

Vermont Global Exchange – Second Conversation Summary– May 4, 2011

Publicity/Telling the Story

How to publicize your effort or tell the story in a way that has impact? Meg Brook, could you set this up for us?

Meg Brook: There are a number of areas that make it challenging.

1. PR before the project takes place before we have volunteers and pictures available. Purpose of the pr = get the volunteers.
2. International setting; often impossible to get pr on a project – how create that relationship
3. Find the line between pr, self promotion, and news. I've sent in stories that to me seem newsworthy and receive feedback that this isn't a true news story, you just want publicity for your group.

Carolyn M: When I'm looking for people to go on trip, it sometimes helps to make connections with **teachers** and to talk with them about donating water and to raise awareness.

Tom: How do you get pr? What are the lessons learned?

Fran: **Find the hook**; what is going to feel like news, not self promotion and publicity. What are the orgs doing in Haiti? What is the energy around Haiti in VT. Connection to teachers is a hook. How is that happening now and could it happen in the future?

Nina: Think about sharing information: bulletin boards, Facebook, **social climate areas**. The way that news travels fast is to get involved.

Tom: George, how did this Newshour story happen for ISC?

George H:

Hamilton: We have a program in China. Newshour was asking what China is doing to work on environmental problems. They went to our partner. **We talked to the producers and made it more relevant.** It helps to **connect to other events, anniversaries, news stories.** How does your story **fit in with larger issues?** Tell stories and connect with partners. **Meet with people.**

Saleem: Different areas of pr. Easy to be seduced. Ideal to get on Oprah. I have had pr for my book in Forbes. Every group has **speaking circuit.** Not necessarily global impact.

Will R: Brad Pitt saying I care and am involved with green housing in New Orleans. Gain endorsement of key person, **celebrity**.

Tom: What does the experience of Greg Mortenson tell us about publicity?

Saleem: Makes people cynical. If you get the **right break**, eg. Parade Magazine, that helps enormously. Once you get that you can get away with anything. There are other orgs in Pakistan, eg. Aga Khan Foundation. Doing more and better schools than Mortenson. Humbling.

Megan EplerWood: Local news media doesn't respond to international hooks. It wants **local stories**. Could a group work up a way of doing **joint publicizing**?

Carolyn M: Pure Water for the World **hooked to the earthquake** to get news story. We made the earthquake a local story. Press wanted a local story. Local papers need a different angle than national news.

Peter Clavelle: Yes, **put a local face on international story**. Example: Haitian person living in VT who benefits from project. Check reporters who cover Haiti.

Saleem: We have worked with Somali immigrants selling frankincense purchased from developer in Somalia. We wrote a proposal to help and met with some success

Tom: Has anyone used a professional pr person successfully? What are the lessons learned?

Megan EW: We have a large **marketing division**. They do all the work of placing stories. Global Scenario they want to sell. Stories of people. Fantastic.

Stuart: We hire **outsiders who have relationships with trusted media outlets**. I like this way better.

Tom: Can someone recommend a professional pr person?

Saleem: **Liz Belton** – academic book and trade publication publicity: lizbelton@aol.com

Jackie: I have found it useful to think through **outcomes** carefully. What are the organization's outcomes and the purpose or outcome you want a particular story to have that ties into the organization's outcomes. Also developing **personal relationships with writers/reporters** covering the field you're active in –helping develop a story in consultation with them. Also **collaborating on publicity** – example = "Tapping Tech" put out by the Vermont Software Developers' Alliance. They distribute this widely to all legislators and any others who might have connections.

Allocation of Resources

Tom: Let's move to the next subject - allocation of resources: How do we make choices about that? .

Rick P: Green Mountain Coffee Roasters focuses on true needs of coffee villages in our **supply chain**. We do interviews with small scale farmers in Central America. Many farmers had problems maintaining diet. Worked with community to find community-based solutions. Now focusing on factory workers in China. How can we do community outreach to those folks? We find workers who live in a dormitories who want a recreation room with ping pong and flat screen TV. How balance that with more basic needs for food security in Honduras?

Tom: How sort through this?

Megan EW: We at the Gap Foundation are in the process of **developing project criteria for selection**. Our efforts have in the past been chosen from the heart. Now putting in **rural appraisal assessments**. We're trying to institutionalize. **Rapid Rural Assessment** – adapt it to tourism economy . This Assessment is used by development banks. How **train people** who are working in your org to rationally look at things? We break things down into different categories. Students do this work for 3 months.

Rick P: We use Tuck School **students to assess needs**. Wonderful additions working in rural Nicaragua. Helped tremendously. How to balance work in coffee villages and China?

Carolyn: Are you working with one pot of money?

Rick: We donate 5% of our earnings to international work. 100 % of our focus has been on coffee. Now broadening to non-coffee supply chain.

Stuart: I've been talking about this with community foundations. They focus on where they can **have impact, where things are happening**. **We're always wanting to build on the assets. Respond to them first.**

Tom: How does ARD work?

Peter C: We go **where AID is investing** ...priority countries. Within projects, where work? **Communities that have capacity and produce results. Biggest considerations is political will. Are there local stakeholders that will help something happen?**

Stuart: If you don't have **local players who can deliver on projects**, it ends up wasting money.

Will: My international focus is in one place. Don't have that challenge.

Tom: Do you go where you see a need?

Will: **Yellowwood Initiative of the Ford Foundation** works with a methodology developed here in Vermont. This is something VGE might like to know about. Yellowwood does **smart good work on how to pull all pieces together into aggregating the greatest progress**. They analyze seven **kinds of wealth**, eg. political will or capacity. My work is in one specific watershed. I look at **where decisions are being made. Who are the real leaders?** I have spent 4 years cultivating a sustainable view of their challenge.

George: The **opportunity to have a lasting impact** is the driver for us – **the political will, the opportunity to leverage other assets, build capacity in policy administrative practice, change things for longer term. We are using rapid assessment to ascertain that.**

Megan EW: **Knowing real political and social barriers** is important. In Belize, they have political will but also resistance to change. We need to know points of sensitivity as well.

Disengaging From Local Partners

Tom: How to disengage from local partner? Megan Camp, would you set this up?

Megan Camp: Partnerships like any relationship go through various stages. Some are long term. May need to change or find partnerships with more capacity.

Tom: What to do with frustration with partners? Perhaps the need to change partners in mid-stream?

George: We work with dozens of partners with different relationships. I need a more specific question.

Tom: You have a project, good funding, focus, but the implementing partner is not ideal, you need to find new person.

Megan EW: I inherited partners. Just in Peru reviewing partnerships. I used the term **horizons. How long would it last and what were their relationships?**

Peter C: Easy to avoid making the difficult decisions. **Be frank – this is not working, what would help. If not fixable, terminate it.**

Brenda: CHT – **create expectations**. Move on that. Didn't plan on how exit would work. When exit happened, lots of pushing and pulling. **Determine years, benchmarks, how exit all these are important to get clear up front.**

Transition

Tom: Curtis Koren's group is going through transition. Could use some advice.

Curtis Koren: We have been running a 4 month cultural immersion high school program. We have a good track record. Get public funding. Have served 100 VT kids. 92 small towns can take their money elsewhere and have invested in students from their town. We decided to dissolve relationship with Sharon Academy which has issues. Program was not sustainable. Gap programs are profitable. We are looking at other corporate models. Board advised not getting 501 c3. We're thinking of building a relationship with another group. What does it mean to join with another org? How would they benefit? Looking at different models. Maybe be for-profit. **What should our corp structure be? Who be good partners?** Several high schools want to take over program. But want to stay in VT. Talking with folks

Nina Meyerhof: Shift Spiral. Asian students 350 for the summer. UVM. Both starting at beginning and can design in different ways.

Tom: If you think of ideas for Curtis, please send to Tom who will send to Curtis.

Joint Ventures/Collective Action

Will: Another topic. What is the smartest way of expanding work to do more with less admin overhead? How structure joint venture agreements?

Tom: Collective action. Desire to work together.

Megan EW – could we do **joint press releases**?

Peter C: I would like Vermont Congressional delegation to recognize our economic cohort. My org is reliant on development aid from USAID. We could create a **common voice** to speak to our Congressional delegation.

Megan EW: Concur. We met with Leahy's staff on biodiversity earmark. Surprised to hear from Vermonters. Chuck Ross was receptive.

George: **Reinforce Vt brand economically. Economic asset that goes beyond Vermont.** Maybe ARD could fund a collective statement?

Tom: I hear interest in collective action. **Lobbying our DC forces** a good place to start.

Peter C: **US Global Leadership Campaign**. Check them out especially if you're focused on best practices.

Closing

Craig: Rich conversation. Many topics touched on. There seems to be **a collective need to get story out, to use collective strength of the group, to look at foreign policy** - a cohesive element in this group. Folks are looking for social change...putting together a vision of new relationships across boundaries. This is much better than celebrating the death of terrorist. We've moved from the nitty gritty to big picture.