

AlpEnMAT

Alpine Energy Meetings on Advanced Energy

Report and Case Study for 1st Pilot event / Jam Bite 20th March 2014, Bad Reichenhall

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Content

Preparations	3
Basis for decision on topic.....	3
Steps of preparation.....	3
Obstacles	4
Agenda for the event.....	5
Realization of the event	7
Feedback on the event.....	7
Conclusions.....	9

Preparations

Basis for decision on topic

Within the region of Berchtesgadener Land and the neighboring Salzburger Land there is a strong research and economic community dealing with geographical data, satellite information and IT tools of all kinds. As they also use this information as means of improving the sustainable use of energy, it suggested itself to use this innovative power and make those companies and institutions target group and beneficiaries of the first event organized by the Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft Berchtesgadener Land (WFG). So the target group which was meant to be reached with the event was defined as small and medium enterprises, public authorities and communities, investors and researchers actively involved or interested in the field of information technologies (IT) for sustainable energy use and production. And the topic of this very first Jam Bite was set to be “Intelligent technologies for sustainable technology” meaning especially information technology and computer based solutions.

Steps of preparation

- Change of originally intended topic of the event due to the before mentioned reason. (Though the original topic “storage” may be interesting for a later event or as topic for the event of an aspired LOI partner for Jam Bite.)
- For the further planning the first draft of the Jam Bite event concept was checked for compliance and potential needs for variation.
- It was decided that it would be best not to stick to the originally planned date in February but to postpone the event to March. The 20th March was chosen.
- The potential number of participants was estimated smaller than originally intended due to the short preparation time and the still developing event concept. It was thought to be between 25 and 40 people and accordingly potential venues were sought out and contacted for an offer. The best offer which also seemed to have a fitting ambience and good accessibility was chosen. So the location of the event was the Hotel Wyndham Grand Axelmannstein, Salzburger Str. 2-6, Bad Reichenhall (Bavaria, Germany).
- A first draft of the agenda was generated, implementing elements from the Jam Bite draft concept, which already included the idea of a keynote, some sort of presentation round for participants, discussion round tables and the possibility to register for personal conversation time with another participant.

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- A press release to give information on the project and involved people within the region as well as some pre-information on the event in the regional press was created and spread and led to 2 articles.
 - People who could take a role as discussion moderators and key note speaker were approached and fixed.
 - The course of action and final agenda were defined and described in English.
 - The description of the event and management of participant registration were set up on the Jam Bite Website and Eventbrite Ticketing Website.
 - The first invitation was sent out via email within the network of WFG and also forwarded to the project partners and other multipliers who could spread the invitation within their networks. With this first invitation the event was announced to be primarily in English.
 - After low registration numbers within the region the official language of the event was changed to German with English translations for the international participants.
 - A second round of invitation emails in German was sent out to a fewer number of potential participants.
 - A very short press release to announce the event was sent out to the press and published at the WFG website.
 - Some of the most important and relevant enterprises within the region were contacted via phone to encourage them to participate and make some extra promotion for the event.
 - A reminder for the participants was sent out.
 - Necessary materials for the event such as name badges, signs etc. were printed.
 - The event venue was checked to be ready and prepared for the day of the event.

Obstacles

Unfortunately due to some financial delays for the Swiss partner in charge of the jam bite platform some delays occurred concerning the realization of the Jam Bite platform which had implications for the announcement and marketing of the first event.

- The registration for the Jam Bite platform to become part of the community was not available. Therefore an announcement and intensive marketing of this aspect of the Jam Bite concept was not possible.

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- The registration for the event itself was realized late which led to a belated distribution of the invitations.

The initial decision of the consortium was to have the events in English language which had negative effects on the greater acceptance of the event and the number of registrations.

- After some negative feedback from different sides (not involved company staff, regional multipliers and invited people) and very low registration numbers 10 days before the event, the decision was made to hold the event in German language to attract more people to attend.
- The invitation was sent out again in German language announcing the event language to be German with English translation for non-German speaking attendees which ended in doubling the number of participants from within the region.

Due to the belated invitation (see comment on Jam Bite platform) and other events around the same date some interesting potential participants especially from the potential investors side had already other obligations.

The before mentioned facts had also some further implications on the bilateral meetings. Due to the rather late registrations no meetings could be arranged in advance. Additionally it was not yet decided what method to use to match people together. So the matchmaking for the Jam 1:1 talks had to be arranged solely spontaneously during the event.

Though the event was postponed from February to March, it was still carried out rather early within the progress of the project. Thus not all promotional branded materials were finalized and agreed upon long enough before the event to get appropriate offers for printing. Therefore the brand visualization was not yet optimal.

Agenda for the event

The course of event was planned to start around noon to enable participants from abroad to travel at the same day and for regional participants to only spend half a day and have the morning for their business. Due to the concept of the format to give as much time as possible to actual conversation and connecting of the participants the number of up-front speeches was kept low. Although the central elements were roughly defined at this point, the detailed execution was not finally defined and agreed upon. So for each of the individual elements one of the proposed ways was chosen to be tested.

The planned course of the event finally looked as follows:

Welcome and general introduction

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- 11:30 – 12:00 Arrival and Registration
- 12:00 – 13:00 Lunch
- 13:00 – 13:15 Welcome and agenda by Thomas Birner (WFG Berchtesgadener Land)
- 13:15 – 13:45 Keynote by Ludwig Karg (B.A.U.M. Consult)
“How the energy transition can benefit from IT tools”
- 13:45 – 14:45 Elevator pitch – People in the spot light
“Introduce yourself – Who are you? What can you offer? What do you need?”
- 14:45 – 15:00 Introduction to adjacent sessions
- 15:00 – 15:15 Coffee break

Networking session

- 15:15 – 16:45 Jam networking session - discussions and business talks (parallel)
- Jam 1:1 bilateral meetings (15 min.)
State your interest for matchmaking during registration; shortly before the event a list of all interested people is sent out and a slot for a personal meeting can be reserved
 - Jam Session moderated panel discussions on following topics:
 - “Geographical data and tools for sustainable energy use and generation”
Renewable energy potentials and sites, sustainable spatial planning
 - “Energy management and Home Automation”
Monitor and regulate energy generation, use and demand within buildings and beyond, increase energy efficiency and harmonize demand and supply
 - “Planning and Simulation”
Forecast and optimize the performance of renewable energy systems and buildings
 - Jam Café free networking with other participants

Closing session

- 16:45 – 17:00 Coffee break
- 17:00 – 17:10 Short wrap-up of the day
- 17:10 – 17:30 Highlights of the discussions
- 17:30 – 17:45 Jam 1:1 experience insight
- 17:45 – 18:00 What’s next? – Outlook on further Jam Bite activities
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18:00 – 18:30 Networking, goodbyes and giveaways

Realization of the event

The event started as planned with registration and lunch. There were a few last-minute cancellations but in general participants showed up on time and the program could start as planned.

The first part of the event was finished faster than expected therefore at the time of the first coffee break it was at about half an hour earlier than planned. The main reason for that was that the introductions of the participants in the elevator pitch took less time than foreseen. Even though all the participants were given a slot to introduce themselves within 99 seconds not all people took the full amount of time and there were less participants than intended during the planning of the event.

As the Jam 1:1 could not be organized in advance the participants were asked to remember people they are specifically interested in talking to during the elevator pitch and then state their interest afterwards so the tables could be arranged during the break.

For the afternoon the course of event was changed. Due to the small number of participants it was decided to have the Jam 1:1 and the Jam sessions consecutively and not parallel to avoid cannibalizing the two event elements. Three-quarters of an hour were dedicated to each of the two elements. The bilateral meetings (3 tables turned out to be enough) came first with the Jam Café parallel for all the participants not involved in bilateral talks. The discussion tables were also reduced to two tables; the topics *“Geographical data and tools for sustainable energy use and generation”* and *“Planning and Simulation”* were combined.

After the last break a summary of the two discussion rounds were given as planned. The slot for the insight from the Jam 1:1 was used to ask people for an immediate feedback on the whole event and not just on the bilateral meetings.

The outlook on the further activities included a broader insight in the whole Jam Bite event concept and promised to provide more information as soon as the Jam Bite platform was ready.

The time for networking was already used intensively during the day, so the event ended as foreseen.

Feedback on the event

Two feedback rounds have been carried out, one during the event and one 2 months later in the middle of May.

The verbal feedback given at the end of the event, which was meant to get opinions on the event and the Jam Bite concept itself, was very much on the positive side. The following ten statements were given:

1. Interesting concept which asks for continuation. The outcome was better than original expectations; especially the one on one talks were useful.
2. The long travel was worth it. It is positive that the European Union stimulates and sponsors such initiatives which initiate new partnerships. A concept like Jam Bite normally can only be found at internal events of big companies or very big fairs but it is a good format also suitable in smaller scale to interconnect and bring together smaller companies.
3. The experience was valuable and the format is good. It would be good to get the possibility of extending the speaking time in the one on one talks if 15 minutes turn out to be too short. Whether the planned web platform for keeping people connected will work, is a subject to doubt though.
4. The event brought lots of interesting impressions. It is a good thing that this topic is not only discussed isolated within Germany but across borders as the energy transition can only work with joint international efforts. A participation in a future Jam Bite event is possible as it is a good occasion to meet different people from outside the normal circle of business partners.
5. The event was more valuable than originally imagined. It is important to foster the establishment of new business contacts within the region and beyond.
6. The varying background of the participants was very positive as it made it possible to actually meet new people. The format and number of participants were good and left enough room for extensive conversations.
7. The great spectrum of different people attending the event was very positive, also one on one talks and the organization. Attending another Jam Bite event is definitely an option.
8. The participation was very valuable with interesting conversations and new contacts which are worth having and cultivating.
9. The type of event is very interesting. The one on one talks did not seem as promising at the registration but the spontaneous participation proved to be valuable.
10. The format of the event is very relaxing and productive. Did not come across anything similar so far. Also the atmosphere at the meeting place was very good.

The second round of feedback interviews was carried out via phone and was meant to shed some light on whether the contacts had experienced direct outcomes from the event.

On the whole, again 10 people gave feedback on the following questions:

1. Was there any further contact with one or more of the other participants after the event?
2. If yes, could a cooperation, project or business deal be established?
3. Can the event organizer WFG support the further developments which arose through the event by any means?
4. Are there any suggestions for further events?

Two of the participants said that they had had no further contact with any of the other participants so far and therefore also no cooperations or deals were established which needed further chaperonage by the WFG. Two participants stated that they had planned to meet some of the participants though no meeting was arranged so far. The others stated that they had had contact per telephone or face-to-face with one or two of the participants and that they were working on exchanges of experiences, ideas, projects and potential jobs though no real deal or project could be established so far. Still some interesting follow-up meetings can be traced back directly to the Jam Bite event.

One example simply led to a speech on energy topics in general of one of the participants at an informative meeting of one of the other participants. Another example was a meeting, which worked as a follow up on one of the discussions which also dealt with problems of load management, looking in detail into which software or initiatives would be suitable to work on this issue. Another meeting was looking at the topic of how to increase the general visibility of SMEs in the technology sector outside the region of Berchtesgadener Land which could be a working task for the organizer WFG and an application area for more Jam Bite events also in other fields of technology. Furthermore an already existing project idea dealing with picturing a better image of heat demand within the region of Berchtesgadener Land was filled with new life through the new contacts established via the Jam Bite event which will also be accompanied by the economic development agency (WFG).

Conclusions

For the specific event can be said, that the start was rather relaxing for the participants giving them already the chance for informal chats and getting to know each other. Nevertheless the beginning of an event with lunch seemed to be unusual for most participants and had the downside of spreading people right at the beginning of the event. Although the meeting venue was very suitable for this type of event, people tended to spread a little too much also in the middle of the event. The whole freedom which is also part of the concept and was very much on the upside in perception might still bear the risk of a downside that people separate from the crowd too much or leave early and hinder

the development of a feeling of togetherness. Whether this problem really manifests and if yes how to deal with this potential risk is yet to be explored.

The concept fortunately leaves plenty of room for flexibility which proved to be a big advantage especially for this first event as things up-front and during the event did not always turn out exactly as expected.

The branding of the whole Jam Bite concept needs some improvement but as this was the first event and not all materials and resources were ready yet, there is a great chance that this will improve.

In general the whole concept was very much accepted even though the doubts in the beginning were high. Still the concept and implementation needs some further development and some special thoughts on how to organize the bilateral meetings and really keep people in contact via online community.

As this first event still felt a little experimental as several details of the concept were not fully developed yet and less people could be attracted than planned the need for an additional event within the region manifested. The budget for this is available due to the before-mentioned facts which ended in less spending. Still cooperation partners are meant to be included in this additional event within Berchtesgadener Land to keep costs low, spread the concept of the event further and attract a broader range of participants also on the investors and public authorities side which was less represented at the first pilot event than planned.