



**GOVCOMMS PODCAST**

**EPISODE #137 CHANGE 2022**

- WITH SHARYN RUNDLE-THIELE

TRANSCRIPT

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Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

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Introduction:

Welcome to the GovComms Podcast, bringing you the latest insights and innovations from experts and thought leaders around the globe in government communication. Now here is your host, David Pembroke.

Alex Abrahams:

Welcome ladies and gentlemen to another episode of GovComms, the podcast that examines the practise of content communication in government and the public sector. You might have noticed that I am not David Pembroke. David is actually in Europe as we speak at a conference for the OACD, but I can assure you he'll be back on the mic as soon as he returns. I'm Alex Abrams, a senior communications consultant here at Content Group and I'll be hosting this special episode of GovComms. Today we welcome back professor Sharyn Rundle-Thiele. For those of you who don't know Sharyn, she is the founding director of social marketing at Griffith University in Queensland and is the editor in chief for the Journal of Social Marketing. Sharyn has worked on numerous social marketing projects that help tackle issues such as marine pollution in Indonesia, unhealthy eating habits of military personnel, domestic pet and wildlife interactions, and teen drinking habits.

Sharyn's mission is to see marketing applied in communications more often. She believes that it is the only voluntary approach that can be applied to change people's behaviour. Today Sharyn is joining us to talk about Change 2022. It's an event tailored to individuals who are focused on achieving measurable change that benefits people, communities, and the planet. Sharyn, thanks for joining us on this special episode of GovComms.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

Ah, thanks for having me today Alex. I really appreciate it.

Alex Abrahams:

Sharyn, let's start at the beginning. How did Change 2022 or the change conference generally, come about?

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

Change actually came about way back in around about 2017, and I've been a long time a person involved in the associations of social marketing, both here in Australia and also globally. At the time our local chapter, the Australian Association of Social Marketing or AASM, if you just want to cut to the chase, had made a decision to take the conference event overseas into Asia. I knew enough people who worked in government that they weren't necessarily funded or given approvals to travel overseas.

At that point I thought actually maybe we still need to be having conversations locally so that we can keep driving our practise and our profession forward and can we get more people applying the way we approach change to keep on happening. So we launched it in 2018. We had two in person events and then a pandemic came along and disrupted our opportunities to get together and spend time in a room.

We are now really happy in 2022 to be back in person, because we know from all of our feedback from past attendees, they love getting together. They love being in a room experiencing one conversation together, and that conversation is all about how do we make change happen? When I talk about change, I talk about making a measurable difference, so moving beyond talk and the way that people actually sometimes come together thinking they're making change happen, and moving it more towards action.

What are the measurable differences we can see after we've actually run either a communications campaign or an entire programme that might be featuring some sort of product and service? For me, excitement starts to build when you've got reported statistics and you've got reductions in vehicles hitting koalas by 83%, you've got double the reportings of sightings because you've managed to mobilise a community and teach them how to actually find the koalas and then actually point out that they're in my backyard.

It's that level of work that actually excites me and trying to help show people that it's not always a magic formula that we can have that we can follow. Whilst there is definitely processes and good methods and systems, this is about, at the end of the day, engaging with communities. We do know that there are strong associations and conversations around there about engagement, but making sure it's not just engagement for its own sake and that what it actually is is listening and making it happen, because communities frequently come to me, or I'm helicoptered into them and they're frustrated because there's been so much talk and they're not actually seeing outcomes.

The more it's connected back into them and they can see that what they've asked for is now happening or they're being spoken to about why it's not happening, and sometimes that's just budget, time, and people, people get real, and the conversations get real, and then they can advocate. Again that momentum helps to push for change.

Alex Abrahams:

It sounds like that engagement is one thing that really makes Change unique. Is there anything else that makes the Change conference unique?

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

I think the aspect of Change that's quite unique is how it's fusing together the driving of outcome change with the processes and the techniques and the people that actually do it. It's basically about creating a bigger tent, because it's not just one person from one field and one background coming to the table. Change is a bit of a unique thing when we stop and think about it, because it actually means that we have to do something different that we weren't doing before. Navigating through that with people who are a bit fearful and don't want to take risks and don't really want to jump into the deep end because they're scared, they don't want to have an impact on their own career, I mean there's so much people in politics to overcome in order to drive that change forward and create an environment that supports people to do something different, fail fast and quick and come back and do more to actually really start to see the positive outcomes that they're really wanting to actually see.

I think the unique part about Change is helping to give more people confidence to give it a go and find the tribe around them of other people who've given it a go to have the network they need. I think that helps hold them up to understand that every change we achieve, when I talk about that reduction in koala strikes from cars of 83%, it's a pretty striking and stunning figure, but the reality of making that happen, it's a lot of work and a lot of time and a lot of energy across a lot of players in a constellation to actually make it happen. That's the strength of the change approach because people in the room are going to meet people that aren't from their field and that helps disrupt and get the different thing that everyone needs to actually make something different happen.

Alex Abrahams:

Such a good opportunity, Sharyn. I know you mentioned that it had been virtual previously and we had the pandemic years and now it's in person turning to practical matters. How will this year's event differ from last years? Perhaps you could also then let us know what a typical day of the event might look like.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

Oh, absolutely. Every year the Change event has been run, the conversation has shifted forward to the best of the practise that the people behind the event organising it know. Every event does differ. We haven't had the same speakers in the sessions and the lineups across time. We always go out looking for yet other players and we work across our constellation of people and they help us meet people and so on it goes.

Change 2023 won't look anything like change 2022, nor do these look like the past. I think that's the true strength, and again this is always about doing something different. The last thing that any person who actually starts to join in our change tribe is always experiencing something that's trying to challenge them. If you're uncomfortable with that, that's a good thing rather than a bad thing because it means I still don't know and I now need to figure out the who else knows or I need to actually get that information to actually do it.

What participants will experience in 2022, and again we've always taken feedback from past events to try and make it as strong as we can actually be, is there's always the TED style talks. So keeping them short and as quick and to the point as it can actually be, about how a change maker actually got to where they went. Then there'll be opportunities right across the day for feedback and questions. We'll be MCing and making sure that we can respond based on the feedback coming in. There's basically sessions throughout the day. They're like an open mic style if you think about it that way, but a half an hour just dedicated so that the people sitting in the room can actually have a two-way conversation. The best part about Change I think is that Friday afternoon people have the opportunity to deep dive and just skill up on something that they're really interested in.

We have three fabulous workshops and possibly a fourth to come...

Alex Abrahams:

Fantastic.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

... allowing people to actually opt into something that they're most interested in and spend a deep 90 minute session, have a rest, do another deep dive, and come out with a few extra skills. Again, that's something different that you're looking for to maybe be able to add to your whole toolkit, your CV, and be walking away celebrating a change you've made over time.

Alex Abrahams:

How wonderful. It sounds amazing. Can you tell us an example of some of the different types of speakers that attendees can expect, some of the stories they might be hearing?

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

Absolutely. You're going to hear the stories of how a entire prevention programme was co-created with one whole community. The city is Toowoomba and it was a project led by young people who are at the heart of the problem. It really is showcasing how engagement happens authentically with community and you're going to hear the stories of some of the programmes that have resulted since then along with next steps to actually come off the back of that work.

Another group are going to be talking about how they created a very, very big tent off the back of years of evidence and learning what works and how that gave them the confidence to step forward, and that has

actually led to the outcomes that I was talking about for Koalas. People will hear that story firsthand. They're going to learn how to actually compare and contrast approaches, like what actually works, can you stop investing behind the things that aren't performing as well for you? And having the skills and the tools to be able to do that quickly and efficiently means that when we have funds, we can invest them as wisely as we possibly can.

They are some of the examples and our workshops dive deeper there and importantly give a few more frameworks around how to actually build trust in communications. Again, this is about making sure that we're really responding to what community are telling us, that sometimes there's too much talk and not enough outcome and action.

Alex Abrahams:

Well, it sounds like this will really address that. It certainly sounds like a very full comprehensive programme of events for attendees. Turning to more practical matters, how much is a ticket and what does the price include?

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

The full conference price is 499 for two days and that's giving people the full one and a half days of TED style talks and opportunities to network. It comes fully catered with really nice coffee. Delegates have told us over the years they love our caterers. We are back working with them because they are good at what they actually do.

Alex Abrahams:

I heard it's barista, good barista coffee.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

It sure is, good barista Coffee. The food is exceptional as well. We rarely get a complaint about anything with this provider, so they're really, really strong. It's got a networking function in the evening. Basically in terms of the event itself, no further cost. There are some discounts, so students are actually getting \$100 off and by all means if you want to bring a group, just write into us and we're happy to actually talk to about that.

The final thing is that that conference ticket can be shared so that if someone wants to come on one day and a colleague wants to come on the second day, you're more than welcome to set up a structure that works for your team because we understand not everyone can be everywhere, and that even now with the pressures we face with work, two days can be a lot. Just again, reach out to the website and there's a social marketing at Griffith email and our team will just write straight back to you to confirm any queries you actually have.

Alex Abrahams:

That sounds like a wonderful option. What about virtual access for the conference?

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

We have actually got a really great, this is probably the new development for 2022, Alex, and I'm so glad you actually nudged me to remind me. We actually have an online version for people that don't want to travel, for people who are operating in different time zones, or just simply want to be able to access some of the content across the two days. You'll get access to the one and a half days of the TED style talks. You'll have access through [inaudible 00:13:46] to talk to people in the room. You will also have access, because it's essentially creating a virtual room where you have a table and you'll create your own table of people that you're sitting with to actually talk between yourselves in the online environment. That is \$100 per ticket. It's just priced enough for you to actually be able to access and to listen.

Anyone who registers will be able to get full content access post event, because the people behind the scenes will actually make all of this available for people to actually go back, revisit, remind because that is useful. There's a lot of information that comes down. People tell us it's a lot, we know that, but we're trying to ultimately give you as much as possible within just that space of time. Two days is, as we say, a big investment to spend on yourself.

Alex Abrahams:

That virtual online option sounds like an amazing opportunity and really good value for money, and how wonderful that people can continue to access it afterwards.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

All designed under the ethos that our whole team's always operated under, and that is that we do love to share what we've learned and what we know. We're passionate about trying to drive either health, social, or environmental change. The more we can help teach and show and upskill the community who've got this beautiful heart of just wanting to truly make a difference, the happier, certainly I am.

Alex Abrahams:

Sharyn, that's wonderful. When is this all happening? We haven't talked about dates.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

October 20th is the kickoff day. That's a Thursday. Sessions themselves start 9:00 AM sharp, finishing around 5:30 in the afternoon with the networking if you feel like socialising. And likewise on the Friday, we kick off on the 21st at 9:00 AM sharp. The TED style talks run through to Friday lunchtime, and the optional workshops running on Friday afternoon for people. We already have people who've signed up for Change and they've registered into their various workshops. We're very happy to report that David Pembroke's content group led workshop at the moment is running as a very hot favourite.

Alex Abrahams:

Oh, I'm not surprised.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

My recommendation is get in fast, because we do actually ultimately have space restrictions across some of these rooms and the team in the background are managing for that. If you're thinking about it, my absolute counsel now is do definitely sign up as fast as you can manage.

Alex Abrahams:

That's it. Get in quick people. Very good.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

First come, first served.

Alex Abrahams:

Now Sharyn, before we wrap. up last words, why is Change 2022 so important?

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

Look, for me it's the feedback from past Change participants about how some actually literally walk away from this event and they use the words, "I've found my own tribe." To actually get a network of colleagues who are trying to push through systems and to try and actually construct and create something new and different, it's great to actually get that sense of a new connection.

I've also watched other people over the years, because obviously I've founded it and I've been watching this for a while, how they've actually made partnerships and formed to actually drive forward. That for me is something beautiful to actually watch. To sign up and buy yourself out that couple of days, I can guarantee you're going to walk away with some people where you can start to do things differently than when you were doing before, and we know through some of the stories that that's got great outcomes.

Alex Abrahams:

There's strength in numbers isn't there, Sharyn? Go out and find your tribe at Change 2022.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

It's really important too. Change is a limited event, so we only have space for 150 people, and that is deliberate. That is so that everyone can have a voice and that everyone has time to actually connect and talk and get to know each other. The last thing we actually want is one of those events where you're totally lost in a crowd because that is not the intent here. It's actually to help people work out where they're at and what other skills and what else they'd like to actually need and connect. So, do come along.

Alex Abrahams:

Sharyn, thank you so much. We're out of time, but look, thank you for your time. If you are interested in attending Change 2022, just go to [griffith.edu.au/change](http://griffith.edu.au/change) and you'll find all the details there and the link to register. Thanks again, Sharyn, and we'll see you later.

Sharyn Rundle-Thiele:

My pleasure. Thanks Alex.

Alex Abrahams:

Bye.

Outro:

You've been listening to the GovComms Podcast. If you enjoyed this episode, be sure to rate and subscribe to stay up to date with our latest episodes.