



## 2014 GSN Tools Workshop Summary

*February 24, 2014*

*Rockefeller Foundation, New York*

### **Introduction**

Through a series of major research projects led by global experts, GSN is identifying and explaining key issues, strategies and approaches that can help new platforms and new networks scale and become material on the global scene. GSN research is developing, shaping and applying models that are increasingly important in solving global problems.

Research efforts are proceeding with great success. A major challenge is to now get those results into the hands of people who can use them to best effect. To that end, this workshop was developed to produce functional requirements for highly effective “tools” for sharing the GSN research in the following ways:

1. To *inform* people about GSNs
2. To *instruct* people in-depth about GSN topics
3. To help people *implement GSNs*

“Tools” can include both digital as well as analog technologies that will result in effective, impactful sharing of information from the research with a variety of stakeholders. A “tool” could be a virtual or physical event, or it could be a mobile app or some combination of similar technologies.

GSN sponsors are often front-line advocates for spreading the word about the importance of GSNs. Therefore, the day’s brainstorming produced conversations on two levels of user needs:

1. What tools do GSN advocates need?
2. What tools do other key user groups need?

Throughout the day, the group alternated between small group and large group work. The three small groups were based on the following categories: Corporate, NGOs, and UN/Government. These categories were chosen to reflect an intersection between the pillars of society with the available expertise and knowledge of workshop participants.

## **User/Content Discussion**

In the first exercise, participants were asked to identify a list of “users” who could benefit from access to the knowledge in the research and to specify what types of GSN content would be most valuable to them.

The three small groups discussed the relevance of the research stream content for the various user types that they generated. The following themes emerged:

1. There is a strong demand across many user types for the basic information about GSNs from Stream 1.
2. From Stream 2, more than one group mentioned that it is important to bring forward information about the role of business in GSNs.
3. Streams 4 and 5 were considered the most important sources of research on application of GSNs to real problems. All of the groups agreed that case study information would be very useful and two groups mentioned in particular the value of issue-based case studies. Mention was also made of possibly creating short versions of the case studies.

## **Technology Discussion**

After identifying potential users of the research and discussing what research content might be most useful for them, the small groups reassembled as a large group to discuss a range of technologies that could potentially be assembled into tools for sharing any or all of the content. A list of both digital and analog technologies was provided to participants for their review, and participants discussed their personal experiences with these and other technologies.

### **A Framework for Moving from Technologies to Tools**

Following the review of potentially useful technologies, provocateurs Debera Johnson and Richard Tyson provided a framework for the small teams to use as they brainstormed the assembly of technologies into tools for specific user groups. Johnson and Tyson described a design and systems approach that suggested thinking about the problem of sharing GSN information as the development of an engagement system. They put forth the idea of thinking first of an idealized future situation and then moving backwards to fill in the steps that would lead to that outcome, all predicated on the assumption that the solution would be designed in a “user-centric” fashion.

Debera also described the importance of fast-fail prototyping of solutions to problems in “green” or “fail safe” space, quoting designer Bruce Hannah: “It’s important to mock it up before you fock it up.”

Mary Boone interjected some design constraints for sharing information that the small groups could use as they brainstormed tools. The information should be:

- **Consumable** (understandable, clear, right-sized)
- **Contextual** (presented with links to progressively more detail)
- **Timed properly** (on demand and/or with the proper cadence)
- **Accessible** on multiple platforms that work
- Designed in the **form** the user wants to receive it (e.g. graphic, white paper, Powerpoint, conversation, etc.)
- **Interactive** (not just one-way)
- **Relevant** (i.e. timely and customized content)

### Three Key Tool Ideas

Following the Johnson and Tyson presentation, the small groups came up with one thoroughly explored “tool idea” for each of their categories.

#### *Corporate Tool Idea*

The corporate group developed a matrix of different corporate functions and key GSN stakeholders with proposed messaging tailored to each of the functions/stakeholders. Concise, consumable content drawn from all 5 research streams could be assembled to describe the value of GSNs. The sharing of this information would enable “conversation cultivation” and encourage actual participation in GSNs on the part of stakeholders, including customers.

A framework for introducing and disseminating the GSN research within the corporation emerged that showed the flow from CSuite support to field operations, participation in GSNs, customer conversations and ultimately feedback. The critical success factor for this process to engage begins with a clear statement of the benefits to the company of understanding and participating in GSNs.

Also of interest was the possibility of peer to peer sessions for learning and sharing ideas.

#### *NGO Tool Idea*

The NGO breakout group focused their brainstorming on ideas for assisting a grantee in the field who might be starting a network. They suggested as a “tool” the development of a “GSN University” that would provide information, education and assistance (and perhaps credentialing) to someone facing a multi-stakeholder problem which could benefit from a GSN solution. Network “newbies” would initially need a high-touch, interactive contact through a call center or at a conference or at the GSN website in order to get started. The initial contact person would help them enter the “GSN 101 Curriculum” and then the “newbie” would progress along a continuum (which would include peer mentorship) ultimately leading to their becoming a model, measurable case and serving as an inspiration for network-based solutions and new peer mentors that would support other communities' network development. The university would essentially provide all the necessary tools for starting, managing and evaluating a GSN, including the tools needed for managing culture change.

### **Government Tool Idea**

The UN/Government group suggested as a tool the development of a framework that would link GSN network types [Stream 2] to stages of policymaking based on political time frames. The tool would include case studies that prove how the network approaches work as well as voting and data visualization. The use of such a tool would involve an accompanying culture and mindset change on the part of government policymakers; this would require an internal team of network enablers – a SWOT team that has deep expertise and training in the GSN theory and methodology to help set the team on the right path. An important component would be a peer network of other government policymakers who can share wisdom and advice internationally. The purpose of this tool would be to open up the typically closed, insular process of policymaking to a more open networked approach.

### **The GSN Movement**

In his comments at the end of the day, Don Tapscott pointed out that in addition to being a source of rich and informative research, GSN is beginning to assemble a network of people that could encourage a “movement” towards promoting collaborative, network-based approaches as a viable means of solving complex global problems. Participant comments supported this notion of GSN serving as a hub that not only amasses and "disseminates" research, but also cultivates the growth of GSNs by serving as a platform that “connects the dots” for those who want to use networks to solve problems. The research content and the network of people surrounding it can help train, educate, and promote purposeful network development.

### **Conclusions and Next Steps**

The ideas and suggestions shared during the day constitute the beginning of a process to continually uncover ways of sharing the rich GSN research content.

### **Summary of Needs – Emergent Themes**

The most critical information needs that emerged over the course of the day included the following:

1. All user types need basic information on GSNs in small, consumable chunks.
2. GSN advocates/sponsors need help developing persuasive messages on the value of GSNs for specific internal user groups.
3. Issue-based, case study information is most valuable.
4. People who are building or maintaining a network need peer-to-peer interaction and just-in-time learning opportunities.
5. Information on the role that businesses play in GSNs needs to be highlighted.

## **Twelve Ideas**

As a starting point towards addressing the needs identified by the workshop participants, tool idea experiments will be conducted by GSN to spur more widespread sharing of the research content:

While a great deal of basic information on GSNs is available on the website, it simply needs to be repurposed to be more digestible for people with competing priorities and short attention spans.

### *General Information for understanding the GSN Research*

#### ***Idea 1 – Research “Table of Contents”***

Participants mentioned that the sheer volume of research is challenging to manage – even when they are just trying to review it themselves. The current Research Agenda document is 13 pages long. A linked “Table of Contents” to the research. Issues could also be hot links that cross-reference other GSN research that addresses the highlighted topic.

#### ***Idea 2 – Short, searchable videos***

Don’s SXSU video on the website is almost an hour long. This video could be broken down into segments of 5 minutes or less that explain specific aspects of GSNs. These shorter videos could be tagged for reference through the site’s search capabilities; used as the subject of blog posts; Tweeted; or emailed to selected audiences with a subject heading that matches the content of the video.

Additionally, a few very simple videos could be created with animated business graphics to explain specific topics: e.g. What are GSNs? What are the different types of GSNs? What are some examples of how GSNs are being used to solve global issues? Why should CEOs care about GSNs? See an example of this type of video [here](#).

#### ***Idea 3 – Podcasts and webinar***

GSN could create monthly (vs. quarterly) podcasts and/or webinars for sponsors and others (based on their identification of relevant topics from the research) that would be captured and edited into consumable, topic-based chunks for an audio library similar to the video library described above. As the GSN community grows, members of the community could be the content creators for these broadcasts.

#### ***Idea 4 – Slidesharing***

A very basic slide presentation (text accompanied by audio) could be created to describe what GSNs are and why they’re important. The whole presentation should be about 10 slides and accompanying audio should be about 1 minute per slide. The vehicle for transmitting the slides (email, space on the website, or Twitter etc.) as well as the presentation itself would also contain a link to the more detailed basic research paper on GSNs.

## *Information Need: Persuasive Messages for GSN Sponsor Internal Audiences*

### **Idea 5 – Matrixed Corporate Template**

A generic list of potential user groups (e.g. marketing, finance, HR, government relations, sales, etc.) within a corporation aligned with content. While the linkages between specific user groups and specific content would need to be customized by GSN sponsors for each organization's internal users. This list would be continually updated as research is added, particularly in Streams 4 and 5. This capability would be highlighted on the Member Area landing page

### **Idea 6 – Small Breakfasts or Dinners**

GSN sponsors appreciate interaction with their peers. Bringing together small groups of sponsors on a periodic basis for informal exchanges could help GSN understand what research content is of most benefit and what new topics should be explored. These small gatherings could be expanded on a selected basis to address the challenge of spreading the ideas in sponsor organizations.

### **Idea 7 – Expand search capabilities**

The search capabilities should be expanded to include all available content (research papers, video and audio libraries, saved Twitter chats, threaded discussions, etc.). Very specific areas within the research papers should be tagged that relate to the search term. For example, if I search on “governance,” I should be able to pull up the exact pages within the research reports that currently contain significant governance references.

## *Issue Based and Case Study Information*

New research is being cultivated for this part of the research agenda. In the meantime, there is significant content already captured that relates to both issues and mini-case studies. Enhanced search capabilities that take people to the right research paper or right page within the research could immediately provide more of this information in a useful manner.

### **Idea 8 – Live cases**

The “stars” of the case studies should be encouraged to share what they know in a live and interactive way. For example, in the online community you could have a case study interviewee facilitate an online discussion for a day or a week. You could have them feature in one of the monthly podcasts or webinars.

## *Content for People Building or Maintaining Networks*

### **Idea 9 – Customized content for individual**

The NGO group's GSN University idea could start with a SOJO-like area on the website (or a separate site). A simple place to start would be to create a series of links that identify where the person is in terms of starting or maintaining a network. Imagine the landing page to look something like SOJO's with the following content:

- Where are you in your journey?
- You want to make a dent in the universe.
- Collaboration in a multi-stakeholder network might be a solution.
- GSN can help

#### ***Idea 10 – Online Community***

If you decide to create an online community, it will be important to pre-populate it with people who are already involved in GSNs who are willing to share their ideas and get things started. Research content should be used to spark dialogue around issue-based topics in the community space. It will be important to create a cadence of online activity that makes this community vibrant.

#### ***Idea 11 – Resource Marketplace***

One of the community areas could include a Resource Marketplace where members of the community list the types of network-based expertise or information they are willing to share with others in the community as a barter, for fee or for free. This area could also include a “Pick a mentor” area. Joining the community would include an agreement to mentor at least one other person as you gain knowledge.

*Emphasizing the Role of Business as a Pillar of Society and Stakeholder*

#### ***Idea 12 – Business Benefits page***

Create an area on the site completely devoted to the benefits to business of participating in networks. This would include short videos of Don talking about this, links to GSN research supporting this idea, videos of CEOs talking about their successful participation in networks, etc.

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*These ideas serve as a starting point. GSN staff will continue to work with partners and sponsors to craft tools that are targeted, cost-effective, and impactful.*