



Collaboration And Communication At RSSB

About RSSB

RSSB is a not-for-profit company owned by rail industry stakeholders. It was established in April 2003 following the public inquiry into the Ladbroke Grove accident. Their vision is for a better, safer railway.

RSSB has six primary objectives. They are for: safer rail by continuously reducing safety risk and healthier rail by supporting a physically and mentally healthier workforce. Additional objectives span harmonised rail by working towards seamless system integration and efficient rail by improving operating performance and customer satisfaction, while reducing the cost of rail to passengers and taxpayers. Their last two objectives are for innovative rail by exploring, assessing and sharing new and innovative solutions and sustainable rail by improving the sustainability of rail as a transport mode.

The Challenge

In November of 2018 the Office of Road & Rail (ORR) led an independent review of RSSB and concluded that there were many strengths to the organisation. It stated that:

"It adds value to the industry's health and safety performance and is effective at reducing future safety risks. Much of its work is regarded as high quality, and of significant benefit to the industry".

The ORR review also recognised that whilst RSSB had a role to play in cross-industry collaboration, it needed to communicate better with its members and it had to ensure effective and efficient facilitation within the industry. They needed a partner who could work to support them with collaboration, facilitation and communication development.





Our solution

PEAR's solution consisted of creating a suite of collaboration and communication products.

Significantly, they were available for RSSB staff and some were also open for their member organisations e.g. Transport for London, Network Rail, the rail operation companies, their rail partners and rail supplier organisations.

As part of the design process we spoke to RSSB members to understand more fully the concerns they had.

What became clear was that due to the fragmentation of the rail industry in the UK, sometimes the rail companies need to compete and sometimes they need to co-operate with each other. They therefore wanted RSSB to be a responsive, open and honest broker.

We designed a series of collaborative products for RSSB that included chairing committees effectively and facilitating workshops. Using psychological models, the solutions helped participants to go beneath the behaviours that were being demonstrated in committee meetings and workshops.

Chairs and leaders were encouraged to ask what function the behaviour they saw was fulfilling. For instance, why might someone be repeatedly criticising proposals? What might their objections be signalling?

Beyond simply writing someone off as 'difficult', we helped chairs become more reflective and therefore able to help members collaborate effectively.

The communication products we designed included presentation skills, structuring messages effectively, storytelling, business writing and an advanced communications course.

Many of the participants were highly experienced and expert engineers who were used to being valued for the depth of their technical knowledge.

Our focus was to help them be as engaging as they were expert. We worked to help them connect with their audiences and to communicate the complex simply.

These courses were highly experiential and practical. They covered areas such as delivering difficult messages, storytelling structure, hostile questioning, authenticity and vulnerability when communicating, creativity and dealing with difficult audience behaviours while presenting.

So far we have trained over 80 cohorts of staff with RSSB and its member organisations in these collaboration and communication courses.



The Impact

"It was great to have a clear and down to earth course where I felt at ease."

RSSB staff comment

Each of the 80 cohorts individually assessed their course and feedback has been extremely positive. The learnings from the courses were considered as highly actionable.

Many people had previously been trained in communications and yet found fresh insights and new knowledge from the experience.

In response to the key evaluation metric 'how likely would you be to recommend this training course to a colleague?', feedback was typically 95% and often 100%.

"Exceeded my expectations. I liked how it approached the topic from a psychological perspective as well as 'you should do' this approach. The trainers were engaging and encouraged audience participation without making it awkward. I would definitely recommend this to a colleague."

RSSB member

