

# Community Engagement Case Examples

## What goes wrong when assumptions go untested

### How to use these examples

These short cases are not best practice stories. They show how technically strong projects lost momentum because engagement increased reassurance rather than changing decisions. Use them to stress-test your own assumptions.

## Case 1: Strong interest, no adoption

### What happened

A UK team met local partners who expressed strong enthusiasm for the product. Meetings were positive and well attended. The team returned confident that demand was high.

### What was missed

No one in the room had authority, time, or budget to adopt the solution. Engagement focused on interest rather than decision-making constraints.

### What emerged later

After the trip, follow-up stalled. Partners remained supportive but non-committal. Adoption never happened.

### What would have changed the outcome

Early questions about who could approve, pay, or sustain use would have revealed limits immediately.

## **Case 2: Pilot success, scale failure**

### **What happened**

A pilot demonstrated strong technical performance. During the pilot period, uptake was high and feedback was positive.

### **What was missed**

Engagement focused on delivery during external support. Little attention was paid to who would maintain, finance, or champion the solution once the pilot ended.

### **What emerged later**

Use dropped sharply when external inputs stopped. No local actor felt responsible for continuation.

### **What would have changed the outcome**

Early discussion of long-term effort, payment, and ownership would have exposed fragility before scaling plans were made.

## **Case 3: Polite agreement, hidden resistance**

### **What happened**

Community leaders welcomed the project publicly and spoke positively in meetings. No objections were raised.

### **What was missed**

Social and political dynamics made disagreement unsafe in formal settings. Those most affected by the project were not present or did not speak.

### **What emerged later**

Participation was quietly discouraged. Uptake was low despite visible support.

### **What would have changed the outcome**

Designing for informal conversations and triangulating insights would have revealed concerns early.

## **Case 4: The right partner, the wrong assumption**

### **What happened**

A respected local organisation agreed to collaborate and acted as an intermediary. Communication flowed smoothly through them.

### **What was missed**

The intermediary filtered uncomfortable information and protected their own relationships. The project team relied too heavily on a single lens.

### **What emerged later**

Critical risks emerged late, when changes were costly.

### **What would have changed the outcome**

Cross-checking perspectives and retaining responsibility for interpretation would have reduced blind spots.

## **What these cases have in common**

- The technology was not the problem
- Engagement increased confidence, not understanding
- Early signals were available but not tested
- Decisions did not change as a result of engagement

### **Final reminder**

Engagement is useful when it changes how decisions are made, not just whether it reassures you about your plans.