

Case Study – Large Group Facilitation

Situation

CANSO – the Civil Air Navigation Services Organisation - is the global voice of the companies that provide air traffic control. CANSO members serve over 60% of the world airspace and control over 80% of the world's air traffic (www.canso.org).

Each year CANSO organises a conference for the chief executives of air traffic companies and other senior managers from the industry to explore areas of common interest.

One such conference, with the theme of Industry Leadership, involved the shaping of a global vision. The brief was to design and facilitate a workshop that:

- ▶ Was energetic and engaging
- ▶ Provided a genuine opportunity to contribute to shaping the vision
- ▶ Gained broad agreement for 12 proposed vision headings
- ▶ Lasted no longer than three hours
- ▶ Involved 150 people, many of them chief executives
- ▶ Made best use of the available facilities
- ▶ Involved participants in the facilitation process



The event took place in Prague and was attended by approximately 150 senior managers from around the world.

Approach

To ensure a lively and engaging event a “market place” process was chosen. It worked as follows:

- ▶ Each of the 12 proposed elements of the vision had an owner who was a senior manager from the industry. Their task was to facilitate a discussion on their particular vision

element with the audience. Each owner had a “stall” comprising a large poster outlining their element with space to include edits of the vision statement and proposed actions

- ▶ The audience was divided up into 12 groups of 12 people (the same number as there were stalls) and the groups then moved from one stall to another in strict rotation. Whilst at a stall the groups had a debate with the owners on the content of their vision statement. The owners took note of comments and made amendments where there was general agreement.



- ▶ The groups were pre defined and made up of people with common industry interests (e.g. geographic location, suppliers, etc)
- ▶ Once all the groups had visited all the stalls, the owners provided feedback to the plenary group on the outcomes of their discussions

This approach is straightforward for the event facilitators to manage and allows maximum opportunity for the audience to contribute. By involving the conference participants as vision element owners, the session had a more personal and informed feel than it would have done if delivered by facilitators outside of the industry.

Careful preparation prior to the event ensured that everyone knew what to do and was familiar with their material.

Tangible Outcomes

- ▶ An opportunity to discuss areas of mutual interest and develop a common understanding of what the forward agenda for CANSO could be
- ▶ A realisation that different geographic areas had different priorities and consequently a “one size fits all” approach to a vision was not appropriate
- ▶ A degree of buy in to the areas of the vision where there was common interest
- ▶ An understanding of the scale of the collaboration task if the industry wanted to work as one

In summary, the approach was a success and achieved the main objectives of allowing active participation from everyone and injecting energy into the overall event.

You can read more about our approach to facilitation on the Services pages of this site.