

NEWS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release

NEW ALLIANCE ADVANCES PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

A new alliance between two Vancouver-based companies is advancing public engagement and community consultation on urban growth and development and neighbourhood involvement to a whole new level.

Online public consultation technology leader PlaceSpeak and COUNTERPOINT Communications-- a public affairs and communications company with a long track record in the urban development sector-- announced they have entered into a channel partnership agreement.

This new strategic alliance will see the two companies bring their respective expert resources, talents and experience to the table to offer clients in the urban development and community planning sector a full range of services to plan, implement and manage effective public process that supports smart land use principles and sound urban design techniques.

PlaceSpeak (www.placespeak.com) is revolutionizing online public consultation, transforming the way citizens in neighbourhoods interact with each other, with developers, with local government officials and with decision-makers. PlaceSpeak's online public engagement platform makes it possible, for the first time, to genuinely communicate in an online dialogue based on where you live, work and recreate. PlaceSpeak's technology leverages the power of social media in online engagement to add real value by generating verifiable geographically-specific data to support community planning, public policy development and local decision-making.

COUNTERPOINT's Bob Ransford says PlaceSpeak's unique participant verification process delivers more valuable information than standard online consultation. He says community developments are exciting but can also be sensitive, and the ability to engage the specific neighbourhoods where things are happening is critical in the consultation process.

"PlaceSpeak is the only online platform that authenticates participants according to their location through a process that protects individuals' privacy but brings neighbourhood- specific interests to decision-makers," Ransford says.

"We literally know 'where people are coming from', and that helps them and us move the community forward in the best possible way."

COUNTERPOINT Communications (www.counterpoint.ca) has developed, over more than a decade, strong specialist skills in public engagement and collaborative land use planning. Working with developers, land owners and public agencies, they have pioneered locally a number of public engagement processes that have helped their clients and communities overcome challenges and plan and build projects that strengthened communities and advanced the development of livable communities with a true sense of place.

COUNTERPOINT Communications will work with clients to apply PlaceSpeak's features to their specific needs and manage a real dialogue with the public, fully taking advantage of the new capabilities PlaceSpeak is offering. At the same time, PlaceSpeak will be able to extend their reach in the urban development and community planning sector, where traditional public consultation and community engagement methods are facing limits in a connected and fast changing world.

This strategic alliance will allow both companies to continue to development their specialties by acting on the valuable insight they obtain from deploying PlaceSpeak as one vital tool in a full solutions application.

"To effectively communicate today, you need to be able to connect with people online. The challenge in resolving land use issues is to truly build relationships with people. That means a dialogue and not a monologue," explains COUNTERPOINT's Bob Ransford.

"PlaceSpeak was designed to facilitate that dialogue. We're excited about helping clients harness all of the power of PlaceSpeak for early and ongoing public engagement. In doing so, we're adding a valuable dimension to the kind of collaborative planning that resolves issues and produces great outcomes for communities."

PlaceSpeak's co-founder Colleen Hardwick says she's excited that COUNTERPOINT has become a channel partner.

"We created PlaceSpeak to open up genuine dialogue on the future of communities, giving the public a bigger voice and more effective input and giving decision-makers a clearer, more authentic view of the community's interests. With COUNTERPOINT

working on the roll out of PlaceSpeak directly with new clients in urban development, it means all of the capabilities we've designed with our platform will be used to help with making public engagement on these important issues real," Hardwick says.

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