Cap Community Advisory Panel
What is a Community Advisory CAP

The American chemical industry is sponsoring over 300 community advisory panels (CAPs) at plants across the country to repair lost trust and credibility. CAPs are an innovation in community−corporate relations and are increasingly being adopted by other industrial sectors. This paper reports on a national survey of CAP community members and the company representatives that collaborate with them.
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The survey suggests that CAPs alert companies to community concerns and promote trust between members and sponsoring companies. CAPs are less effective in stimulating changes in environmental performance and, like many citizen advisory groups, have difficulties serving as systematic links back to the community. While business and industry organizations are well represented on CAPs, environmental and community organizations are not and neither are medical or other health or safety professionals. Significantly, these latter groups are most likely to feel that one of a CAP's main functions is to influence a plant's health, safety, and environmental performance. A CAP is perceived to be more effective by members when it has a significant commitment by the plant manager, a professional facilitator, and a diverse membership. A majority of community members, but not of company representatives, feel that access to independent technical experts and members with technical background contribute to a CAP's effectiveness. While new to corporations, CAPs raise many of the same issues as governmental citizen advisory committees, including representativeness, intentions of the institution being advised, and availability of independent technical expertise so that participation is fair and competent.
The Pros and Cons of CAP
The Pros

1. **It is an easy way to network with other business leaders.** The last thing some managers want to do after a long day at work is spend another 3-4 hours at an after-hours function to network. An advisory council provides like-minded professionals with the opportunity to network with each other during regular business hours will still accomplishing something for a team or organization.

2. **Different perspectives can create deeper programs.** The end goal of any team is to create the highest quality of work. Quantity is also important, but not at the expense of quality. When there is an advisory council in place, different industry leaders can provide their unique experiences so the team can benefit from them. Although the advice given may not always be the best advice, the unique viewpoints offered can help to deepen a team’s understanding of what needs to get done.
The Pros

3. **It can be highly profitable.** If you put half a dozen industry leaders into the same room for an hour or two, then you’re going to get some creative ideas. Those ideas can then be turned into projects that could be highly profitable. This is true for any industry, including non-profit organizations. Fresh ideas bring more attention to a business or program and that attention is what will lead to profitability.

4. **Council members can switch in and out.** An advisory council doesn’t have to be a permanent position. It can be something that community leaders attend when they have an opportunity to do so. The council can be as big or as small as a manager wants or needs so specific goals can be met. This flexibility makes it a little easier to recruit members who would like the chance to have some input on the future of a manager’s organization.
The Cons

1. **It can be difficult to find participating members.** Most advisory councils offer unpaid obligations. To make matters worse, many managers will make requests of an advisory council that requires members to invest time, resources, or both into the success of their own department. This can make it difficult to find members to sit on the council because of so many personal obligations that typically come with such a position.

2. **You can get some really bad advice.** Managers love advisory councils because of the chance to consult with others. The only problem is that there can be some bad advice disguised as good advice offered in these meetings. Any advice, help, or resources provided should always be taken with a grain of salt. It isn’t the council that will be held responsible should something not work out right. It will be the manager.
The Cons

3. **There is a definite expense that must be carried.** An advisory council isn’t going to just show up for nothing. They must have some sort of incentive to be involved. It might involve catering, cross-promotions, or other tasks that require a personal or organizational investment. Many managers don’t have to pay council members directly and this makes it seem like the process is free, but it is far from it.

4. **The meeting notes might have to be on the public record.** Even if a manager is informally gathering together community leaders to become part of an advisory council, the notes of that meeting may need to be published. Even if it isn’t required, the transparency of such an act can help to foster internal communication. That means someone has to take notes and that typically requires another employee to be present, limiting productivity during the meeting.
The Pros and Cons of CAP

The pros and cons of an advisory council show they can provide a lot of potential, but there are certain challenges that must be met. Whether it is just for networking or to come up with a solution to a unique problem, an advisory council can provide the needed experience an organization doesn’t have internally so that the next step in the journey can be completed.

We can make a difference on Community Advisory Panels/ Council by listed your purpose for being on cap engage all your neighbors and take action let the Cap know you want change and justice.