**Tactic: The Game of Analogs**

*Uncover relevant lessons from outside the sector to surface what success has looked like elsewhere—and identify the core ingredients that can guide this group’s approach.*

**When to Use It:**

Use when your group is facing a stuck point, complex challenge, or moment of strategic design and needs a fresh perspective. This activity is especially helpful when participants come from different backgrounds or sectors and could benefit from shared insight into how big shifts have happened elsewhere. It’s ideal early in the problem-solving process to spark creativity, align values, and generate cross-sector inspiration.

**How it Works:**

**Step 1 (10 minutes) | Introduce the activity and spark imagination**Explain the purpose: to look outside your sector for insight into how others have tackled similar challenges. Share 1–2 real-world examples (from history, business, or culture) to prime creative thinking. Emphasize that the goal isn’t to find a perfect match, but to uncover patterns, strategies, and values that could inform this group’s approach.

**Step 2 (30–40 minutes) | Break into small groups to work through the worksheet**In groups of 3–5, participants explore 1–2 analogs using the provided worksheet prompts. Encourage each group to assign a note taker and keep the focus on big-picture insights and transferable lessons.

* What is a challenge similar to this one outside our sector, and why is it similar?
* How did change happen in those analogs, and who made it happen?
* What principles or mechanisms feel relevant to our current challenge?

**Step 3 (15–20 minutes) | Reconvene for plenary reflection and pattern-spotting**Invite each group to briefly share highlights from their analogs and key ingredients for success. The facilitator captures themes on a flipchart or shared screen—grouping by category (e.g., values, change strategies, types of actors). Close by reflecting on how these lessons might shape the group’s strategy or approach moving forward.

**Helpful Tips:**

* **Encourage “stretch” thinking.** Remind the group that perfect analogs aren’t required—the goal is to **spark insight**, not find a one-to-one match.
* **Use visuals to spot patterns.** During the plenary share out, cluster themes on a whiteboard or digital tool to make shared insights and values visible in real time.
* **Watch out for cynicism.** Some participants may focus on why analogs don’t apply—invite them instead to ask, “What *can* we take from this, even if it’s not a perfect match?”

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### **Example Analogs for “Game of Analogs”**

Use these case studies as inspiration to help participants draw relevant comparisons across sectors and time periods. In order to focus time and attention, each group should select one analog to reflect on together, using the worksheet as a guiding tool.

**1. One place in history we have seen a significant shift from Volunteerism to Professionalism**

| WHAT:  (Analog) | 1. **WW2**: WW2 helped professional many previously volunteer based occupations like nursing and emergency medical services. 2. **Non-Proft Sector:** Increase in size,scope, and budget of Non-Profit sector have required individual non-profits to rely on paid staff with expertise and skills to manager their operations and programs. |
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| HOW AND BY WHO  (Mechanism and Actor) | 1. Women, laypeople, on the ground volunteers meeting increased demand for immediate labor. 2. Increased demand for efficiency and returns on larger and larger investments. |
| How long did it take to initiate and take hold? | 1. 6-8 years. 2. 20-30 years. |

**2. What's a social sector change that has been scaled by the private sector?**

| WHAT: (Analog) | 1. **Anti Smoking Implementation in Public Space:** Patrons grew tired of having to share the same “air-space” as other guests who smoked and so private business began creating “smoking sections.” 2. **Restaurant Menu Calorie Count**: Buyers wanted more transparency around the health contents of the food they were getting outside of grocery super markets and restaurants helped alleviate that transparency. |
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| HOW AND WHO (Mechanism and Actor) | 1. Airlines in the 1970s’ / Restaurants in the 70’s and 80’s, Office spaces in the late 80’s and 90’s responding to customer demand + Healthy and Scientific consensus coming together on the issue of second-hand smoke. 2. Fast Food chains in the early 90’s - McDonalds, Wendy’s, Carl’s Jr on the backs of public outcry that their food was unhealthy and hidden with dangerous chemicals, additives, etc. |
| How long did it take to initiate and take hold? | 1. 30 years 2. 10-15 years. |



