

NEW GAME-PLAN CASE STUDY

DISTANCE BRAIN-POOL WORKSHOPS

MOBILIZING A COMPANY'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT POLICY

1. Background and purpose

Our client had recently established a new global Policy on Community Engagement to encourage and support constructive relationships with regulators, interest groups and the general public. This case study reports on a program to mobilize the new Policy across the company by encouraging effective engagement between the company's sites and their local communities.

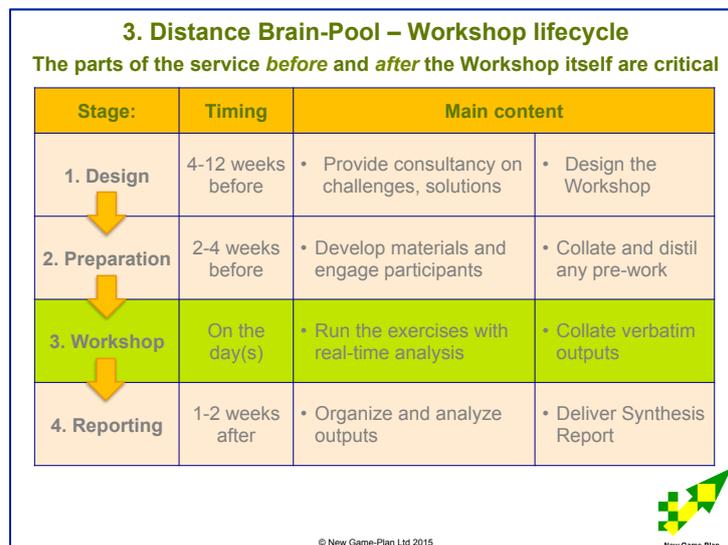
The program faced some formidable challenges given the number of sites, their geographical spread across four global regions, diverse site operations (ranging from production to research) and varied local economies (from 'emerging' to 'highly developed'). Approaches relying on traditional face-to-face meetings could not be contemplated due to the prohibitive cost of bringing many people from several countries to meet at one location. These overhead costs include the cost of travel, the time consumed, stress on individuals, and the opportunity costs for the business.

'Distance Brain-Pool' is an innovative workshop service developed by New Game-Plan. It brings people from distant locations together through a web platform to share knowledge intensively and solve business problems in a highly productive, structured way. It produces rich, tangible outputs. Avoiding the costs associated with long-distance travel is an obvious benefit. But, importantly, the Distance Brain-Pool approach ensures that, rather than being compromised, the collaborative working is more intensive and can be of higher quality than in traditional face-to-face workshops.

Following the successful completion of a pilot to test the use of the Distance Brain-Pool service with several company sites in North America, New Game-Plan were engaged to run a series of 12 'Community Engagement On-boarding Meetings' across four global business regions. This case study summarizes our process, the outputs, and the benefits provided by this service.

2. The project lifecycle

The slide below illustrates the typical lifecycle of a Distance Brain-Pool project. There are four main stages: Design, Preparation, Workshop and Reporting. Each involves close partnership working with our sponsor, in this case the Head of Social Policy and Performance, in Corporate Affairs.



3. Designing the workshops

During this brief consultancy phase we work closely with our clients to set the business context, define the purpose of the project, identify special challenges, advise on solutions and create a high-level workshop design. We help clients articulate their requirements and advise on workshop designs and exercises that will best meet these needs.

The business context in this case was provided by the need to mobilize Community Engagement, across all sites. The company had already gained significant experience of engagement in many parts of the world, but its nature and level were not consistent. The company was keen to explore the opportunities to widen and deepen engagement with local communities.

The following key definition, purpose and objective were agreed for the workshops:

- **Community engagement:** *'The pro-active involvement by the company with the local community to align interests, increase mutual understanding, build relationships, take joint action for mutual benefits and share value.'*
- **Purpose:** *'Co-create and share knowledge and experiences across sites. Create an understanding of issues and get engaged.'*
- **Objective:** *'Create a common approach to Community Engagement that mitigates risk by connecting the company to the community.'*

Building on our initial work with internal stakeholders during the pilot, we also established a joint project team. We identified the following special challenges:

- *How to find 'win-win' Community Engagement solutions that deliver sustainable benefits for both communities and the company?*
- *How to achieve an appropriate degree of standardization given the huge differences between company sites of different types in different places, and their communities?*
- *How to make the program a learning process for individual sites and between sites?*
- *How to develop the very different mindset that is required for Community Engagement to succeed and add value?*
- *How to get sites to give the program the right level of priority and focus?*
- *How to kick start the program so it is actionable and is actually operationalized by each site?*

These challenges were each addressed in selecting the workshop model and developing the detailed workshop design. Critical elements included:

- Confirming that the Distance Brain-Pool service offered the most efficient way of reaching the participants given their large number and global geographical spread.
- Encouraging sites to focus on what matters to local communities by taking the interests and concerns that are being expressed locally as the starting-point for discussion.
- Deliberately mixing experienced and less-experienced sites in each workshop, so that they could share and deliberate on their challenges, ideas, and actions.

- Including exercises to identify challenges, and suggest solutions, to encourage thinking about mindsets, culture, and priorities.
- Including an exercise on action planning to encourage thinking about next steps, resources, involving employees voluntarily in engagement activities, and quick wins.

The overall design of the project provided for:

- A series of 12 three-hour workshops. These were communicated as ‘Meetings’ to reassure participants that, while of high importance, they would not involve all the time, disruption and travel costs that they would normally associate with face-to-face ‘workshops’.
- Each workshop to involve up to 40 participants at 5-10 hubs or sites.
- The workshops to bring together colleagues from similar types of sites (e.g. Production and Supply, or Research and Development) within any one region at a time.
- The ‘Meeting Team’ of New Game-Plan, the sponsor, and any company colleagues, to run the workshops from the company’s head office.

4. Preparing for the workshops

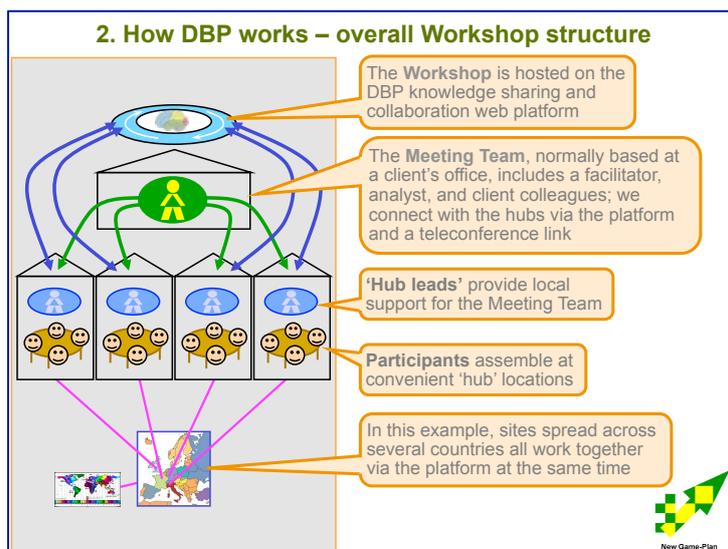
At this stage we work with our clients to: identify workshop participants; develop background materials; obtain any pre-existing inputs, or organize some pre-work by participants; and brief local hub leads. Our clients usually deal with ‘housekeeping’ matters (e.g. identifying and inviting participants, sourcing inputs, booking rooms for the hubs, and arranging refreshments).

The company selected the participating sites and asked site managers to nominate colleagues to take part. We prepared some supporting hand-outs containing key slides and the instructions for each exercise. We also briefed ‘hub leads’: these participants check local arrangements (e.g. rooms, internet connection, refreshments) and act as contact points during the workshop for the Meeting Team. The sponsor sent the supporting materials to the participants, together with a Workbook providing background information on the Policy, well before each workshop.

All participants were asked to log in to the platform in advance of the workshop to confirm that they could do so easily, and to complete a short exercise to familiarize themselves with the platform and start thinking about the subject matter. We received some 30-50 valuable ideas for Community ‘Interests and Concerns’ for each workshop from this ‘pre-work’. We were able to distil these contributions and use them as initial prompts in the first exercise in the workshops.

5. Delivering the workshops

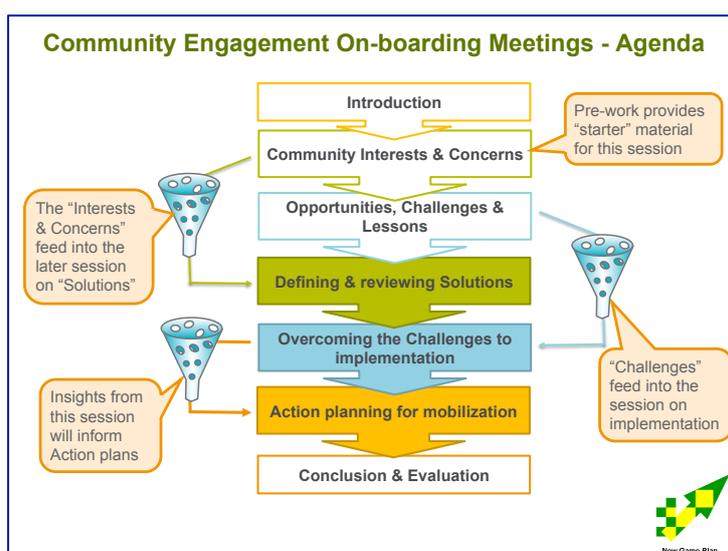
At the set time for each workshop, the participants assembled at their local hub. Most were based at their own site; others travelled a short distance to a neighboring site; a few did not join a hub but participated as ‘satellites’ from their own locations. The slide below illustrates how the platform, operated by the Meeting Team at the company’s head office, linked together all the participants.



Each workshop followed the same structured process, with five exercises in one three-hour session:

- Identifying Community Interests and Concerns
- Identifying Opportunities, Challenges and Lessons for Implementing the Policy
- Defining and Reviewing Solutions to the Community Interests and Concerns
- Overcoming the Challenges to Implementation
- Action Planning for Mobilization

The slide below shows the Meeting agenda. Importantly, it illustrates how inputs obtained in early exercises (including the pre-work), were fed into later sessions, having been distilled in real time.



Participants were advised that all their individual contributions would be anonymous. They were encouraged to make full, open and honest contributions.

During the workshop:

- Our facilitator used a teleconference link, and the slides on the platform, to guide the process and exercises at the hubs.
- All contributions typed in by participants were pooled, captured and shared via the platform.
- Our analyst: reviewed all the inputs as they came in; entered prompts to seek clarification or encourage further thinking; briefed our facilitator on the inputs; adjusted exercises as necessary; and distilled some key outputs to create inputs for later exercises.

6. Reporting the workshops

We prepared a high-quality compendium of outputs from each workshop and presented this to the sponsor. Our 'Synthesis Report' for each workshop comprised:

- An **Executive Summary**.
- A concise **synthesis** of the outputs, distilled from the verbatim contributions.
- The **workshop evaluation** and list of participants.
- The **verbatim contributions**, tidied to remove errors and improve clarity, for reference.

The distillation process typically involves reducing the volume of text by 60-70%, while remaining faithful to the original contributions. For example, one fairly typical On-Boarding Meeting, involving 37 participants from seven sites across four countries, yielded 405 substantive verbatim contributions to the main exercises. From these, our analyst produced 125 synthesized outputs:

- Six benefits of improving Community Engagement.
- 16 Community Interests and Concerns linked to 26 Solutions to address them.
- Two positive Opportunities presented by the Community Engagement Policy.
- Five Challenges for implementation, and 18 suggestions for how to overcome them.
- Four Lessons from previous experience for implementing the Policy.
- 48 Actions for Mobilizing the Policy.

The report for each workshop included the verbatim text as a record of the original contributions. The reports were made available in both PDF and editable formats, to facilitate further work by the sites (e.g. in taking forward the Action Plans they had started to develop during the workshop).

We also produced a series of Overview Reports, collating the outputs of all the workshops held in each region, and the outputs for one function in two regions. These reports, together with an Inventory Report collating and further distilling the outputs of all 12 workshops, were made available to all the company's sites (including non-participating sites) via the company's intranet, to maximize opportunities for sharing ideas and experience.

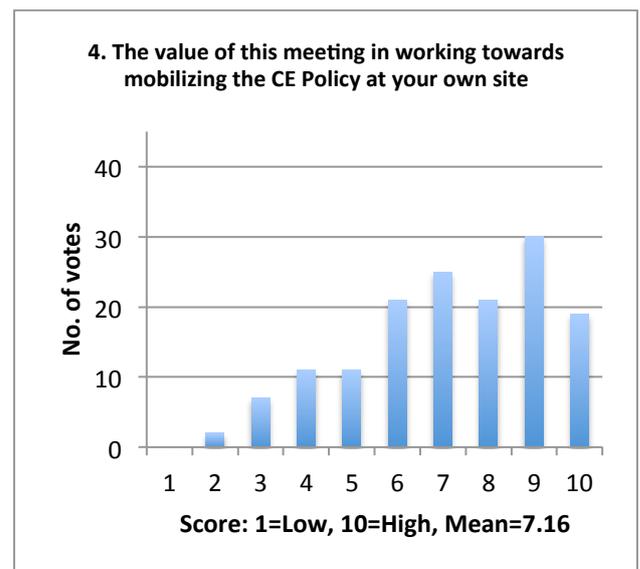
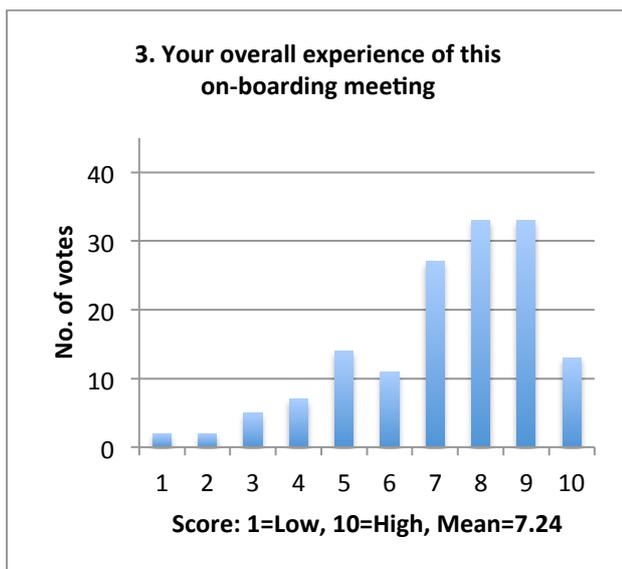
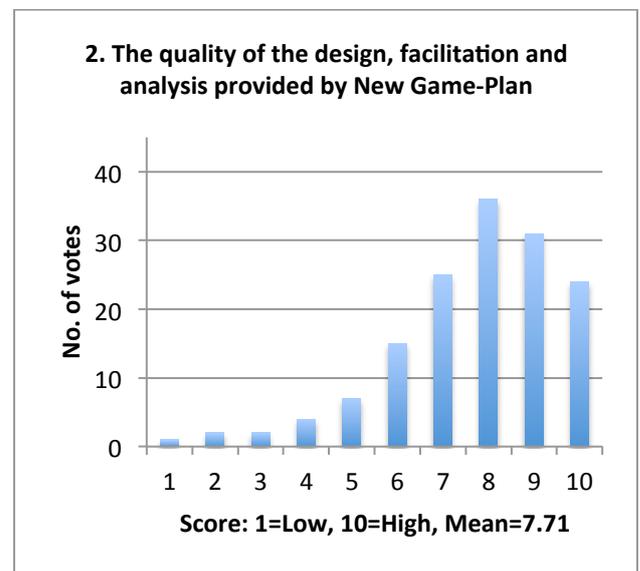
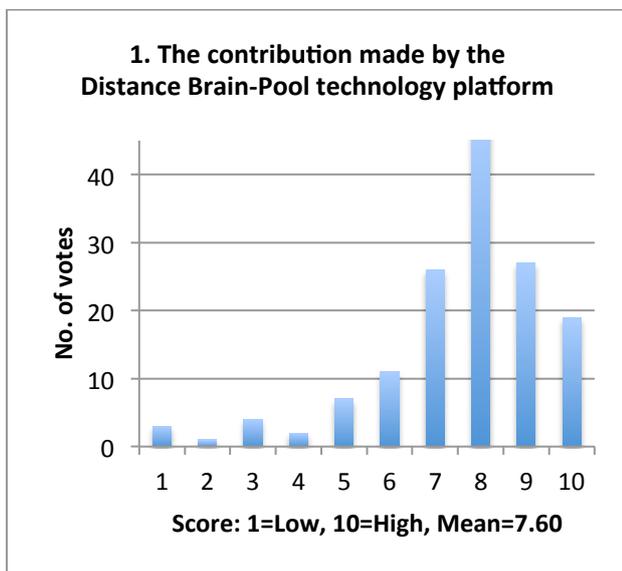
7. Feedback from participants

At the end of each workshop, the company's participants completed an anonymous evaluation. Some 147 ratings were received for each of four questions from the 12 workshops. The questions were scored on a scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high). Participants could see only their own scores. Some participants may have voted as a group, rather than as individuals, at some hubs.

The questions and the corresponding overall mean ratings were:

1. The contribution made by the Distance Brain-Pool technology platform: **76%**.
2. The quality of the design, facilitation and analysis provided by New Game-Plan: **77%**.
3. Your overall experience of this on-boarding meeting: **72%**.
4. The value of this meeting in working towards mobilizing the Community Engagement Policy at your own site: **71%**.

The charts below show the spread of ratings across the 12 workshops for each question in turn.



The comments recorded by participants included:

- ‘The meeting organization, layout and flow were superb.’
- ‘Pre-work helped us to come with prior understanding about the presentation format and flow.’
- ‘I enjoyed the ease of this meeting, it was interactive, with real time information and participative - the best interactive meeting I’ve participated in.’
- ‘The Workbook, handout material and login procedures were developed skillfully and dynamically.’
- ‘Three or more hours never placed me in a boring mind-frame nor did I lose my attention. Very well done!’
- ‘I was very impressed by the facilitation – very clear, assured and easy to follow (especially recognizing that many participants would not be native English speakers).’
- ‘Good interaction between participants and visualization of inputs on the platform.’
- ‘The opportunity to contribute comments collectively, quickly, non-attributably - much more efficient than open dialogue.’
- ‘Did not have to waste time travelling.’
- ‘I like the use of the platform versus the old flip-charts approach.’
- ‘Encouraged individual contributions without individuals and their views dominating.’
- ‘New platform provides very collaborative meeting – impossible to do this kind of meeting by Conference Call.’
- ‘Leveling participation - writing in English is easier than talking in English.’
- ‘I felt I worked better, worked smarter, was more creative and was less pressured = all a win-win.’
- ‘We captured all the responses and this data can be worked on and used to build up a good picture to use after the workshop.’
- ‘I truly enjoyed the engagement aspects in this activity and understanding what other locations are experiencing.’
- ‘This platform connected a diverse cross-section of the company, giving varied insight and knowledge to a meaningful topic.’
- ‘I dug out some good ideas from the contributions being typed in by others at the same time. I had the freedom to look at what is of interest. Really fantastic.’
- ‘I really liked this entire meeting. I read all the material before the session and thought “oh here is another thing we are trying” – I have to say this is by far the best platform I have experienced since I have been with the company.’

8. Reach

The 12 workshops directly engaged some 300 employees from 84 sites in 34 countries across four global regions: APAC (11 countries, 22 sites), EAME (16 countries, 30 sites), LATAM (four countries, 14 sites) and NA (three countries, 18 sites). Data provided by the sites indicated that the workshops indirectly engaged some 11,500 company employees and a further 9,500 contractors and temporary or seasonal staff at the participating sites, some 21,000 people in total.

9. Demonstrated benefits and conclusions

Our Distance Brain-Pool service delivers a range of benefits to clients, as illustrated in the slide below, including benefits in terms of outcomes, program delivery, reach and intense collaboration.

1. Distance Brain-Pool – Benefits

- **Better outcomes:** ensuring that strategies, plans or projects are well-founded, fully-tested, and have company-wide 'buy-in'
- **Accelerating delivery:** one DBP Workshop can be as productive as a whole series of conventional workshops
- **Extended reach:** engaging people who would not be able to attend a face-to-face workshop due to travel costs, their limited availability, or other restrictions (e.g. access to visas)
- **Richer and more intense global collaboration:** by involving diverse groups working in different time-zones
- **Significant cost savings:** economic (e.g. air fares and hotels); environmental (e.g. CO₂); and opportunity costs (3-4 hours only per DBP Workshop - fitting readily within a daily work schedule)
- **Reduced stress:** saving on travel time, and avoiding jet lag


New Game-Plan

© New Game-Plan Ltd 2015

The workshops exemplify these benefits in several ways. The outputs themselves were rich and detailed. Some 1,200 substantive outputs were synthesized from the contributions received:

- 84 benefits of improving Community Engagement.
- 51 positive Opportunities presented by the Community Engagement Policy.
- 29 Community Interests and Concerns linked to 304 Solutions to address them.
- 24 Challenges for implementation, and 255 suggestions for how to overcome them.
- 57 Lessons from previous experience for implementing the Policy.
- 453 Actions for Mobilizing the Policy.

These outputs have the potential to contribute to better outcomes in terms of a wider and deeper level of proactive Community Engagement, in particular by more sites becoming aware of, adapting, and implementing successful interventions made elsewhere at sites across the world:

By bringing large numbers of people together from different countries, the workshops facilitated intense sharing of experience and ideas, which it would have been difficult to create by any other means, in such a short time, without very extensive organization and travel. The workshops brought together participants who would not ordinarily work with each other, and who valued the opportunity to do so; one involved sites in South Africa, Kenya, Turkey, Portugal and Sweden!

The 12 workshops directly engaged some 300 employees from 84 sites in 34 countries across four regions. The workshops enabled staff from diverse functions, and with significantly different levels of seniority, to participate. Many would have found it difficult to travel to another country for a face-to-face workshop, given the costs, time and possible visa requirements. The wider impact, beyond the participants themselves, could extend to some 21,000 employees and contractors at the sites.

By minimizing the travel requirements for most of the participants, who were able to join the workshop at their own site, the workshops elicited significant savings in economic terms (e.g. air fares and hotels); environmental costs (e.g. CO₂ emissions); and opportunity costs (three hours per workshop - fitting readily within daily work schedules). The cost of bringing 300 participants to 12 face-to-face workshops could easily be some \$2,000 each, giving a total of some \$600,000.

The On-boarding Meetings were considered to be a great success by both the participants and the sponsor. Over some 36 workshop hours we were able to engage some 300 employees at 84 sites world-wide, in intense, knowledge-sharing and co-creation. It would be difficult to conceive how otherwise this could be done without the need for costly travel.

There was effective partnership working between New Game-Plan and the client in the joint project team. The care taken in understanding the business challenges, undertaking a pilot workshop, and designing the full program to take on board relevant learning points, was repaid in terms of the smooth running and high productivity of the 12 workshops themselves.

The Distance Brain-Pool platform was robust and very well received by participants. The design, preparation, facilitation, and analysis were also highly rated and valued. Participants found it to be a motivating, engaging and positive shared learning experience.

The Brain-Pool approach is repeatable and applicable to diverse business areas. Another recent 'Distance' workshop helped 40 participants across Europe and North America to anticipate future regulatory challenges. Other recent projects, using our 'Classic' approach (with participants using the same platform, but all located at one site), have tackled diverse topics: identifying and assessing innovative technologies for product delivery; embedding the 'lean manufacture' concept and developing roadmaps for implementation; learning lessons from problems in product development; and developing an extended and updated corporate global Code of Conduct.

10. About New Game-Plan

Our distinctiveness is based on our innovative approach, which fuses excellent facilitation, powerful tools, strong analysis and supporting technology. Our specialist services include:

- High-productivity collaborative 'Brain-Pool' workshops
- Engaging Stakeholders
- Developing Structured Networks
- Developing Policies and Strategies through co-creation

11. Further information

Further information on our Distance Brain-Pool service, including an introductory slide-set and brochure, is available from Ian Castle (T: +44 7970 663352. E: ian.castle@new-game-plan.co.uk). He is happy to discuss how our service could fit specific requirements and set up demonstrations.

Further information and Brain-Pool case studies can be found at: www.new-game-plan.co.uk.

*New Game-Plan services are traded by The Consultant Connection Ltd.
© New Game-Plan 2015. All rights reserved.*