

Econnect and NVivo leading the way in communication best practice

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While many communication and public relations firms can struggle to convince their clients to fund formal research and evaluation, Australia's Econnect Communication has made it the backbone of their science and environment communication practice.

Econnect Consultant Dr Michelle Riedlinger said the agency has developed a seven-step approach to developing its clients' communication programs and evaluating their communication efforts, which uses research software NVivo 7.

"I think communication practitioners would agree that it is hard - particularly in tight times - to source funds for evaluating communication activities," she said.

"While program development and communication evaluation can be challenging processes, they are critical, especially when working with science or government clients, whose programs are often designed to elicit change."

"Research and evaluation must be transparent, robust and most importantly, ongoing. That's where we've found NVivo invaluable."

Dr Riedlinger used NVivo 7, developed by Australia's QSR International, in a recent review of the use and application of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission's (MDBC) Communication Strategy. The strategy was originally developed by Econnect in 1999 following widespread community consultation.

Econnect Communication used interviews, focus groups and web surveys to connect with 76 MDBC staff and 332 external representatives late last year. Dr Riedlinger then used NVivo 7 to compare the new information with the baseline data and measure MDBC's performance in information transfer and exchange, networking and involvement.

"NVivo let us work with both sets of data in the one project. We were able to drill down into that information to compare and contrast the feedback from not just broad sectors such as landholders or government agencies, but very specific audiences," she said.

"The fine level of detail NVivo allows for is fantastic and the relationships function helps to uncover connections between stakeholders and communication processes that aren't obvious at first glance."

Dr Riedlinger said NVivo 7's support of live data was also crucial in the early stages of the project.

"Our interviewees were able to modify or add to their data, which was immediately reflected in the analysis."

However Dr Riedlinger said the real art of NVivo was in the querying.

"NVivo lets you go back and interrogate the data again and again. You can really get to the heart of why some communication activities work or fail. You'd never be able to do that using a spreadsheet and your head - you'd lose a lot of that insight."

For more information about Michelle Riedlinger or Econnect visit: www.econnect.com.au.

About NVivo 7

NVivo 7 is designed to handle very rich text based information, where deep levels of analysis on both small and large volumes of data are required. It removes many of the manual tasks associated with analysis, like classifying, sorting and arranging information, so more time can be dedicated to explore trends, build and test theories and ultimately arrive at answers to questions. From policy formulation and education evaluation to mixed methods studies - NVivo 7 supports a wide range of research areas and is used by researchers, forensic scientists, psychologists, tourism managers, sociologists, consultants and academics worldwide.

About QSR International:

QSR International is based in Melbourne, Australia, with offices in North America and Europe. Its flagship products - XSight and NVivo 7 - are both designed to help researchers and other people working with non-numerical data to compile, compare and make sense of their information quickly and easily. More than 350,000 users in 90 countries, from

market research agencies, government bodies and universities, to tourism, urban affairs and human resources professionals, use QSR research software. QSR International is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and the company's NVivo 7 software was used as a reference project at the Microsoft TechEd 2006 conference in the United States. Information: www.qsrinternational.com