

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: THE WORLD BANK LIVE: A MODEL OF MARKETING SUCCESS, BUT IS IT THE RIGHT MODEL?

The World Bank invests in knowledge to achieve its mission. The primary audience of its knowledge sharing is internal. Knowledge and data informs staff about good practices, country- and sector-specific issues and trends and operational successes and failures. The efficacy of knowledge sharing within the Bank has been a critical goal of reforms implemented by current Bank President Jim Kim in 2014 to transition the institution from a “knowledge bank” to a “solutions bank.”

The investment the Bank makes to create and share knowledge is also done to aid a second group of agents who the Bank recognizes as essential to helping it reduce poverty and make development sustainable. Knowledge and data empowers stakeholders such as media and civil society with information to understand and assess the Bank’s work as well as guide government officials, academia and country-based actors in the implementation of their own development initiatives.

Because of internal initiatives and external pressure, stakeholders have access to more information about the Bank in recent years. Still, a question remains: Do stakeholders know the right and best information in which to make informed decisions about development? Stakeholders know more about what the Bank produces and what it decides. Less clear is whether they know enough about how the Bank approaches its work, why it acts the way it does, and how it makes decisions. The process of development – the discussions, debates, meetings, dialogues – that formulates policies, positions the institution and moves projects remains largely out of view and behind closed doors.

World Bank Live (WBL), the institution’s video content platform, is a crucial conduit for sharing information to the public. In the past four years, WBL increased webcasting volume in the aftermath of civil society pressure, but remains a modestly used service. The Bank has focused resources on live events featuring senior officials and prominent personalities. This has resulted in well-advertised and glamorous events disseminating targeted messages, but comes at the expense of the potential impact Bank webcasts could have for its development mission.

Bank Information Center (BIC) analysis suggests a more mission-effective approach for WBL would be to shift its focus from almost exclusively featuring the Bank’s leadership towards one featuring Bank technical experts and researchers on the front lines of solving development challenges. Decentralized content sources and venues will create a more productive environment for knowledge sharing with external stakeholders and foster President Kim’s vision of a solutions bank. External Community Relations (ECR), the vice presidency managing WBL, also curates content using traffic data to determine what to feature. In fact, traffic metrics are not an appropriate measurement for the value of content shared and undermine the ability of viewers to make this determination. The Bank hosts hundreds of policy dialogues during the year focused on the institution’s repertoire that are invaluable to the development community but are not shared online. BIC also recommends WBL’s model of live webcasting shift to a model that primarily features on-demand webcasting. An on-demand model will allow WBL to vastly reduce webcasting expenses and will enable it to increase coverage and make the system far more diverse and inclusive. Finally, WBL should decentralize costs for using the service throughout the Bank and should seek to attract external content providers who can help subsidize its costs.

In a period when personnel often feel unconnected to stakeholders, internal evaluations of project performance show serious declines and the institution continues losing market share to competitors, a new WBL model provides an opportunity to slow, and perhaps, reverse these trends.

THE WORLD BANK LIVE: A MODEL OF MARKETING SUCCESS, BUT IS IT THE RIGHT MODEL?

The World Bank invests in knowledge to achieve its mission.

The primary audience of its knowledge creation and sharing is internal. Knowledge and data informs staff about good practices, country- and sector-specific issues and trends and operational successes and failures. With this information, they are armed to provide appropriate products and services for clients. How well knowledge is shared within the Bank, however, has been a point of concern for senior management since the concept of knowledge management was first introduced as part of former Bank President James Wolfensohn's strategic compact in 1997.

The efficacy of knowledge sharing within the Bank has been a critical goal of reforms implemented by current Bank President Jim Kim in 2014. In an address to the Bank's Board of Governors at the Bank-Fund annual meeting in Tokyo in 2012, President Kim announced his intention to transition the institution from a "knowledge bank" to a "solutions bank." The 2014 restructuring of the Bank from region and country-specific focuses to knowledge-based pillars of sectoral global practices seeks to expedite the evolution of Kim's solutions bank. To improve the Bank's ability to bring "evidence-based, non-ideological solutions to development challenges," these global practices organize the institution's technical expertise so knowledge, data and analytical tools enhance internal understanding and capacity.

While capable in many areas, the Bank also understands that it cannot solve every problem or meet every challenge.¹ Therefore, the investment the Bank makes to create and share knowledge is done to aid a second group of agents who the Bank recognizes as essential to helping it reduce poverty and make development sustainable. Knowledge and data empowers stakeholders such as media and civil society with information to understand and assess the Bank's work as well as guide government officials, academia and country-based practitioners in the implementation of their own development initiatives.²

Over the past half-decade, the Bank has made tremendous strides in opening itself to the public. In part, this accomplishment is through the active efforts of the institution to make information available through disclosure policies, public information centers, websites, video, data and online directories, email, newsletters and social media communications. With this information, government officials have more resources available to them to administer projects affecting their citizenry. Concurrently, academics, activists and communities are also better positioned to understand the impact of those projects. The

¹ Recent pronouncements by the Bank's leadership of support for the newly formed Asian Infrastructure Industry Bank is an example of this acknowledgement.

² In his 2012 Tokyo address, President Kim said knowledge flows "from entrepreneurs in Delhi to citizens in rural Mexico and to civil society in Lagos to policymakers in Sarajevo." The Bank, he suggested, was positioned to connect these global stakeholders and broker knowledge exchanges between them.

Bank has shown leadership by updating its Access to Information Disclosure Policy, starting innovative efforts such as Open Data and Mapping for Results initiatives and has received plaudits for its aid transparency from Publish What You Fund.

Documents and data are vital to eradicating poverty by 2030, the Bank's stated goal. External stakeholders have advocated for expansion of the Bank's knowledge sharing with them and have been rewarded with access to countless documents and databases. They know more now about the Bank's work and learning than ever before. Nevertheless, a question remains: Do stakeholders know the right and best information in which to make informed decisions about development? Stakeholders know more about what the Bank produces and what it decides. What is less clear is whether they know enough about how the Bank approaches its work, why it acts the way it does, and how it makes decisions. To a significant extent, the "what" is there, but the "how" and the "why" are missing. Partly, this has happened because external observers have focused on the products of development more so than the process of development. The process – the discussions, debates, meetings, dialogues – that formulates policies, positions the institution and moves projects remains largely out of view and behind closed doors. Bank stakeholders get the final products. They know less how they came to be.³

In asking the question about whether the Bank is sharing the right knowledge about the process of development, a coalition of development organizations and activists have been pressing the Bank for the last few years to increase public webcasting of its policy dialogues via World Bank Live (WBL), the institution's video content management platform. WBL began operation in 2003 but only offered a few dozen webcasts to the public during its first nine years. In 2011, WBL's volume began to grow in response to a coalition of civil society actors who petitioned then-President Robert Zoellick to invest in B-SPAN, a defunct webcasting system launched by the Bank in 2000.⁴ WBL's volume continued climbing at a modest rate until a second coalition letter to President Kim in early 2014 generated a significant reaction.⁵ From February 2013 to February 2014, WBL webcast 69 events. Following the letter to Kim, WBL's volume more than doubled over the next twelve months. During the past year, WBL webcast offerings declined somewhat, but remain substantially more than prior to the coalition letter to Kim.

WBL features an intoxicating array of dignitaries from U.S. presidential candidates to prime ministers to Nobel winning economists discussing the most prevalent challenges the Bank

³ "The effectiveness of operational teams in a 'solutions bank' will depend on how well they perform their role along two critical dimensions: (i) knowledge providers; and (ii) enablers of client learning. The competencies needed for the 'provider' dimension (essentially technical knowledge) may be very different from those that are needed for the 'enabler' dimension (e.g. listening, patience, empathy, humility, flexibility). The latter competencies are critical to the process of adapting 'global best practices' to find the 'best local fit', which is that the core of an effective knowledge broker/enabler role. Past client feedback data suggested that Bank teams may be more effective in playing the role of knowledge 'providers' and less so as 'enablers' of client learning." Nicolas Gorjestani, Further Reflections on the Bank's Change Process, May 2014, World Bank Matters, 1818 Society

⁴ Letter to World Bank President Robert Zoellick on B-SPAN and Transparency, <http://igo.home.pl/igo.org.pl/news/193-letter-to-world-banks-president-zoellick-on-transparency>.

⁵ Coalition letter to President Kim, February 24, 2014, www.bicusa.org/bspan.

faces. WBL's model of marquee lineups of development figures featured in well publicized events raises important questions: Is this the only or even the most appropriate use of WBL to share knowledge with its stakeholders? Would an adjustment in WBL's emphasis make it a more effective instrument in achieving President Kim's vision of a solutions bank? Would a new model for WBL put less stress on the Bank's finite resources?

With thousands of Bank technical experts and researchers in the trenches working to solve development challenges, analysis of WBL participants reveals it is significantly skewed to feature only the institution's most senior officials.⁶ Prior to the original coalition letter to President Zoellick in 2011, almost half of WBL's webcasts were hosted by mid-level Bank staff. Mid-level Bank staff are defined as lead economists, senior economists, consultants and analysts. Since the letters to President's Zoellick and Kim, some 400 webcasts events have been held, but only about 10% have been hosted by mid-level staff. This represents a major decline of representation by mid-level staff. Senior Bank officials, defined as Bank presidents, managing directors, vice presidents, directors and department heads or other prominent external dignitaries, have filled this void as primary event participants.

This evidence suggests that as pressure from external stakeholders grew to increase content volume, the Bank responded by focusing WBL to feature senior officials almost to the exclusion of rank-and-file staff. Not surprisingly, as the operating philosophy for WBL evolved in the period following the coalition letters, the official that has that has enjoyed its resources and benefits the most has been the Bank's president. Since assuming his position, President Kim has been the featured participant on more than one-third of WBL's webcasts. This provides a marked contrast to the model deployed by B-SPAN, the Bank's original webcasting service, which actively sought to decentralize content sources and the vast majority of event hosts were lower ranking Bank officials directly involved in project implementation and research.

The coalition letters to Zoellick and Kim, that encouraged them to fund the defunct B-SPAN system, were motivated by WBL's lack of representation for the full array of Bank's daily policy dialogues and meager volume. This advocacy effort was successful in an important aspect: WBL's volume did increase substantially following the letters. As noted, offerings more than doubled in twelve months following the letter to Jim Kim. However, WBL's output of some 400 events since the original letter to Zoellick more than four years ago still pales in comparison to B-SPAN, which was plagued by resources constraints yet still conducted more than 350 webcasts during one year.⁷

⁶ Bank Information Center analysis of World Bank Live, July 2014, January 2016.

⁷ Volume is a relative measurement. Since the 2014 coalition letter to President Kim, WBL has webcast a little more than 200 events. Of this, 87 events were from the Bank's annual and spring meetings, almost 40% of content. This translates into roughly one webcast per week of non-meetings content during the balance of those years. In response to the letter to Kim, the Bank stated it has "increasingly been web-streaming the Bank's internal seminars, workshops, brown bag lunches, lectures and dialogues with government, civil society organizations, business leaders and research organizations." BIC's analysis contradicts this assessment. In comparison, B-SPAN would routinely average more than an event a day.

WBL concentrates resources on sensational events. Webcasts are conducted in large venues such as Preston Auditorium because significant staff and digital resources are used to build event awareness and audience participation. Events are highly choreographed and often hosted by prominent and internationally recognized figures. WBL's model vets sources, centralizes outlets and glamorizes the big event. This suggests that as pressure grew from external stakeholders to increase content volume, the institution yielded to this demand by supplying content that was in sync with the Bank's traditional cultural norms: publicly releasing highly choreographed information; and releasing content that served Bank purposes rather than stakeholders needs. By contrast, the B-SPAN model decentralized content sources and venues, sought to create an informal environment for knowledge sharing and exchanges, and was actively making the institution a solutions bank.

A major difference between the two models is that WBL exclusively conducts live webcasts while B-SPAN filmed dialogues and archived them on-demand so participants could watch at their convenience. While WBL invests heavily in promoting live events, B-SPAN's model allowed it to offer coverage that was far more diverse and inclusive and at far less cost. These divergent objectives are exemplified by WBL's coverage of the 2013, 2014 and 2015 Bank-Fund spring and annual meetings. During meetings for these years, WBL covered 65 events, including 44 events featuring President Kim. Of the several hundred sessions held during the Civil Society Forum, only town halls showcasing Kim with civil society representatives, were webcast.⁸ By contrast, B-SPAN routinely showcased external stakeholders sharing their knowledge with Bank staff, and never covered the Bank-Fund meetings.

In analyzing the impact of its 2014 webcasts, ECR concluded that "what the numbers point to in some key areas such as engagement and conversion - is that by doing less, we could actually have more impact. We stretched resources - human and marketing - too thin across too many events. We diffused our efforts and thereby impact. We must be more selective in what we can support ...promoting [so many] events over the course of a week creates too much noise especially on our social channels. Our messages are spread too thin and risk getting lost."⁹ In 2015, ECR noted "our core messaging and narrative from the spring meetings remained diffuse. The greater discipline and focus we can build around key themes and a core narrative, the greater communications impact we will have. Secondly, we can increase our impact by establishing greater clarity about the audience segments we need to reach and shaping, targeting and measuring our message penetration with those audiences in a more targeted way."¹⁰

Sending messages and measuring penetration versus sharing knowledge, often generated from the sources and resources of the Bank's clients and their taxpayers, to benefit

⁸ A key request made in the coalition letter to President Kim in 2014 was that World Bank Live invest resources in webcasting Civil Society Forum events. A survey taken by the Bank's Civil Society Team found civil society participants in the 2013 meetings recommended more webcasts to improve access for non-attendees.

⁹ Impact of Digital and Traditional Media, Annual Meetings 2014, ECRME and ECRWS report, December 11, 2014.

¹⁰ WBG Spring Meetings 2015 – Communications Impact, ECRME and ECRWS report, May 2015.

development stakeholders lies at the heart of the debate as to how WBL should function to support Kim's vision of a 'solutions bank,' and aid the Bank's mission. WBL's administrators shouldn't debate the merits of messaging, penetration and improving traffic numbers without first considering whether it has the right audience in the room. If WBL's emphasis remains in place, then information it generates will primarily move in only one direction. Bank insiders who support the current webcasting model should take note that by expanding the range of content providers and increasing volume, WBL will attract more viewers and bring more attention to the Bank that in turn will aid their messaging, penetration and traffic objectives. A more expansive vision for WBL will increase diversity and inclusiveness and allow more opportunities for the external stakeholder participation and engagement the Bank states is necessary for development. Knowledge sharing is as much about receiving knowledge from stakeholders as it is about sending information. In the end, giving more opportunities for external stakeholder to watch, learn and provide feedback will make the Bank a more effective instrument.

The Bank's response to the first coalition letter to Zoellick highlights other important aspects of these competing philosophies. First, the Bank suggested stakeholders were not interested in viewing webcasts of entire events, but preferred snippets and segmented highlights. This position undersold the value of the Bank's content and stakeholder interest. If external audiences were not interested in watching webcasts, why hold the events at all? Fortunately, in the aftermath of the Kim letter, the Bank abandoned this position and increased webcasts of events in their entirety. However, in another respect, officials adhere to a model that creates deep concern. The Bank's response to the Zoellick letter states it finds value in curating content based on audience usage. Using traffic data to determine what content to feature does not adhere to stakeholder interests, but rather undermines their ability to determine what they find of value. In fact, traffic metrics may not be appropriate measures of success or impact at all.

Content viewers know their needs better than anyone else and they should decide what is relevant to them rather than accepting editing from a select group of Bank officials. The institution has a unique mandate. The value of its knowledge may not always be obvious or immediately assessed. Some parts of the Bank and some stakeholders will value high-profile, carefully orchestrated and targeted video content that seeks to maximize audience interest and message penetration. However, other parts of the Bank and we think most stakeholders will value in-depth knowledge sharing and learning from niche events that may enjoy less audience per event but may more powerfully influence development outcomes.

WBL can easily add a plethora of content offerings available from the Civil Society Forum during Bank-Fund meetings, the Development Economics Vice Presidency's research brown bags, InfoShop events and the burgeoning amount of other events held daily.¹¹ An increase in volume and decentralization of sources would provide notable and tangible

¹¹ In a recent Devex article, World Bank Global Practices – Knowledge Sharing Made Easier? December 17, 2015, Abha Joshi-Ghani, director of the Bank's Knowledge Exchange and Learning, said the Bank's volume of staff brown bags has increased significantly since implementation of the global practices.

internal benefits as well: increased engagement with the Bank's resident missions; reduced staff and guest travel costs; more opportunities for staff to build networks of influence with external networks; more content offerings for the institution's pedagogical activities; and elevated digital metrics for the Bank's social media channels, blogs and websites.

Resource constraints are always an important consideration. Sources suggest ECR is running million dollar deficits and administrating WBL is a sizable cost in expenditures and staff time. By evolving to a model that archived most events for streaming on-demand, it could accommodate large increases in volume while concurrently easing resource constraints tied to the 'big event.' In its heyday, B-SPAN covered five-times more events than WBL and did so on an entire budget of about \$250,000. A revised model can also shift WBL's expenditures from cost-recovery to revenue generation system. The current model puts the onus on ECR to manage and disseminate content. A more sustainable approach for WBL would be to reposition it from an ECR product to one viewed as an institutional service. This can be accomplished by decentralizing costs throughout the Bank. ECR's inputs would include website administration and marketing. GSD, the Bank's audio-video unit, would subsidize filming services. ISG, the Bank's information technology unit, would subsidize server, encoding and streaming activities. Global practices and other content providers throughout the Bank would pay to have their events appear on WBL. Moreover, resident missions would evolve from consumers of WBL's content to providers. Content providers could purchase annual packages of service. For example, if they produce ten events a year, one fee would be charged. If they produced twenty events a year, another fee would be implemented, perhaps at a discount, and so on. Content providers could also be offered an à la carte menu of services. Simple webcasting would be the low-cost service. Costs increase as powerpoints and papers are offered with the webcasts, additional links are added or events are summarized.

WBL has value to the Bank, but not the Bank only. External content providers could be sought and would have interested in providing or creating events for WBL. DC, U.S. and international universities with international development and foreign affairs programs would have a natural interest in participating with WBL. Washington-based think tanks such as the Center for Global Development and numerous nongovernmental organizations involved in international development would also be attracted to WBL. WBL could charge external content providers a fee for gaining access and that would subsidize the system. In turn, external content providers would gain access to the Bank's global audience. The Bank would ultimately benefit the most since it would be creating the single most valuable source for development knowledge for its stakeholders.

Statements by the Bank's leadership suggest that to achieve a 'solutions bank,' they would support expanding the bureaucracy's notion of knowledge sharing. "If you were to ask me, what was the point of the change process, the first was that we were not moving knowledge throughout the world," said President Kim.¹² Sanjay Pradhan, former vice president of the World Bank Institute, said during the 2014 spring meetings, "The World Bank's role is as a bridge to integrate citizen feedback and to amplify citizen voices."

¹² Jim Kim's Moment of Truth, Devex, July 1, 2014

In its 2015 report on the Bank's project performance, the Independent Evaluation Group noted a "statistically significant drop" in fiscal years 2011-2013.¹³ While assessing the current reforms, Nagy Hanna, a former Bank official involved in the institution's 1987 and 1997 reorganizations stated "Technical excellence is not only about global knowledge, but also understanding the local context and adaptive capacity ... much of the Bank's most valuable knowledge is practical and tacit and the result of intensive interactions with clients."¹⁴ Recently, Ian Goldin, a former Bank vice president, noted "You cannot parachute knowledge into a country if it is not demand led."¹⁵

The Bank's stated goal is it wants to improve stakeholder engagement, because it recognizes that it must partner with stakeholders to achieve development objectives. Therefore, it must invest in them more strategically. Concurrently, stakeholders want to increase access to the Bank's knowledge because they see it as vital in achieving successful outcomes. A revised model for WBL is an opportunity to achieve both objectives simultaneously. Increasing and diversifying WBL's offerings would, in fact, expand business and marketing opportunities for the Bank. By growing volume, WBL would increase the institution's visibility, and as the Bank drives attention to itself as the source of the latest and best development knowledge and research, clients will increasingly be attracted to its financing instruments and technical assistance.

With a stated mission to end poverty by 2030, the Bank should be motivated to rethink how it shares knowledge via webcasting and how it influences development outcomes via its online engagement. To do otherwise risks a continuation of subpar project performance and continuation of losing market share to other development agencies, private sector flows and new competitors such as the Asian Infrastructure Industry Bank and New Development Bank BRICS. In considering whether it should revise WBL's model of sharing information, the Bank would do well to remember the following: We generally think of knowledge as something we gain, but it is worth noting though, should we forget, that knowledge can also be lost.

¹³ Results and Performance of the World Bank Group 2014, Independent Evaluation Group, <http://ieg.worldbank.org/evaluations/rap2014>.

¹⁴ Nagy Hanna, Lessons from Past Reorganizations, World Bank Matters, May 2014.

¹⁵ World Bank Global Practices – Knowledge Sharing Made Easier? Devex, December 17, 2015