

*Spendlove
and Lamb*

Narrative Strategy Case Study
by Spendlove and Lamb

CREATING THE NARRATIVE FOR A YOUTH ALCOHOL CULTURE CHANGE PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

At Spendlove and Lamb we understand that creating alignment around a vision is challenging when producing communications and marketing campaigns for organisations.

Essentially at its very core all communication is storytelling. The challenge with telling stories is that there are too many fantastic stories to tell. The narrative provides a working strategy around which stories align with the goals of the project or campaign. We help organisations gather the individual stories that make up a campaign or project to create a narrative that binds it all together.

A good narrative is a success if it brings all storytelling stakeholders together under a shared common purpose.

This early stage case study tells the story of a youth alcohol change project with City of Whittlesea, YSAS and VicHealth. The focus of this campaign is getting disengaged young people



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thinking about how they can create connection and ease loneliness without using alcohol as a way to socialise with other people.

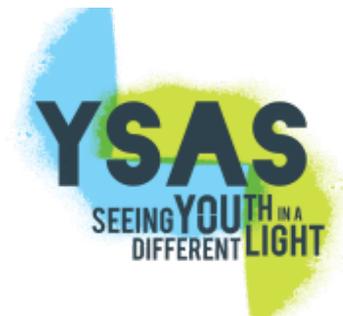
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Davey Wilson is the project lead on a youth alcohol culture change project at the council of Whittlesea in the northern suburbs of Melbourne Australia. VicHealth's Alcohol Cultures Grant is an LGA funding stream aimed at reducing harm from alcohol among targeted subcultures. The target group for our initiative is young people aged 14 to 18 who are disengaged or at risk of being disengaged from study, training or work.

Despite evidence suggesting that young people are drinking less, there are vulnerable groups that still experience high levels of harm. This project has a strong focus on reducing inequities in harm from alcohol by targeting a group that has traditionally not been reached.



**City of
Whittlesea**



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PROJECT GOALS

They are currently entering the second year of a three year project. Davey has been meeting with a co-hort of disengaged youth from ages of 14 – 18 to collect their thoughts and feelings on alcohol use through interactive codesign sessions.

We have identified a number of values that influence the group's relationship with alcohol, including:

- **Making new friends and boyfriends/ girlfriends**
- **Reinforcing friendships in environments (i.e. urban streets, under bridges, parks and nature reserves) that offer a measure of adventure, excitement and unpredictability**
- **Learning to negotiate a self-managed degree of risk and pleasure that is considered essential for having an exciting night out and creating identity**

Having spent a year meeting the young people they were ready to enter the second stage of the program by putting the messages and stories collected from these sessions on SnapChat and Instagram.

To do that they needed a strategic way to tell the stories and a shared overarching vision to create cohesion with the content.

In a strategic narrative strategy session, we pin pointed the commonality in all of the stories the young people were telling.

Loneliness

People who are lonely or feel disconnected turn to alcohol to create a sense of connection with people or ease feelings of disengagement. This connection is short lived and confined within the act of drinking. It might help ease a momentary situation, but it doesn't provide any lasting alternative ways to create connection in their lives.

That's where Spendlove and Lamb came in, we needed to arm the storytellers with a narrative for this culture change project to create a shared vision and actionable goals.

This narrative brings big picture thinking to the project, so all participants can see where

“THE PROCESS HAS HELPED ME UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF USING STORY TO HELP CREATE CULTURE CHANGE. AN AUTHENTIC STORY MAKES PEOPLE WANT TO BE A PART OF THE EXPERIENCE AND THEY START TO SEE THE NARRATIVES IN THEIR OWN LIVES.”

- DAVEY WILSON, CITY OF WHITTLESEA

they have been and understand where they are going.

If easing loneliness is the problem, then connection is the answer.

We started by breaking the problem down into **storytelling pillars**. We used the voices of the young people and created pillars that avoid academic and overused language:

- **Being yourself and not drinking just because others tell you too**
- **Balancing risk while being open to genuine life experience with food, music and events**
- **Being Loyal to friends, don't dog the boys/ girls**
- **The alcohol only amplifies who you are, it doesn't make someone into a different person**
- **You are in control, you know the best choices to have good friendships**
- **Genuine experiences make you feel bigger than yourself, it connects you to something larger, like a community or a club**

PROJECT GOALS

From those values and the stories that underpinned them we created the narrative of -

- **Connect Without Alcohol**

Or

- **What can we do besides drink to make or maintain friendships?**

The strategy uses these types of stories to inspire young people to produce user generated content for social media channels on SnapChat and Instagram.

We are writing copy with the young people and producing imagery for a digital campaign to demonstrate this authenticity and built up its credibility with a very critical demographic, teenagers. We are using humour and a tongue-in-cheek content created in the codesign sessions that will become the content for the digital channels.

“THE SOCIAL MEDIA COMPONENT HAS HELPED ME TO COMMUNICATE MY FINDINGS INTO A COHERENT STORY. RATHER THAN PROMOTING A RANGE OF MESSAGES IN A HAPHAZARD WAY, THE NARRATIVE GAVE ME A CLEAR GOAL AND CLEAR PARAMETERS TO WORK WITHIN, SUCH AS THE STORIES TONE OF VOICE AND VALUES.”
- DAVEY WILSON, CITY OF WHITTLESEA

Each piece of content will act as a call to action, encouraging young people to get with their friends to show us how they are making connections without alcohol. This will create a series of instantly memorable digital assets that the youth can share with their peers. We needed to show the story to the recipient, not just tell it.

Perhaps more importantly, we are giving a voice to those have felt voiceless. We are providing connection to their stories and points of view to anyone in the world who chooses to engage with the content.

“IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE AN AUTHENTIC, PROVOKING AND ENTERTAINING STORY FROM ANYTHING - EVEN AN ALCOHOL HARM MINIMISATION PROJECT.”

- DAVEY WILSON, CITY OF WHITTLESEA

The goal is to help the young storytellers create emotional connections with others through a clear narrative supported by a range of antidotes that fit into the storytelling pillars.

One of the strengths of multi-pillar storytelling is that it is modular. Each storyteller can find the space for their unique point of views within the story pillars to create the ongoing narrative.

The young people have started to see their stories come together in the collection of content we are producing. When they saw the output, their eyes lit up and understood the impact of what they had been doing in meetings for a year. The larger narrative has allowed them to understand the importance of their contributions. The bigger vision of, don't just drink to create connection, would not be possible without their individual thoughts and feelings.

CONCLUSION

The culture change project now has a narrative that resonates and all the story tools they need to bring the campaign into the world.

The digital component of this campaign is set to go live in May 2018. We are looking forward to seeing the impact of this work.

In the meantime, here are some takeaways on the narrative's success from Davey Wilson -

- **Created greater shared understanding among stakeholders**
- **Produced more buy-in from participants. They are proud of the story they are telling. They feel like their story is important**
- **Helped create content that people want to engage with. Everyone wants to read it, have positive comments and often have a laugh**

PLATFORM

The platform we used to tell the stories of the young people of YARD is [Mish.Guru](#). MishGuru is a platform that supports the sharing of user generated content of produced via SnapChat. They provides the tools for campaigns to share them with the world.

