Organising engagement

Though the benefits of adopting an engagement driven approach are significant to both individuals and the organisation, it does require investment of time and energy. Though many engagement events will appear spontaneous and flexible, they must be carefully planned and preparations made.

Hints and tips

- Involve the project sponsor in engagement events; this helps to make them visible and accessible. Give them a clear role, such as hosting an event, welcoming or networking with attendees.
- Consider if you will use an open invitation to attract and involve those who you need to participate, or if a targeted audience would be better to achieve your goal.
- Make sure that you have a good balance of cross-functional participants, from different organisational levels. Seek out representatives of functional areas if volunteers are not forthcoming but make sure attendance is voluntary.
- Establish your ‘Rules for Engagement’, share and use these throughout the project.
- Plan all engagement events ensuring that responsibilities are clearly assigned:
  - involve the right participants
  - use the right venues
  - define the outputs required and set the agenda
  - specify who will plan, prepare and run the events
  - debrief afterwards, summarise and share outputs
  - make people accountable for taking decisive action to follow up.
- Place equal value on all engagement activities, regardless of the number of people involved. Telephone or face to face interviews, emails and ‘water cooler conversations’ may be the best way to involve people.
- Keep comprehensive records of who has engaged, when and in what way.
- Capture and share outputs in a way that maintains integrity and meaning but makes efficient use of resources available, such as taking and sharing photographs.
- Save time by using standard text for emails, where appropriate, and reusing across a number of engagement activities and projects. This helps to promote the approach and build familiarity.
- Make use of existing communication channels and social media to promote events and invite attendance.