportunities as part of the company's strategy for
 - o Marketing – helping to develop the company's image and profile
 - o Internal staff development and engagement – e.g. by being involved in choosing the main charity that the company will support.

4.4 What can voluntary and community organisations do?

- Make people aware of what they are doing
- Be open to opportunities for partnership
- Find ways to generate new ideas and contacts
- Make sure that they are using all the resources that are already available – e.g. brokers.
-

5 Conclusion

The event was well received by the majority of the delegates. Delegates were asked to complete a feedback form to evaluate the event. Although only minimal numbers were completed and returned the general consensus was very complementary and positive towards the event. It was an excellent opportunity to meet valuable local contacts and there was considerable demand for follow on events which is an indication that it was perceived to be of value.

The key messages were taken on board – that engagement is much more than just asking for money. There is scope to enhance the overall communication and awareness process through the setting up of a simple bulletin board and website,

which may be something that the Council might wish to consider to help maintain the momentum.

6 Appendix

6.1 Delegates Attendance List

Name	Surname	Company/Organisation
Harvey	Alexander	North Rigton Community Association
Charlotte	Atkinson	Yorkshire Association of Business Angels Ltd
Nigel	Avison	EDU, HBC
Carol	Barber	Harrogate Citizens Advice Bureau
Roger	Bamforth	CSV/RSVP Yorkshire
Barbara	Barnes	Amnesty International (Harrogate & Knaresborough)
Lynette	Barnes	Ripon CVS
Paul	Berwin	Berwins LLP
Harriet	Bissen	Harrogate CVS
Heather	Bowen	Henshaws Society For Blind People
Sharon	Cain	Quest Public Relations Ltd
Zena	Chui	NYBEP Ltd
Helen	Cook	Young Enterprise

Gill	Cottam	Samaritans
Bruce	Crabbe	Abiliti Hearing
Peter	Crossley	EDU, HBC
Jo	Crossley	Business in the Community
Andrew	Dickins	Treves UK
Ann	Duncan	DCPI
David	Durrant	Horticap
Marian	Farrar	St Aidans Cof E High School
Oliver	Fawcett	Jennyruth Workshops
John	Galloway	york-england.com
Peter	Guest	Renaissance Knaresborough
David	Hall	Yorkshire Bank
Joan	Harry	Help at Home
Steve	Hinton	QED Consulting
Emma	Holland	Paperworks

Helen	Holme	Yorkshire Federation of Young Farmers
Andy	Hudson	Platinum Print
Gill	Keighley	Barnardos Crashpad
Dawn	Kenny	Harrogate Healthcare NHS Trust
Parveen	Khann	Rajput
Shaan	Khann	Rajput
Charlotte	Kruger	The Hope Centre
Les	Lancaster	Claro Enterprises
Ralph	Lunn	Follifoot Cricket Club
Hazel	McGrath	Harrogate CVS
Joe	McGuinness	Relate
Sarah	McKee	Bettys & Taylors Group
Pat	Nash	Marie Curie Cancer Care
Christine	Norton	St Michael's Hospice
Sara	Parker	Vocalink

Chris	Powell	Bettys & Taylors Group
Toby	Price	Hollinbay Consultancy Services Ltd
Caroline	Roberts	Henshaws Society For Blind People
Vernon	Roosevelt	Hope Centre
Pat	Ross	Harrogate & Craven Crossroads - Caring for Carers
Mark	Scott	Jennyruth Workshops
Deborah	Siswick	Matchpoint & Careers in the Community
Barry	Slaymaker	Nidderdale AONB
John	Steer	Open Country
Ian	Stewart	Yorkshire Forward
Helen	Stewart-Smith	Forest School
David	Strover	Harrogate & District Family History Society
Robyn	Thomson	Ripon CVS
Karen	Weaver	DCPI
Jane	Webster	Global Brands

Anne	Wells	The Carers' Resource
Andy	Wilkinson	Harrogate Hospital & Community Friends
David	Wyvill	Platinum Print