

## **IF MY STUDENT IS AN APPLE, DO I COMMUNICATE LIKE AN ORANGE?**

### **ABSTRACT**

*In most facets of life and throughout the ages, information has always been a potent source of power. Seers and fortune-tellers have long capitalised on our insatiable thirst for information. Corporate management understand well the potential of controlling the flow of information (valid, pertinent or otherwise) to their colleagues and staff.*

*The proverb “the pen is mightier than the sword” eloquently identifies that the wellspring of strength and power that comes from communication and information. As the Industrial Age blossomed, the core tenet of educating the masses recognised that information-sharing would contribute positively to all areas of living. Indeed the new century was heralded as The Communication Age.*

### **DISCUSSION**

In 2007 RMIT University embraced peer-to-peer communication by engaging 200 student volunteers to ‘paint the picture’, ‘spread the word’ and ‘spill the beans’ on orientation. Campus tours, portfolio/school barbeques, corporate partners’ liaison, hosting and handling enquiries – the volunteers provided both The Face and The Voice of Orientation. As a direct consequence of this, participation across all campuses in all orientation events exceeded both previous years and current expectations. Before we embarked on this journey we needed to ask ourselves the question; if my student is an apple, do I communicate like an orange?

Within the Transition framework, how do we address “the more things change” without straying too far from “the more things stay the same”? How do we rejuvenate our communication tools and skills to embrace the new culture and language found in our classrooms and campuses? Should we regenerate the relationship between student and teacher to include a contra-flow of information regarding contemporary attitudes on communication? How is student engagement affected by the traditional relationship between student and teacher? How can we modify our communications to embed good Transition practices?

Regenerating the approach to Integration between secondary sector education and tertiary learning

- When do we begin communicating the value of orientation to students? Year 11/12?
- The message: what aspects do you discuss at secondary level? Value. Student Experience. Transition. Creating an expectation of involvement and a sense of immediacy or intimacy about the student’s participation at tertiary level.

- What does “everyone” already know about tertiary learning – does that need to be re-covered? Re-evaluating the importance of the non-academic component of a student’s success/experience. Creating a culture of social engagement with the habit of as much vigorous questioning, exploration and prioritising as is expected in the academic arena.

#### Appreciating issues from student perspectives

- How do you communicate with your peer group? How do you change the importance or significance? Do you modify the message or the media?
- Why did you participate in orientation?
- Are there situations/messages that are more effective coming from a teacher? From a peer? From the institution?
- How do students monitor and manage their communication with each other?
- What effect does changing the media have on the message?
- Has the hunger to learn been sated by communications loaded with sweeteners and full-fat marketing while being lite on significance and 98% substance-free?

#### Breaking down social isolation for new students

- At what size does the group dynamic change to create pockets of isolation?
- Can the language barrier be minimised with clearly defined procedures and/or expectations? What timeframe is realistic to achieve such aims?

Presenting authors, Janeene Payne and CaAtherine Meredith will lead the discussion before introducing RMIT students, Claire Connors, Emily Zielinski and Owain Wallace who will share their experience.