Making Research Useful: Knowing Your Audience

Jonathan Breckon, Nesta
5 Top Tips

1. know your audiences
2. absorptive capacity of your audience
3. use knowledge brokers, intermediaries, networks
4. use fundamentals of good communication
5. manage politics
1. know your audiences

- frontline practitioners
- service providers
- regulators
- wider public
- Business
- Middle/lower-level ranks

.....stakeholder mapping?
2. Absorptive capacity of your audience – policymakers skills

Successful policy

3. Use knowledge brokers, intermediaries, networks

Avoid what Geoff Mulgan, CEO of Nesta, calls the ‘clever chap theory’ of scientific advice. Empathise with those in power. And use:

• Peer-to-peer networks like Alliance/professional bodies e.g. Royal Colleges
• Institutions and cultures e.g. Netherlands Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis. In UK...
3 (cont.) What Works network
4. Use fundamentals of good communication

– work upstream, co-design/create

– Communicate from point of view of your audience.

– Social media and blogging much more effective than reports, good for Search Engine Optimisation

– Data visualisation e.g. The Conversation

– Avoid Portal Proliferation Syndrome
4. (cont.) Guides ....

- **Research Uptake Guidance** Department for International Development (UK)
- **Communicating research for evidence-based policymaking: A practical guide for researchers in socio-economic sciences and humanities** European Commission
- **Guide: Engaging with Policymakers** National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (UK)
- **Impact toolkit** Economic and Social Research Council (UK)
Six Top Tips

- Data Visualisation.
- Pictures are better than words. Reuters Inst seminars with journalists.
- But also EEF-Son Trust Teaching and Learning toolkit

- Manage Politics.
- Not just the civil servants. Manifestos coming up.

SLIDES TWO/THREE
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AUTHOR

Siew-Ean Khoo
Senior Fellow, Australian Demographic and Social Research Institute at Australian National University

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT
5. Finally... politics

“There is nothing a politician likes so little as to be well-informed. It makes decision making so complex and difficult.”

(John Maynard Keynes)

“For me, politics shouldn’t be some mind-bending exercise. It’s about what you feel in your gut”

(David Cameron, April 2011)
Conclusion

1. importance of not being passive & interactivity e.g. ‘ongoing engagement’ with audiences.

1. upstream engagement not linear model of knowledge transfer and ‘dissemination’.

2. politics and delivery is vital, not just good evidence. Dutch central planning bureau deals with 10 political parties.
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