

**Who are these people yelling at me? From outrage to engage**  
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**A Step by Step methodology to moving from outrage to engagement.....**

<b>Step by Step Approach</b>	<b>What do you do in this step?</b>
<b>Step 1 – STOP Doing What You Are Doing</b>	<p>Sounds simple, just 4 letters – “S-T-O-P”, but it takes enormous courage to recognize the signal for change, and to stop what you are doing that isn’t working.</p> <p>If people are yelling at you, and responding with emotion, anger and/or outrage, what you are doing likely isn’t working that well. In public engagement your goal is to engage people who are interested or affected on issues that are important to them, so that you can make more sustainable decisions. If they’re yelling at you, you’re likely not getting input you can use to make decisions, and ploughing ahead won’t make it any easier.</p> <p>So STOP.</p>
<b>Step 2 – Acknowledge &amp; Respond</b>	<p>Taking Step 1 requires you to have courage and to recognize that there is a different way, and that you are being responsive to what you have heard. Now is the time to acknowledge that – acknowledge that you heard things might not be going so well and you want to do this differently. Tell people you are stopping the train on the tracks while you figure out what is next – it’s OK not to know exactly what you will do next, and to say you want to start a new process that is more responsive.</p>
<b>NOW WHAT????</b>	

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<p><b>Step 3 – Deeply Understand the lay of the land</b></p>	<p>Before you re-start your engagement process, you want to really understand who is out there, what they care about and why you’ve got conflict, outrage or controversy. That way you will have information that will really help you do things differently.</p> <p><i><b>Conduct a Conflict Assessment</b></i></p> <p>A conflict assessment is both a process and an outcome that leads to deeper understanding, and starts to build relationships. It is a series of interviews with targeted stakeholders that asks questions that get at the history, type and source of the conflict, that provides information on what people hold in common, and what they disagree on. It also helps you understand how they might participate going forward, what the future path ahead might hold, and provide information about the state of existing relationships.</p> <p>Go one step further and do more than conduct interviews with targeted stakeholder groups. Post your interview questions online and/or print them and distribute them, and send out notices and invitations for people to self select and answer the same questions you are using in interviews. Encourage them to email, fax, or send in their answers to the questions too.</p> <p>Prepare two reports from this data – one that outlines “What Was Said” and another that analyzes the issues, identifies what values are held by different stakeholders, what the source, type and history of conflict is, what people disagree on, and most importantly, what they hold in common.</p> <p>Share this information with everyone, as a first step in building trust, transparency and openness. This serves as the basis for the design of your “new” approach to engagement.</p>
<p><b>Step 4 – Question Your Assumptions</b></p>	<p>Using everything you’ve learned about the lay of the land, you can design a new engagement plan and process.</p> <p>The new process needs to have a few foundations:</p> <p><i><b>Reframe your conversation</b></i></p> <p>Reframe your conversation, your engagement question or the scope of the conversation to encompass and embrace BOTH sides of the issue, and to bring people together in an “and” conversation, rather than an “or” conversation. If you need to, make the scope a little broader to encompass a higher level focus on values people hold in common.</p> <p><i><b>Don’t assume where people stand</b></i></p>

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	<p>Be very conscious of not making assumptions about your stakeholders or participants and their frame of mind or frame of reference, and work hard to believe that people will come to this new conversation with the best of intentions. That attitude goes a long way to changing what happens in the room.</p> <p><b><i>Work to ensure you have ALL voices at the table</i></b>  While a Core Value of P2 is to engage the interests and needs of ALL, including decision makers, you need to consciously ensure you do everything in your power to reach EVERYONE in this process. Vocal and quiet, for and against, internal and external, elected and community, powerful and marginalized – everyone who might be interested or have a stake should be at the table. Don't fall into the trap of representation versus inclusion – it won't deal with the outrage or conflict, and won't result in sustainable decisions or a different way of talking with people, or build their own capacity to talk together. Go for inclusion AND representation.</p> <p><b><i>Good engagement includes looking out AND looking in</i></b>  Make sure your equation for inclusion includes external stakeholders AND people inside the organization – staff and/or elected officials etc. The process doesn't work if you only look outside the organization to external stakeholders, and then try to make a decision where internal voices haven't been reflected. Hold separate sessions and avenues of participation for staff.</p> <p><b><i>Don't think you've got a monopoly on good ideas – PLAN the next process WITH opponents</i></b>  Create an Advisory Committee made up of people who represent a wide variety of perspectives on the issue you're dealing with, and make sure the committee includes opponents. Make the focus of the committee the transparency, accountability and meaningfulness of the engagement process – not the content of the issue you are dealing with, but the process itself. If they want to provide input on content, encourage them to do that like any other stakeholder, through one of the avenues for participation in the new engagement plan. Build the new engagement plan with their input and support, and ask them to act as conduits to their respective stakeholder groups too. They can act as guardians of the process, and even if they don't like the final decision, they'll be able to say it was good process and their voice was heard.</p>
<p><b>Step 5 – Embrace the Emotion</b></p>	<p><b><i>Hold a “Venting Ceremony”</i></b>  As part of your new engagement process, you have to create a forum to address the emotion that people feel. That means a face to face gathering, or a series of gatherings, where people get to express their anger, upset or discomfort about things to date, to share how they've been</p>

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	<p>impacted by it all, and to express their emotion. As hard as it is, in this process, your job is to embrace that emotion, welcome it, encourage it, and acknowledge it. You don't get to present information, respond to their issues or start the engagement process until you've done this.</p> <p><b><i>Prepare Yourself</i></b>  You'll need to prepare yourself for this – its hard work, and counter intuitive too as its natural to want to defend or explain why and what has happened. Resist that urge – it will make the outrage worse. Once you've done this step, you'll be able to support people to participate in constructive ways in the next step where they aren't consumed by the emotion.</p>
<p><b>Step 6 - Let Go</b></p>	<p><b><i>Put the conversation in the hands of the community</i></b>  As an act of trust, transparency and relationship building you need to build stakeholder capacity to host this new kind of conversation.</p> <p>Train stakeholders to host their own conversations on this issue by building their skills in facilitation, hosting and engagement. Give them some tools to host their own conversation and train as many as want to be part of the process.</p> <p>Then once trained, set them loose to engage their friends, neighbours and colleagues and to send you the results of those discussions. Let the conversations go where they may.</p> <p><b><i>Be creative</i></b>  Use a variety of tools to put this conversation directly in the hands of the community – story circles, workbooks or discussion guides, photo voice, school age colouring projects – anything that lets people express themselves on the issue in a way they have control over and that they lead, and that gets you input that you need.</p>
<p><b>Step 7 - Have the Hard Conversation</b></p>	<p><b><i>Ask More of People</i></b>  Once you've embraced the emotion and put the conversation into the hands of the community, you can expect that people will be ready to engage in the issues in a constructive way. If you expect them to engage in deliberative process in a constructive way, and create the space for them to do it, they will almost always rise to the challenge. When people of good intention come together, amazing things can happen.</p> <p><b><i>Engage them in deliberative process</i></b>  In an earlier step you reframed the issue you are dealing with to include multiple perspectives. Take each of these perspectives, provide people with some facts and information, and engage them in a deliberative process on the pros, cons and trade-offs of the various perspectives.</p>

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	<p><b><i>Finally ask people to look deep inside themselves</i></b>  Once stakeholders have fully unpacked, discussed and considered the issue from multiple sides, you can push them a little further on what the future might hold. Hold a final engagement activity where people consider: <i>“What if the final decision is NOT what you want. What do you really need to be considered in that decision?”</i> Ask people to answer for themselves, and also to step into shoes of other people who don’t hold their view – what do people really need? This is hard work, but it helps people connect with what it most important to them, and to also acknowledge and recognize the needs of the broader community.</p>
<p><b>Step 8 - Move to Action</b></p>	<p><b><i>Document it meticulously</i></b>  Document your process in great detail, and be transparent and accountable about sharing that information. Document your final result as well with direct connections to what was heard and how you came up with the final decision, and how it was created based on the consideration of what has been gathered.</p> <p>Don’t be tempted to go to the left on the spectrum, to lower levels of involvement like Involve or Consult at this point. For example, it’s a common desire to hold open houses or information sessions at this point to share the conclusions or recommendations, and validate that final step. Moving back down the spectrum away from the hard work of tough conversations tends to take people back to those polarized positions, and invariably undoes some of that good work they did. Instead, move to action based on Step 7, and share all the information in a transparent way.</p> <p>In the end, not everyone will love the final decision, but its likely all will be satisfied with the process and that they have been heard, and many will feel they got something they needed, even if they all didn’t get exactly what they want.</p>

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