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FULL PAPER FOR EVALUATION

WORKSHOP 1

Theme: Communication strategies and media relations

“Creative Communication Creates Innovation”

By

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Successful communication strategies are essential to promoting innovation, which in turn is crucial to economic growth. Innovation commercialisation is a strong focus of both public and private sectors and Western Australia’s (WA) Technology Park Bentley provides links between government, academia and industry that support innovation to commercialisation.

The Park is managed by the WA Government and its budget is determined by elections, ministerial appointments, social and economic imperatives and priorities, industry development and stakeholder expectations.

Whether managed by government, industry, academia or combinations, most STPs function within similar constraints that demand highly creative communication strategies to ensure their viability and continuation.

This paper explores strategies that generate optimal collaboration between innovative R&D and industry, and support innovation that creates commercial activity. It aims to encourage workshop debate by introducing proven strategies that can be adapted to most STPs and that can deliver short and long term social and economic benefits.

Introduction

For positive public perceptions of STPs to be maintained and their viability assured it is essential to utilise a purpose-designed communication strategies that cater to, inform, and encourage existing and potential stakeholders.

Critical to any strategy or plan is the early, clear identification of its aims and objectives, and determination of exactly who the stakeholders are, why they are considered stakeholders and how they are best accommodated. The plan must also identify who the individual and collective target audience/s is/are.

For the purposes of Workshop 1, and to ensure the paper's applicability to the greatest number of delegates, the actual technical structure of the Plan, which is specific to Technology Park Bentley, will not be discussed but rather discussion will focus on where various communication mechanisms, available in most STPs, have been employed to maximum advantage. The purpose being where delegates identify an application that is relevant to, or can be adapted to, their STP it can be further explored in the workshop or collaboratively post-workshop.

Background

Technology Park Bentley

Being cognisant of its stakeholders the Plan for Western Australia's Technology Park, Bentley (the Park), includes disseminating, by multiple overt and subtle means, the facility's aims and objectives, which are to:

- Support emerging and small local companies to develop and export technology based products and services;
- Encourage interaction between private and public sectors;
- Attract international, technology focused companies and research organisations to locate their operations to Western Australia;
- Promote commercialisation of research and development within universities and the public and private sector; and
- Create and maintain international and national strategic linkages for possible future joint project opportunities.

The WA Government provides the strategic direction for the Park and is keen to build linkages between industry, government and academia to foster an environment of innovation, research and development and ultimately commercialisation.

The Park was established to develop technology driven and innovative organisations dedicated to information technology and telecommunications; renewable energy and clean technologies and life sciences.

The Park's brand and image, developed over 26 years and recognisable to all sectors, is a major promotional leverage point. It is perceived positively and the Park's location, approximately 6 kilometres from the central business district, is a desirable business address. Its limited lots are publically and/or privately owned and when lots become available they are sold or leased within a short time.

Protecting and enhancing the brand and its 'products', namely innovation, science and technology, is crucial. Communication initiatives that fulfil brand maintenance and allow expansion are encouraged and given priority.

On the Park major research activity is generated from a diverse range of public and private sector tenants including pharmaceutical giants Bayer and Pfizer, Centres of Excellence such as the Australian Federal Government's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, the Australian Resources Research Centre, and the State's Departments of Agriculture and Food and Environment and Conservation, and universities.

The Park is also home to emerging enterprises, which are offered support services from inception to commercialisation at the Park's incubator, the Innovation Centre of Western Australia.

Many tenants have strong local, national and international linkages. For example, The Pawsey High-Performance Computing Centre and iVEC (advanced computer technology, high-speed communications, scientific visualisation, grid technologies and e-Research infrastructure) are currently developing unprecedented super-computing facilities critical to the nation's bid to have the multi-billion dollar, multinational Square Kilometre Array (SKA) radio astronomy project located in Western Australia. Billed as one of the 21st Century's greatest science projects, the SKA involves 20 countries and 70 research institutions.¹

Communications Plan

Against this backdrop of tenant diversity and varying degrees of related industry complexity a creative multifaceted communications strategy or plan (the Plan), which includes media relations, has been designed to positively and actively promote the Park, and it highlights innovation, science and industry, and associated activities. The Plan includes typical publication and dissemination of newsletters, e-newsletters, brochures, booklets and magazines, media releases and use of extensive general and audience specific databases, website and other internet applications. However, it also utilises ministerial speeches, WA's network of 11 international trade and investment offices, gala awards presentations, collaborations with prestigious universities and organisations, and purpose built and operated facilities that foster a culture of innovation and commercialisation.

Central to the overall Plan is broad and regular local, national and international stakeholder consultation, engagement and feedback, which underpins decision making and resultant outcome analysis.

The Plan fully utilises the Park's positive and long-standing brand, and operates on three interconnected yet separate levels and delivers consistent, carefully crafted messages and initiatives at the state, national and international levels.

State Level examples of where the Plan successfully maintains the Park's strong public image and connects with stakeholders include:

1. The Innovation Centre of WA (ICWA), central to the State's delivery of the commercial opportunities emanating from innovation, is located within the Park and assists early stage and start-up companies by:
 - Providing infrastructure and services to support emerging innovative enterprises
 - Bridging the gap between development and commercialisation of ideas into viable and sustainable enterprises and products
 - Assisting existing businesses to identify commercialisation opportunities.

The Plan includes actively promoting the ICWA as a networking and delivery channel for relevant programs and services and as a central point of reference for the innovation ecosystem. It assesses and tailors profile-raising opportunities relevant to programs and services it provides, such as:

- Educational industry seminars, workshops and networking events;
- An initial contact and commercialisation referral point for innovators and entrepreneurs;
- Funding programs which are designed to assist successful applications through the commercialisation process;

1. Due to the sheer size and complexity of the SKA Project it has its own specific, multi-layered local, national and international communication strategy, and allocated resources to execute that strategy - the budget for which is provided by Commonwealth and State Governments. The project's importance to global science and to the nation dictates that wherever possible reference to, and promotion of it is included in the Park's Plan.

- Access to venture capital and angel investor networks.
- Awards Programs (see below), which promote, acknowledge and reward a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across the public, private and education sectors;
- An internet portal entry point for:
 - Organisations and innovators wanting to commercialise;
 - Service companies wishing to profile their products and/or services;
 - Local and international investors;
- An Innovation Services Directory of public and private WA organisations providing services to start-up and existing businesses wishing to commercialise new products, processes and systems.

The Plan also actively targets the promotion of other ICWA services such as;

- small offices available for short term tenancy;
- hot desks equipped with telephones and Internet connections available for hire by the hour, half day or full day;
- national and international patent search facility; and
- administration services

Through continuous profile and brand recognition activities the Plan promotes the above via logo recognition, co-location on the Park, an ICWA purpose-built website, the Park's and other agency websites, hosted networking functions and expos, seminars, targeted emails and invitations sent to specific stakeholder databases, promotional articles in industry newsletters, public-private collaborations and sponsorships, e-newsletters, and where appropriate in ministerial speeches and media releases.

2. The State's Australian Marine Complex Technology Precinct and its state-of-the-art central services facility provide professional business, function, meeting and conference suites to maximise innovation commercialisation and networking opportunities. It is promoted as the ICWA above, however, where necessary the Plan is tailored to unique attributes relating to its marine industry clusters and its industry specific stakeholder base.

The Australian Marine Complex proper has a very high local, national and international government and industry profile. The facility has been brought to fruition through taxpayer and private investment of hundreds of millions of Australian dollars, thus its stakeholder base is diverse and needs to be handled in a specific manner. A public relations company is engaged to contribute to the maintenance of the facility's public profile, and to keep the public informed about its development, via its own website, various high-profile media events and targeted publications, a commensurate communication strategy budget, regular stakeholder meetings and other dedicated resources.

3. Communicating a range of short and long term collaborative educational programs via public and private sector networks, e-opportunities, inclusion in public speeches, publications and printed matter. The programs are tailored to support innovation and commercialisation on both a local and international level.

Again the Plan's aim is to utilise networks to establish collaborative exchange partnerships with established institutions and foster ongoing mutually beneficial relationships.

One fine and very exciting outcome of the Plan, and one adaptable to many STPs, is a partnership between the State Government, one of the State's leading universities, Curtin University, and the prestigious University of Cambridge. The outcome is the 'Ignition Program' whereby Cambridge has granted Curtin exclusive rights to deliver an intensive 6-day training program for aspiring innovators and corporate entrepreneurs on progressing ideas to commercialisation.

The Ignition Program is based on the successful 'Ignite Program' managed and delivered by the Cambridge Judge Business School's Centre for Entrepreneurial Learning (CfEL) which is a blend of educational teaching sessions, small group mentoring, expert clinics and an opportunity for delegates to network with successful innovators and professional service providers. Ignition is the only tertiary accredited commercialisation program in Australia and it will be the first time that this program is delivered in Australia.

The program's uniqueness provides a multitude of high-exposure public relations and media opportunities. It is of political social and economic significance and will be promoted at all of those levels. The Plan will highlight not only the program proper but the measurable benefits it is expected to generate.

4. The Plan's annual highlights that raises awareness and maintains the Park's public profile, that of the ICWA and of state-wide science, innovation and commercialisation are prestigious awards that encourage and recognise excellence in these fields. The awards are:

- The WA Innovator of the Year Awards which promotes a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship across the State's public, private and education sectors.

The awards offer business skills training, professional support, mentoring and financial support for successful entrants to launch their product or service into the marketplace. Substantial prizes underscore the award's prestige, these are:

- Mitsubishi WA Innovator of the Year Award - Prize AUD\$50,000 cash and \$50,000 in-kind support
- Start-Up category - AUD\$25,000 cash and \$25,000 in-kind support
- Growth category - AUD\$25,000 cash and \$25,000 in-kind support

This event highlights precisely how "creative communication creates innovation" through a specific communications model which is implemented to assist entrants to properly convey their ideas and present their innovation to the judging panel. This is achieved by the provision of:

- **A Business Program Launch** which is held for inventors; researchers; commercialisation experts; professional service providers such as key technology lawyers, patent attorneys, accountants; and representatives from universities. The Plan also seeks out media opportunities to maximise the competition's exposure.
- **Business Skills Training** sessions are offered to the top 30 candidates chosen after round one of judging. These sessions educate the candidates on how best to communicate or 'pitch' their ideas for the required 15 minute presentation and question and answer session, for judging round two. The training also educates candidates on other aspects of business development such as IP, patents, sales, capital raising, export market development strategies, tax strategies and start grants.
- **A mentor** is assigned to each of the 30 entrants to assist in further developing the entrant's ability to communicate their idea to the judges, for the second round of judging. Those entrants successful after the second round receive another mentoring session to prepare their presentation pitch for the third and final round of judging.
- **Pitching Round**
This is the critical round for all entrants where previous training in successful communication of their idea/innovation comes into being. The entrants are required to deliver a 15 minute presentation to the judges that describes their entry. It is at this stage that the winner is determined. They will also be required

to engage in a question and answer session with the judges as well as deliver a brief 5 minute presentation.

- **Business Awards Judging Rounds**
 - Initial Judging is done remotely via the Internet.
 - Top 30 entrants are selected
 - Judges meet for three days to allow chosen candidates to convey and explain their idea/s.
 - Entrants deliver a 15 minute presentation to the judges.
 - One award category is covered each day over the three days.
 - Five minutes of questions and answers between finalists and judges.
 - Judges meet to determine six finalists.
 - Finalists give a five minute 'elevator pitch' to judges.
 - Judges question presenter for 15 minutes.
- **Schools Awards presentation**

There is a schools program of the WA Innovator of the Year Awards Program and a representative is on the Business Awards Organising Committee to ensure collaboration and co-ordination between the business and schools components of the Program.
- **Innovator Awards Presentation**

A gala awards final is attended by government, industry and academia and elicits strong media interest. The winning Innovator of the Year and their product/idea is promoted throughout the follow year.

This event is promoted to the wider community via:

- Advertising in newspapers;
 - Stakeholder knowledge of the conducive prize pool
 - Utilising the ICWA and other databases of registered targeted recipients;
 - Relevant websites;
 - Word of mouth - committee members, entrants and related organisations are effective at promoting interest in the awards;
 - Online newsletters;
 - Ministerial and other press releases;
 - Brochures at targeted events and venues
- The Western Australian Science Awards, which honour outstanding and groundbreaking achievements in WA's science and innovation communities and recognise the important role they play in the economy.

Again, substantial prizes underscore the award's prestige and categories are:

 - Scientist of the Year - Prize AUD\$50,000
 - Early Career Scientist of the Year - AUD\$10,000
 - Science Educator of the Year Primary - AUD\$10,000
 - Science Educator of the Year Secondary - AUD\$10,000 and
 - Science Outreach Initiative of the Year - AUD\$10,000

The Plan promotes this event in a manner similar to the promotion of The Innovator of the Year Award, though with a different target audience and highlights its unique features

5. Premier's Research Fellowship Program

The Premier's Research Fellowship Program is promoted locally, nationally and internationally with the intention of seeks attracting high-calibre researchers to WA from overseas or interstate, to conduct scientific research that is internationally competitive and of specific benefit to WA.

6. The Plan includes coordinating WA's participation in the Australian Innovation Festival, a month long festival which promotes the best of Australian innovation and entrepreneurship. The Park will feature prominently in these events as the Plan includes strong local participation in by hosting activities, providing services, accessing media promotion.

The objective is a significant contribution to the Innovation Festival, ensuring that WA establishes and maintains its profile as a key player in the innovation arena. The Festival will comprise a diverse program of events which raise the profile of WA's innovation capabilities, facilitate networking and collaboration among the innovation community, and inspire and promote increased innovation initiatives in the State.

The Festival's effectiveness will be measured by attendances and outcomes achieved as a result of specific events. Its efficiency will be achieved through the enhanced networking opportunities of the Festival, allowing innovators to more readily access the information and resources they require to increase the contribution to innovation in the State.

A communication template has been developed to facilitate tracking internal and external events and will be continued throughout the year to encourage open collaboration and information sharing with regards to innovation activity.

In planning for the festival, it became apparent that a map of innovation initiatives for the whole of 2011 was necessary to ensure a coordinated approach beyond the Festival proper. This will provide the framework for a more strategic approach to innovation events and activities, identify opportunities for marketing and promotion, and ensure events and activities are cross-coordinated and well planned. This consolidated approach will also help to identify gaps in the innovation ecosystem, allowing for more accurate targeting of innovation initiatives and determining where these should be directed.

7. Innovation Gateway or Portal

The Innovation Gateway, expected to be launched in mid 2011, and will be a one-stop, online portal for organisations and innovators seeking to establish networks, identify opportunities and further develop their business innovation activities in WA.

The objective of the Gateway is to connect innovators and facilitate communication, collaboration and commercialisation opportunities in WA. The Gateway has been designed to accommodate a flexible delivery style so that new applications can be created based on user-demand in the future.

The Plan will promote the facility's aims, which are:

- Updating and collating information about WA's innovation capability and capacity;
- Identifying areas of expertise as well as gaps in capabilities or resource allocation;
- increased collaboration across industry, academia and government;
- reduction of duplication in innovation and information repositories; and
- the creation of global linkages.

National Level examples of where the Plan successfully maintains the Park's image and brand and connects with stakeholders and the wider community include:

The Plan being dedicated to ensuring local innovation is highlighted in the national innovation agenda through membership and proactive representation in national projects and influential organisations such as:

- Commonwealth State and Territory Advisory Council on Innovation - which brings together major jurisdictional representatives responsible for industry innovation and sharing knowledge across Australia and New Zealand;

- Commercialisation Australia - which assists researchers, entrepreneurs and innovative companies to convert intellectual property into successful commercial ventures; and
- Enterprise Connect - provides support to small business with acquiring knowledge, tools and expertise to improve productivity.

International Level examples of where the Plan successfully maintains the Park's profile and recognition and connects with stakeholders include:

- Leveraging international support for innovation and science through the State's network of global trade offices located in Japan, China, South Korea, Europe, Middle East, Indonesia and Malaysia/Singapore. This invaluable resource is provided with promotional and other material, information and updates, links to websites, text for speeches and the Plan utilises each office's database;
- The Park enjoys Memoranda of Understanding with science and technology parks in China, Korea and Italy, reference to which is utilised in promotional material and activities; and
- Provides tailored information briefings to visiting international delegations and media groups.

As described above the proven outcomes of the communication and related strategies employed by the Park ensure its viability, its publically acknowledged desirability as a business location, and the positive projection of the opportunities it provides. All of which is attained on a limited and varying budget.

The strategies maximise stakeholder opportunities, seek out collaborations, foster partnerships and generate economic success for innovators and science and technology practitioners. Although often operating within constraints common to many STPs the Plan encourages creativity which actively leverages the positive reputation of the established brand and promotes optimal outcomes for its highly beneficial 'products' of innovation, science and technology.

Creativity coupled with energy, enthusiasm and a strong belief in the potential for positive outcomes for stakeholders remains the driving force behind the successful communication campaigns.

For the purposes of the eight minute presentation for Workshop 1 the above cited examples would be summarised into interesting 'bite size' discussion points of what is possible for all STPs, highlighted with visual aids, and audience responses would be sought throughout to encourage debate and proactive discussion. Hopefully, the discussion generated would continue post-workshop and result in new cross-STP relationships and collaborations.

Technology Park Bentley always welcomes the opportunity to assist other STPs when and where possible.