

Best Practice Profile

Expertise Network

NationalJournal LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

CASE IN BRIEF



Problem

Lobbyists are stretching themselves thin as their issue portfolios expand and destabilize.

Solution

A collection of issue experts in government affairs and the corporate office that lobbyists can tap when they require more issue expertise.

Outcome

Complete issue portfolio coverage, expertise available on every issue, and greater government affairs visibility within the corporate office – all at no additional cost.

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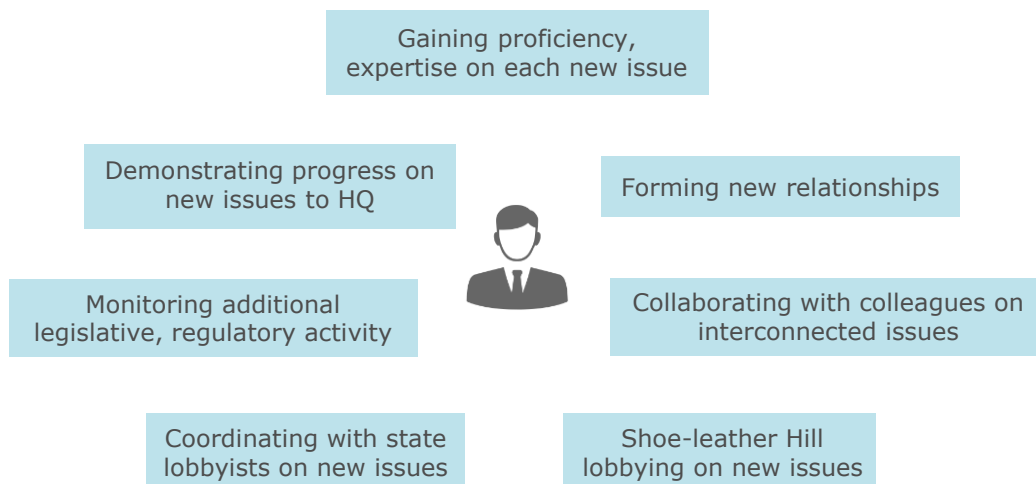
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Lobbyists are stretching themselves thin as their issue portfolios expand and destabilize.

Issue portfolios for many advocacy organizations in Washington are expanding and destabilizing, and often without a corresponding budget increase. Faced with a mandate to “do more with less,” many organizations have responded by asking their lobbyists to work harder and longer. But this approach has stretched lobbyists thin, taking a toll on their effectiveness. They are less able to maintain their issue expertise, making it more difficult to answer policymakers’ questions, and ultimately putting their credibility and the credibility of their organizations at risk.

New Responsibilities of Expanding Issue Portfolios Weighing on Lobbyists



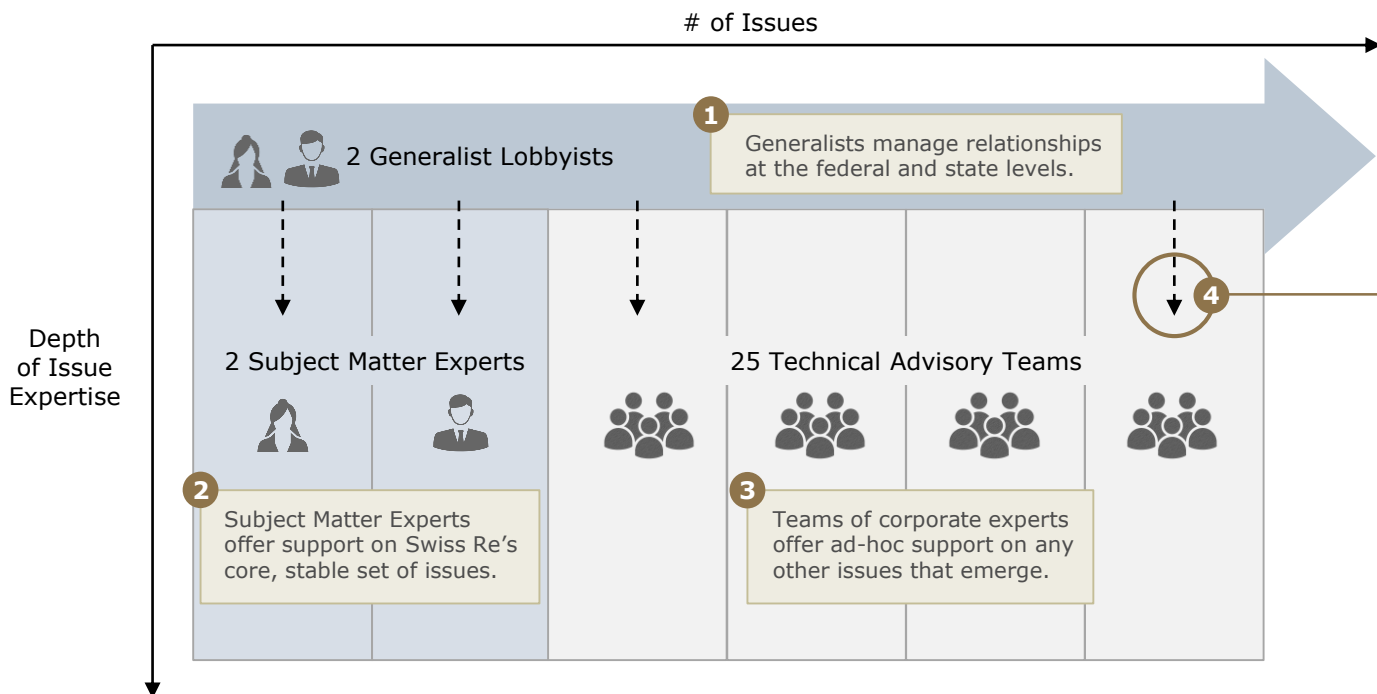
At Swiss Re, the issue portfolio load is shared by a network of experts in government affairs and the corporate office.



Swiss Re

Two lobbyists are designated as “generalists”; they manage relationships and operate without a set issue portfolio. When more issue expertise is required, a generalist calls upon an expert: either a subject matter expert located in the government affairs office, or a team of experts located in the corporate office.

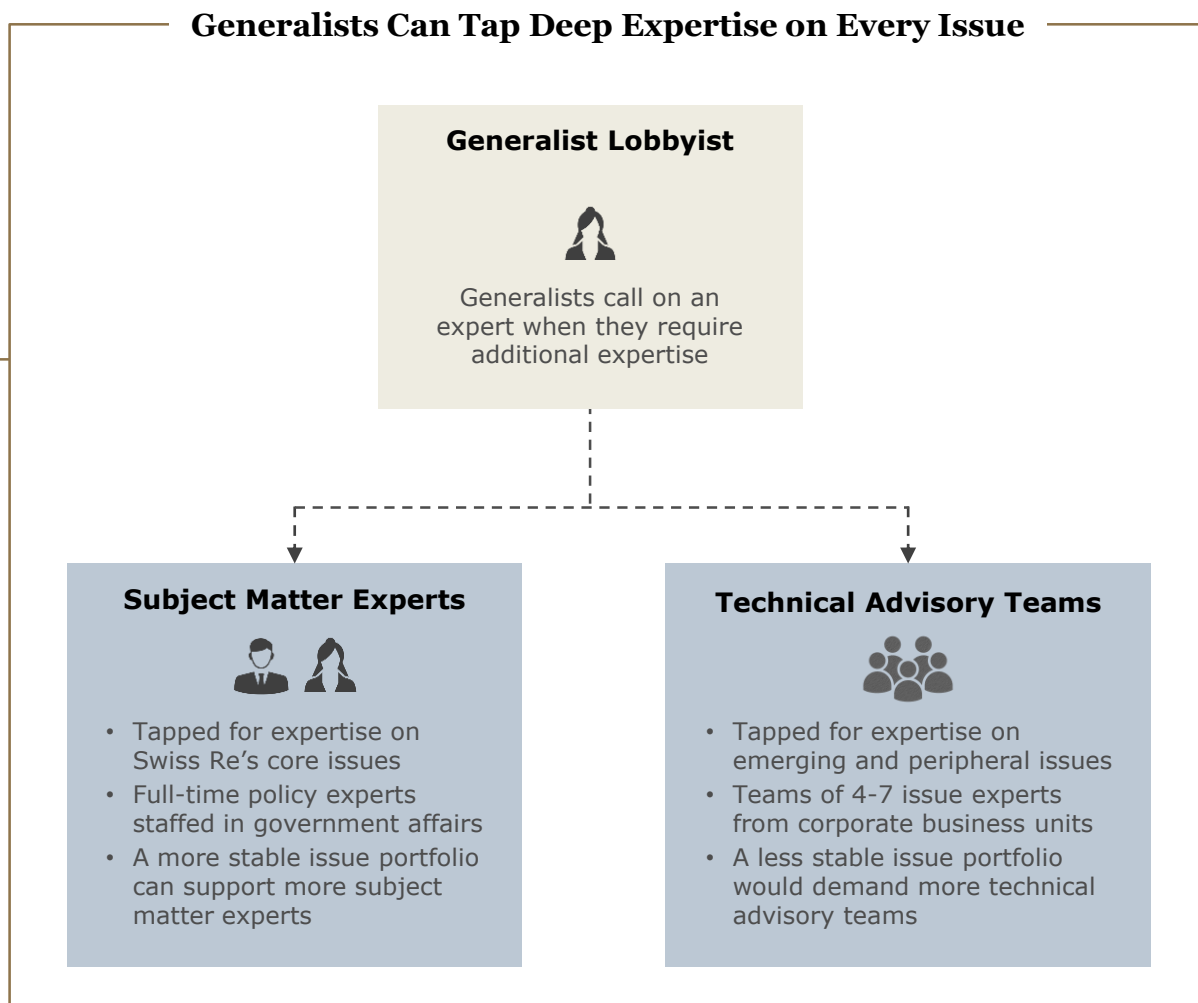
Issue Portfolio Coverage in the “Expertise Network”



Expertise Network In Brief

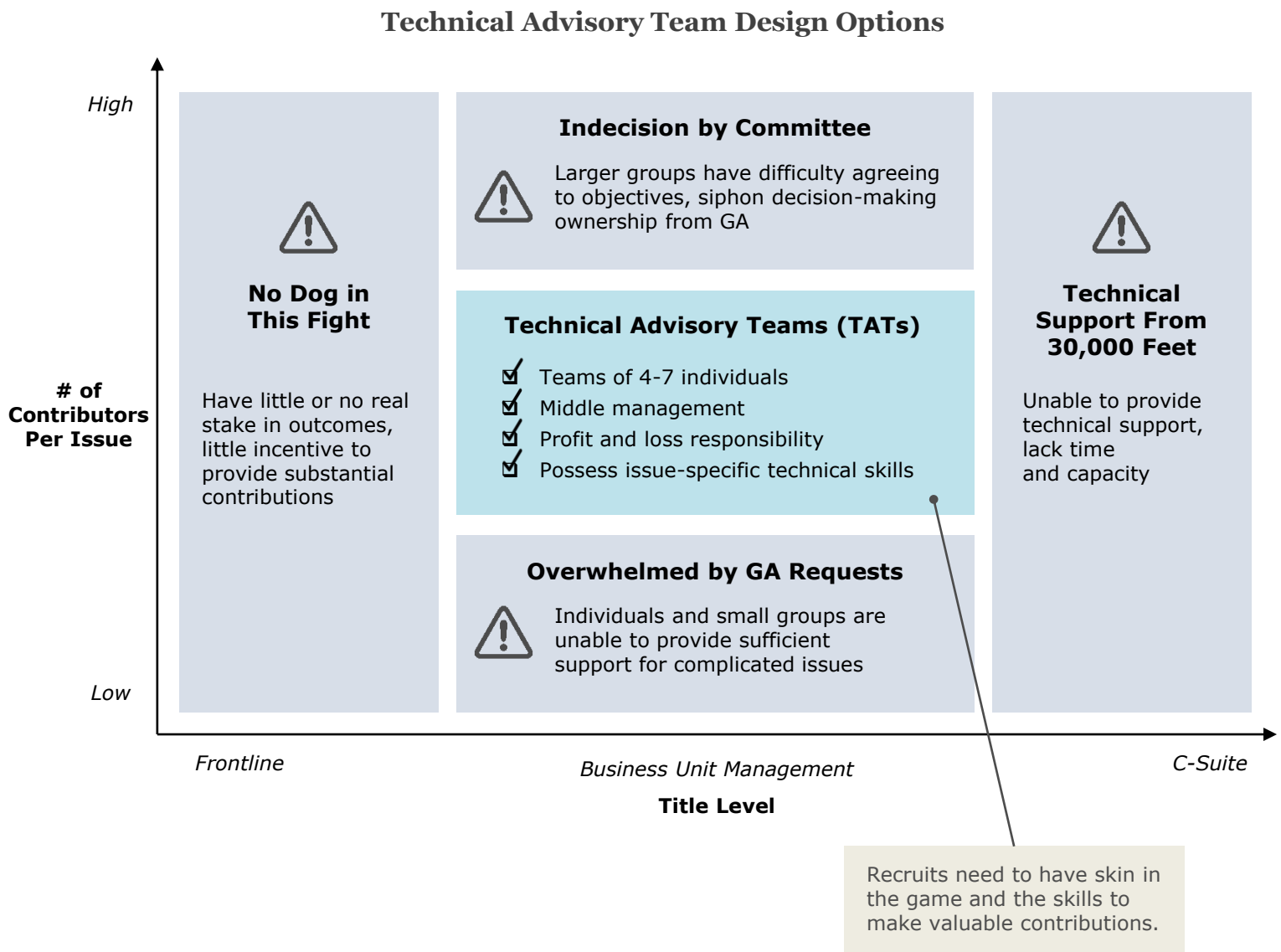
- A collection of issue experts in government affairs and the corporate office that generalist lobbyists can tap when they require more issue expertise.
- 2 generalists manage all relationships at the federal and state level, calling on experts only when additional issue expertise is required on specific issues

The linchpin of the Expertise Network is the generalist lobbyist. This individual is responsible for accessing organizational expertise. The generalist calls on subject matter experts for expertise on Swiss Re's core issues. For peripheral issues that do not flare up as frequently, the generalist convenes technical advisory teams to weigh in. Access to this network of experts allows the generalist to achieve complete issue coverage without sacrificing any depth of expertise.



Technical Advisory Teams are assembled to be *doers*, not advisors.

The generalist lobbyists need technical advisory teams to provide substantive support—not just opinions and guidance. Team design has an outsized impact on what kind of support a team offers. Too small, and teams become overwhelmed by government affairs’ needs. Too big, and teams spend all their time trying to make decisions. Teams also need to be made up of individuals with stakes in the outcomes of policy decisions—typically business unit leaders with profit and loss responsibilities.



In order to keep technical advisory teams actively engaged throughout the year and responsive to incoming requests, the generalist lobbyist maintains clear rules of engagement. These principles demonstrate respect for company experts' time and a commitment to supporting their contributions.

Rules of Engagement for Working with Technical Advisory Teams



Set Reasonable Time Expectations: On average, team members can expect to be convened roughly 25 hours per year.



Ensure Interactions Are High-Value: Teams are only summoned for specialized tasks that the generalist lobbyist or subject matter experts are unqualified to complete.

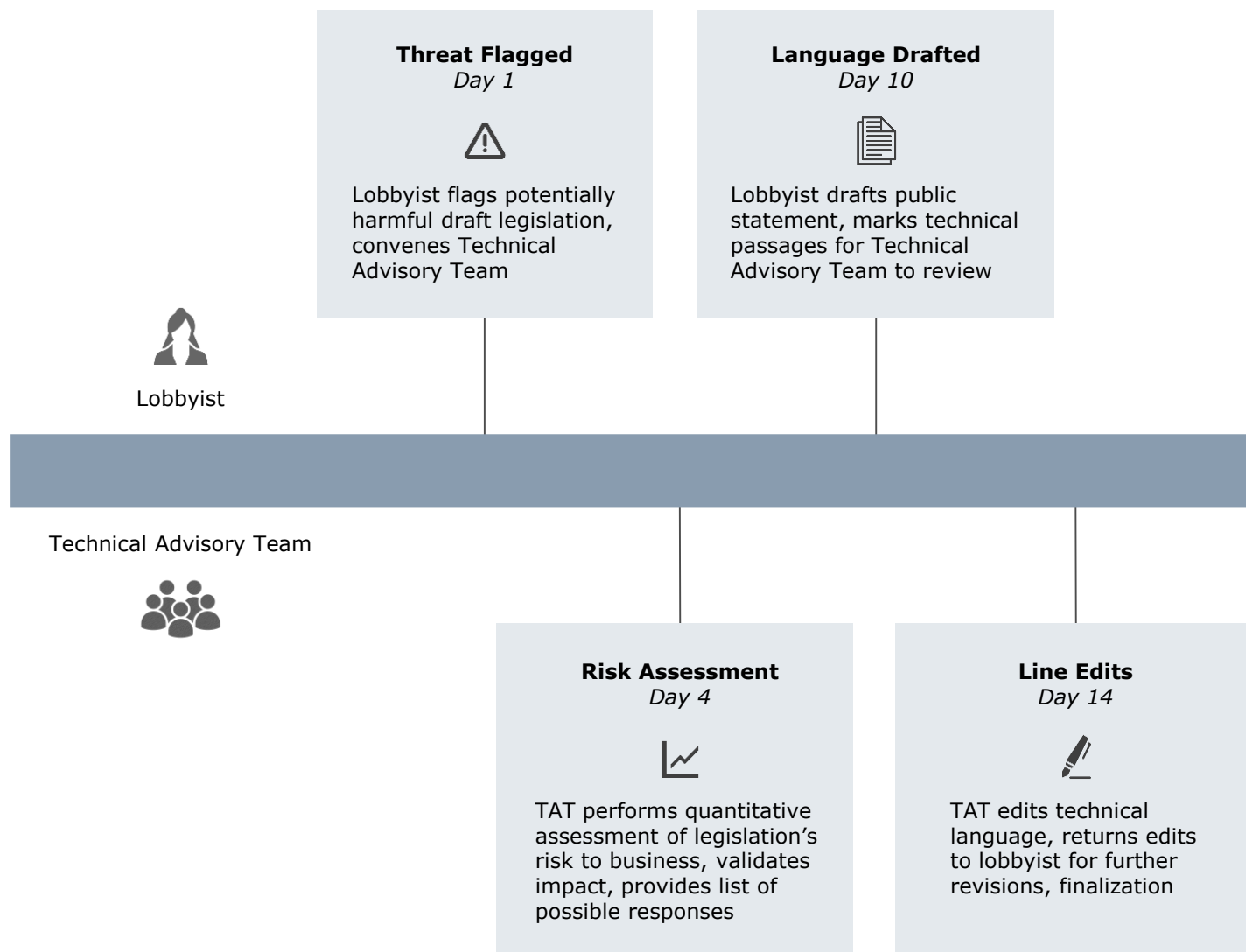


Be Available: Generalist lobbyist is available to answer questions and troubleshoot problems when they arise.

The Expertise Network in action: a generalist deploys a technical advisory team to help defeat draft legislation.

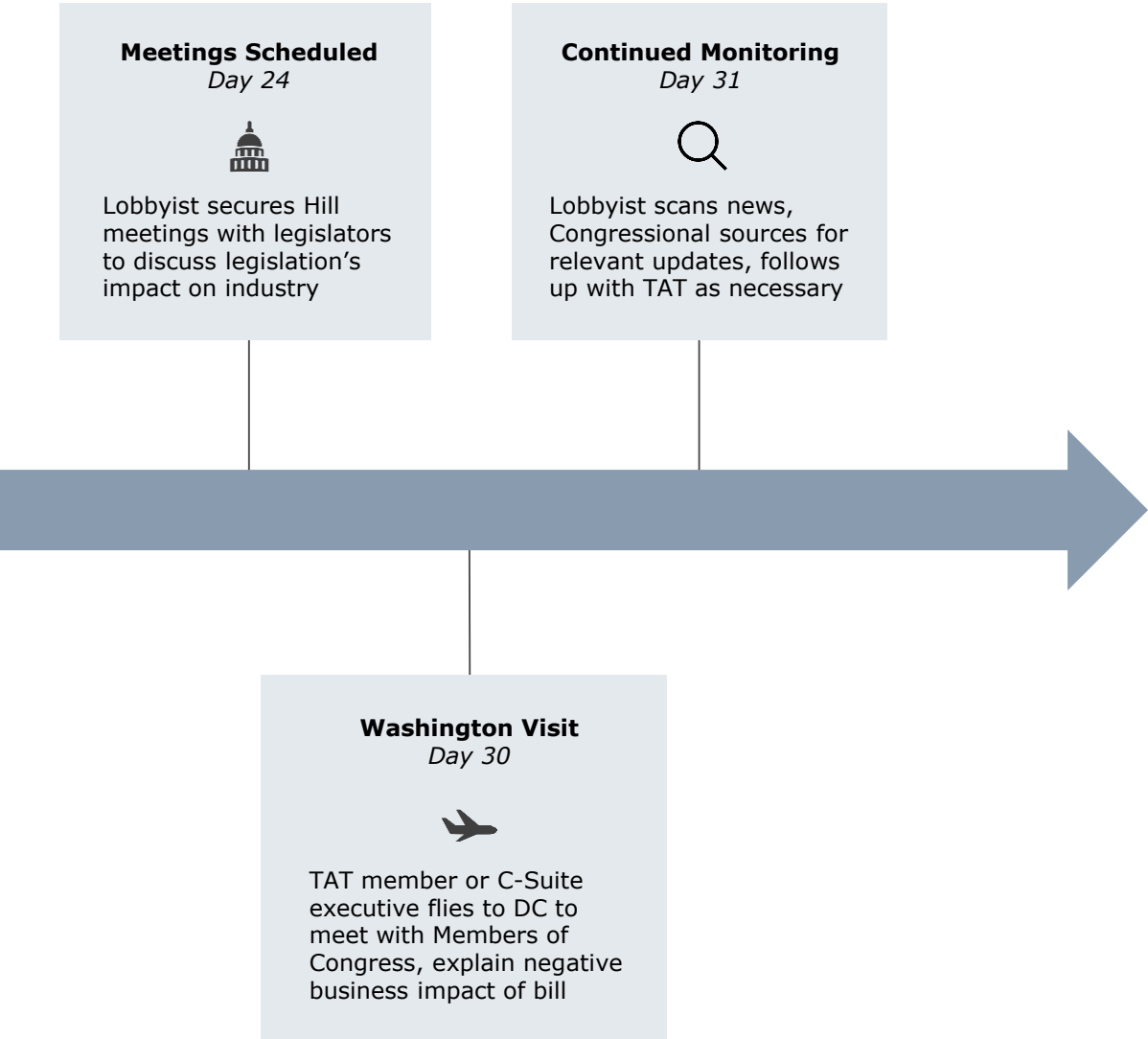
Technical advisory teams play an active role in Hill advocacy. When an issue emerges, lobbyists and technical experts work together to diagnose potential threats, develop an action plan, and execute it. In the illustrative example below, a technical advisory team helps a generalist lobbyist defeat hostile draft legislation.

Generalist Lobbyist Leverages Technical



1 Illustrative.

Advisory Team to Fend Off Policy Threat¹



The expertise network provides complete, expert coverage of issues—and enhanced visibility within the wider company.

Swiss Re's government affairs office has enjoyed clear benefits since introducing the expertise network in 2015. The restructuring has allowed the organization to cover its entire issue set at substantial depth, recruit the equivalent of two full-time experts to support government affairs, and increase the advocacy function's visibility throughout the company.

Benefits of Swiss Re's Expertise Network



Complete Issue Coverage: All issues within Swiss Re's portfolio are covered at substantial depth.



Greater Visibility at Headquarters: Business units have become aware of issues impacting their bottom lines in Washington and trust government affairs to execute without constant supervision.



Recruited Equivalent of 2 Full-Time Experts: With 25 TATs of 5-7 people meeting roughly 25 hours a year, Swiss Re's government affairs office has recruited the equivalent of two full-time issue specialists at no additional cost.

Take the next step with National Journal Leadership Council

Consult with an Expert

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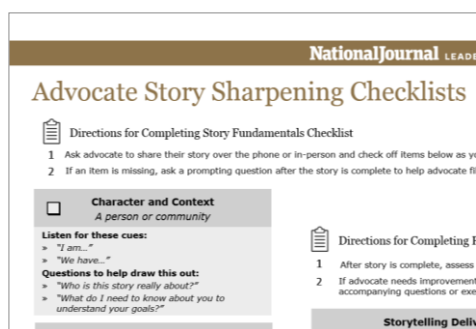


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