

Communications and Advocacy

When Technical Excellence Isn't Enough

Tagline: *Great Engineers, Silent Leaders*

BetterGround Advisory | Case Study

AT A GLANCE

A Fortune 12 multinational energy company develops strategic communication and stakeholder engagement capabilities across 300+ senior leaders, transforming how the organization engages with regulators, communities, and critics.

The Challenge

A Fortune 12 multinational energy company had built its reputation on technical excellence and operational discipline. Its engineers were among the best in the industry. Its safety record was strong. Its operations ran with precision. But the company faced a challenge that technical excellence alone could not solve.

When the organization stayed silent during changing stakeholder and regulatory environments—waiting until plans were finalized, communications were polished, and all questions had answers—other voices filled the vacuum. Activists, NGOs, legislators, and industry competitors were defining the conversation. The company found itself reacting to stories others were telling, rather than telling its own.

The gap was not in strategy or operations. It was in capability. Senior leaders were strong technical managers but less practiced at building trust with skeptical audiences, communicating under uncertainty, and advocating for their positions in less friendly rooms.

The Approach

We designed a leadership development program focused on the capabilities that mattered most: strategic communication, stakeholder engagement, and the confidence to speak before having perfect answers. The program was certified through the University of Texas-Austin and built around immersive, scenario-based workshops that put leaders in realistic situations they would face in their roles.

We didn't design hypothetical exercises. We worked with senior executives to identify the actual stakeholder challenges their teams faced—difficult conversations with regulators, contentious community meetings, media inquiries during crises, internal communication during organizational change. Leaders practiced navigating real

situations before the stakes were real. The scenarios came from their world, not a textbook.

We facilitated workshops across multiple business units and geographies, adapting content to regional contexts while maintaining consistency in the core curriculum. The program was not a one-time event; it became an ongoing capability-building effort that evolved based on participant feedback and business impact data.

The Results

Over three years, **more than 300 senior leaders** completed the program across global business units. The program was extended multiple times—not because it was mandated, but because participants and their managers saw the value and asked for more.

The impact showed up in how leaders engaged with stakeholders. Conversations with regulators became more proactive. Community engagement improved. Internal communications during difficult transitions were handled with greater confidence and clarity. Leaders developed a common language and shared frameworks for situations that had previously felt ad hoc.

Perhaps most importantly, the behavioral changes sustained. Peer networks formed during the workshops continued afterward. Leaders reinforced what they had learned with their teams. The organization began to shift from a culture of technical excellence alone to one that also valued—and developed—the ability to lead through influence.

The Takeaway: Technical excellence earns credibility. Strategic influence determines whether that credibility translates into trust, alignment, and the ability to shape outcomes.

Engagement Overview

Client: Energy (Fortune 12, multinational)
Duration: 3+ years (ongoing)
Capabilities: Leadership Development | Stakeholder Engagement | Strategic Communications | Workshop Facilitation

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