



Idaho National Laboratory



Computer-Aided Decision Support

As part of its informed decision making and analysis capability, INL Systems Engineering provides electronic meeting support using structured group intelligence technology, called *ThinkTank*, to help teams collaborate and to enhance organizational brainstorming and decision-making. *ThinkTank*, produced and marketed by GroupSystems, Inc, is hosted on a stand-alone or web-based server and accessed through satellite laptop terminals.

Improved Meeting Efficiency

When used in close support of one of the INL's trained facilitators, *ThinkTank* technology can improve the content and product of a meeting by allowing meeting participants to simultaneously

input ideas and comments into a shared database, sort and categorize those ideas into common areas of emphasis, rate the relative importance or value of those ideas through multi-voting and other analysis capabilities, and further develop those ideas into a viable path forward. The electronic meeting technology also encourages equal participation and focuses the meeting on the subject matter content, not participant personalities, through the use of anonymous participation. Research shows that electronic meetings help organizations think better, create better, and decide better by engaging and empowering organizational resources through the use of "Group Intelligence" technology. Using the INL's *ThinkTank* capability,

meeting objectives can be reached in about half the time and with richer and more detailed content than can be achieved through traditional meeting methods.

ThinkTank Capabilities

ThinkTank has the capability for brainstorming; organizing, and commenting on ideas to various levels of detail. It also has an extensive capability for idea reduction, selection, or alternative analysis using several "voting" methods, including rank order; 4-, 5-, and 10-point scaling; multiple selection ranking; and agree / disagree statements. Reduction / selection results are immediately available for discussion by participants, thus allowing for real-time clarification and correction of results. The system can also be used to create customized surveys to assess participant

For More Information

Ron Klingler
(208) 526-0183
ron.klingler@inl.gov

Lori Braase
(208) 526-7763
lori.braase@inl.gov

R. Douglas Hamelin
(208) 526-2337
douglas.hamelin@inl.gov

Website:
<http://www.inl.gov/syseng>



attitudes and accumulate detailed information prior to or during a meeting.

Proven Applications

The INL's *ThinkTank* system has been used successfully to support mission development, requirements identification, research gap analysis, project alternative analysis, brainstorming of innovative problem solutions, and document review and revision.

Meeting Process

ThinkTank meetings are requested and coordinated through the INL Systems Engineering department. The *ThinkTank* meeting is then carried out in three phases:

1. An INL facilitator and *ThinkTank* technographer meet with the meeting host one to two weeks prior to the scheduled meeting to plan the meeting agenda, establish meeting objectives, and determine which *ThinkTank* tools are most appropriate to meet those objectives. The technographer then configures *ThinkTank* to fulfill the meeting objective.
2. The technographer sets up the meeting location with the agreed upon number of client stations, and the meeting is conducted, as planned, by the facilitator, *ThinkTank* technographer, and meeting host.
3. The facilitator and *ThinkTank* technographer generate a meeting report containing all of the information input into *ThinkTank* by the meeting participants.

Two primary advantages to this process are (1) the meeting host can participate as a content contributor and decision maker rather than focusing on the details of facilitating the meeting, and (2) a much larger portion of the ideas and discussion from the meeting are captured and reported.

Meeting Options

Two meeting options are available, depending on the needs of the group:

1. The in-house, internet browser-based *ThinkTank* capability consists of a single laptop server and leader station and up to 22 laptop client stations, which access the software capability through a wireless router. This configuration is portable and can be transported and used at any on-site or off-site location.

2. The INL *ThinkTank* capability is also available through the world-wide web and can be accessed using an internet browser from any desktop world-wide. Again, the capability allows for a leader station and up to 22 client stations. This configuration allows for *ThinkTank* sessions to be conducted virtually anytime, anywhere with participants in numerous remote locations.

Costs

Costs for use of the INL *ThinkTank* capability are pre-arranged via cost transfer with the requesting program or project. Use fees fund the session facilitator and technographer and help maintain the hardware and software components of both *ThinkTank* configurations.

