



Filling the Gaps

Trafalgar Communication Strategy Community Survey

October 2003

for



Trafalgar Community Development Association

Supported by:



Prepared by: Tina D'Urbano
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Monash University Gippsland Campus

FILLING THE GAPS

TRAFALGAR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY COMMUNITY SURVEY

October 2003

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

for

Trafalgar Community
Development Association

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Foreword

The survey of Trafalgar's residents was a high priority of the Trafalgar Community Development Association ("TCDA"). It was also identified by the Trafalgar Community in the 2001/2002 Partners in Community Building Project as being important to the community

Its purpose was to assist local residents, businesses, clubs and other interested groups to communicate clearly, quickly and effectively to the various stakeholders, thus creating an environment for that will assist volunteer participation, economic and social activity, increased awareness of government policy and procedures (and other instrumentalities) and a better understanding by external service providers of Trafalgar's particular needs

A Project Board was established to oversee the project, consisting of Dorothy Hoare, David Balfour, Duncan Wade, Kellie Asmussen, Nathan Anderson and me.

The benefits of a project such as this are that the Trafalgar community now has a document that:

- identifies communication products currently used by local residents, businesses, clubs and other interested groups;
- assesses their effectiveness; and
- identifies other communication products not currently utilised that are of benefit to the community.

The results of this survey will permit local residents, schools, clubs and businesses to have a better understanding of how to better communicate within the community and with their various contacts outside the community.

The Gippsland Research & Information Service Monash University Gippsland, under the guidance of Tina D'Urbano, undertook the project. The Project Board is very appreciative of Tina and her team for their effort in this project. Special thanks also go to the Baw Baw Shire Council for supporting the project by providing financial assistance through funding it sourced from the Community Support Fund to enable the survey to be undertaken and then analysed. Finally, I thank the members of the Project Board for their enthusiasm and constructive input into the project.

The recommendations that form part of this report will be presented to the TCDA management committee, and those accepted by the TCDA will form part of the community's 2003-04 to 2006-07 Strategic Plan.



Mick Bourke
President
Trafalgar Community Development Association
November 2003

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Trafalgar Communication Strategy

Community Survey 2003

Executive Summary

Introduction

Through support and financial assistance from Baw Baw Shire Council, Gippsland Research and Information Service (GRIS) of Monash University was contracted by the Trafalgar Community Development Association (TCDA) to undertake community consultation to identify what the general population's perceptions and attitudes are communication and information sharing within the district. The results from this survey will form part of a series of strategies to develop an understanding of the community's needs and will be used by the TCDA to produce communication actions for Trafalgar's Strategic Plan.

Using a questionnaire developed by TCDA in consultation with GRIS residents were asked to indicate the media types they currently have in their household and the form of communication used to obtain information about the Trafalgar community. Residents were asked to indicate what information they frequently look for, whether that information is readily available to them and if not, how they would prefer to access that information.

To assess the effectiveness of communication that residents currently use they were asked to rate a series communication and information sources on their ease of understanding, effectiveness of information content and the credibility of that source.

Methodology

Information was collected during October 2003 via a telephone survey conducted during the evening. There were a total of 150 responses to the survey from residents in Trafalgar and the immediate surrounding district. Phone numbers with 5633xxxx prefix were randomly selected from the Whitepages telephone directory.

Survey Findings

Section 1: Respondents

A total of 150 Trafalgar residents participated in the survey, of which 60% were female and the remaining 40% male. There was an equal gender balance among rural residents while town residents had a higher proportion of female respondents of 65% compared to 35% males.

More than half of the respondents to the survey were aged over 50 years with 26% being 51-64 years and 28% 65+ years. Representing a much lower proportionate sample were residents in the younger age groups of 18-25 years with 3.3% response and 26-35 years with a 12% response.

The majority of respondents were long time residents with 69% having lived in the area for more than 10 years, of which 57% have been resident for 15 years or more and 12% for 11-15 years. There was a further 19% of total respondents who have lived in the Trafalgar area for a short term of 5 years or less with the remaining 11% being resident for 6-10 years.

The survey yielded 70 % of responses from urban (town) residents and 29% from persons living in the rural area while the remaining 1% did not respond.

A total of 22% indicated that they own or operate a business in Trafalgar, of which three-quarters stated that it was a home based business. Rural respondents made up 58% of persons who own or operate a home based business, although it is possible that this figure could include farmers.

Type of media in the household

All respondents stated that they have a television in their household followed closely by 99% of residents who have a radio and nearly 97% who indicated that they use newspapers as a type of media.

A large proportion of households have at least one mobile phone while almost half stated that they have access to the Internet. Rural households were more likely to have access to the Internet/WWW compared to town residents. Of the 24 residents who stated that they run a home based business, more than half indicated that they have access to the Internet.

Section 2: Communication Products Currently Used

Residents were asked to indicate their first three source preferences currently used to obtain information about Trafalgar. This was an unprompted question, which meant that respondents would be most likely to recall information sources that they would more readily and frequently use and almost all respondents nominated at least one preference.

Residents would be more likely to use Traf News to obtain local information. Other local newspapers included the LV Express, Moe/Narracan News, Warragul Gazette and other unspecified newspapers.

The second most preferred communication source was Word of Mouth, which was nominated by more than half of the respondents. Other local community sources mentioned included Community Groups/Clubs, Noticeboards and Flyers/Brochures.

There was a total of 14 mentions of Community Groups/Clubs as an information source with sporting clubs being most frequently mentioned, such as Football Club, Bowling Club and Sporting Clubs in general. Other groups mentioned included Elderly/Senior Citizens, Rotary, Chamber of Commerce and Playgroup.

Local electronic media is not used extensively as a communication source with only 13 mentions as a preference. This low usage of local television and radio for information gathering may be due to the limited reception availability.

Section 3: Information Frequently Looked For

Residents were asked to state the type of information they frequently look for, whether that information was readily available to them and if it was not available, how they would like to receive or access this information.

The most commonly sought information is community news. Information on sporting events and up and coming events were both nominated by almost one quarter of respondents. Other information frequently looked for included local community services, local business information and educational activities. Only a few respondents stated that they frequently looked for information about Shire services and information on local business specials or classified advertisements.

Other information frequently looked for included garage sales, housing/real estate information, births and deaths, local politics, where the money is spent in Baw Baw Shire, church news, what's happening for kids, club news and meetings, GP services and historical/general information about Trafalgar.

Section 4: Effectiveness of Communication Products Currently Used**Rating of Ease of Understanding information source**

Traf News was rated as the most easily understood information source with nearly all respondents rating it easy or very easy to understand. Other local newspapers were rated in a positive way with more than three-quarters of respondents stating that they are easy or very easy to understand, with the LV Express having the highest rating of very easy followed by the Moe/Narracan News.

Information provided by the Local Mobile Library was rated positively although there was only a small proportion of residents who responded to this question with most respondents indicating that they were unaware of the Local Mobile Library information or did not access the service.

Word of Mouth received a high rating for ease of understanding as did information provided by electronic media, local TV and local radio. Local TV was rated slightly higher than local radio. Information sought over the Internet receive a low rating although it must be understood that only half of the respondents indicated that they have access to the Internet in their home and this question was only answered by a low number of persons.

Community Noticeboards in supermarkets/shops and Flyers/Brochures were both rated as easy to understand by more than three-quarters of respondents with Noticeboards being rated as slightly more easy to understand than Flyers/Brochures.

The other source to receive a very positive rating was information provided by Community Groups/Clubs, while the lowest rating for ease of understanding was for information from the Baw Baw Shire.

Rating of Effectiveness of information content

As with ease of understanding, the Traf News received the highest rating for effectiveness of information content. The Local Mobile Library was rated a positive by nearly all respondents who responded to this question.

Local TV and radio both received ratings of over 70% with local TV receiving the higher rating for effectiveness of information content with 80% compared to 74% for radio. There was also a high response rate for Word of Mouth as an effective form of communication for information content which was closely followed by Community Groups/Clubs.

Overall, local newspapers including: LV Express, Warragul Gazette and Moe/Narracan News, received varying ratings for effectiveness of information content. LV Express was rated most positively followed by Warragul Gazette.

Both Noticeboards in supermarkets/shops and Flyers/Brochures received positive ratings for ease understanding although there was a less positive response for effectiveness of information content, with Noticeboards rating 67% and Flyers/Brochures only 52%.

Baw Baw Shire Council information once again received the lowest score with only half of the respondents rating content of information as effective.

Rating of the Credibility of Communication and Information Sources

Residents felt that information from the Local Mobile Library was the most credible although it must be noted that this question/information source was responded to by only 61 respondents.

Traf News was held in high regard by the majority of respondents. Other local newspapers did not fare as well as the Traf News, although LV Express did receive a high response for credibility. The credibility of information in the Warragul Gazette received a slightly lower rating than the LV Express.

A very high credibility rating was received for information produced by Community Groups/Clubs. Local TV and local radio received similar credibility responses with TV being slightly more positive.

Although information provided via Word of Mouth was rated as being easy to understand and effective, respondents were less likely to rate it as credible.

The two more 'direct marketing' sources of information, Noticeboards in supermarkets/shops and Flyers/Brochures received only slightly positive ratings for credibility, with Noticeboards being slightly more positive.

Once again the level of confidence in the Baw Baw Shire was low with only half rating information provided as being credible.

Less than half of the low number of respondents to the credibility of information from the Internet rated it positively with just over 38% being neutral. This data again must be used carefully due to the low number of responses.

Section 5: Identifying Other Communication Products Not Currently Used

Information Gaps

Respondents felt that the main source of the information gap was related to the Baw Baw Shire followed by Community Groups/Clubs and their interaction with each other and the community as a whole.

The information gaps attributed to the Traf News included that it should be published more regularly, it should be more available to the rural community and that the information is dated and not up-to-the-minute. A delay in getting information into the community was an issue for some respondents, particularly for rural residents. These delays also cause the problem of information being out of date by the time the community receives it.

Residents also made comments about the community noticeboard, or lack of, to display information, and that there are not enough flyers and brochures. There were issues relating to age groups, particularly information for the youth and that there is not enough general community information available. There were further suggestions that there is limited or slow broadband access and that it is difficult to pick up local television and radio transmissions.

Section 6: Use of Preferred Types of Information Contact to Communicate with the Community

Overall, the most preferred or perceived effective type of information contact was Word of Mouth although as a first preference residents would more likely use print media as a more formal type of advertising and creating awareness of information. Newspaper articles was nominated by 33% of respondents overall, followed by newspaper advertisement/classified ads. Traf News was also seen as an effective way of communicating information.

Nominated newspapers included: LV Express, Warragul Gazette and Moe/Narracan News, with respondents more likely to use the LV Express rather than the Warragul Gazette or the Moe/Narracan News.

Direct marketing or advertising, such as flyers or brochures in letterboxes, was also seen as an effective way of contacting the community as was the use of a community noticeboard.

Section 7: Types of Information that would assist to become more involved in the Trafalgar Community

The most prominent comments/suggestions related to the availability of community directories including lists of Community Groups/Clubs, listings printed in newspapers, listings of local organisations and of children's activities and groups. A similar information source was the suggestion of the production of a calendar of events and meetings, advertising or listings of sporting events/news, club news and group activities, and distributing this information through flyers and brochures.

Residents also felt that if they were more informed of council proceedings they could become more involved in the community while some respondents state that they would like council to hold public forums and be more open with the community and provide access to council minutes and historical documents relating to town planning and developments.

Use of the Traf News as an information source was recognised by some respondents as a way of keeping informed and assists with increasing community involvement. Other suggestions for keeping informed included: being pro-active, contacting the TCDA and staying aware of what is going on, while others stated that they wanted information on how to get involved or to be a volunteer and that there is a need for a very effective noticeboard.

Recommendations and suggestions

Following are suggestions and recommendations of ways to improve communication within the Trafalgar community. This list is not exhaustive, although the researcher feels that all or most of these suggestions should be considered as a feasible starting block for developing an effective communication strategy for Trafalgar. Through further community consultation, particularly with retail and commercial organisations and key members of community groups, additional recommendations or suggestions may arise.

**note: Recommendations and suggestions are not listed in any preferential order.*

1. A community noticeboard to be installed as a high priority.
2. Continue with production of the Traf News. Expand information content and make provisions for all community members to access this paper. Invite increased participation from community members to include articles and information.
3. Ensure that all advertising or delivery of information is delivered in a timely manner.
4. Efforts should be made to ensure that distribution of information be inclusive of all residents, particularly rural residents.
5. Produce a community directory that lists community groups, clubs and organisations and distribute to all households within the Trafalgar district.
6. Develop and distribute a calendar of events and meetings of the community clubs and groups. This could be done on a quarterly basis and be included in the Traf News. Information should be displayed through Posters/Flyers on a community notice board.
7. The TCDA continue to develop and advertise it's new website and encourage businesses, clubs, schools and other organisations to utilise it as a communication source.
8. Develop mechanisms for the community's clubs and organisations to interact with one another on a regular basis. Initial co-ordination could be undertaken by the TCDA and then continued by the clubs themselves.
9. Community to lobby for improved local television coverage.
10. Community to lobby for expanded or improved broadband access.
11. Encourage Baw Baw Shire Council to work with the TCDA to improve its communication with and between the Trafalgar community.
12. Council to hold public forums on matters affecting the community.