Exchanges

A. Purpose.

Exchanges of concerns/issues with a trained and licensed facilitator help resolve problems encountered by members of the workforce.

B. Overview.

An exchange is either a one-on-one dialog between two members of a workforce or a dialog with a small group, one of whom is trained and Chartered/Licensed as a cultural/team facilitator. The outcome of an exchange is to create empathy in the relationship and open the minds of participants to the possibilities of shifting perspective that will ultimately result in increased capacity for the organization. This does not presuppose that the results of an exchange will always result in a more positive condition. An effective exchange strategy will however, produce positive long-term results.

C. Scenario Development.

The cultural/team facilitators must develop a set of potential scenarios that they are likely to find themselves in and an appropriate response to those conditions. Some generic scenarios can be predicted, however, and are presented here. The exchange condition is similar to a "customer service desk" in any organization except, the cultural/team facilitator is the provider, and the "customer" is another member (peer, subordinate, superior, network member).

1. Serendipitous Observation. Normally facilitators are members of the workforce that are located in highly visible jobs close to the front line. Other members of the organization can easily scrutinize the behaviors of facilitators. For this reason, facilitators must develop work habits that are well within employee guidelines. The credibility of facilitators cannot be at questioned by either supervisors or peer members. It is also important that facilitators be inviting and approachable to others and ought to avoid hanging around with the same coworkers, for example, during breaks.

2. Surface Neutral Dialog. Members often have the opportunity to exchange dialog on "light" topics of no particular significance: "Great weather!" - As an example. These exchanges are important because they begin to load a ***ProZone*** (See Tab 2, Attachment 1, ***ProZones***) with perceptions that will become valuable if and when subsequent more meaningful conversations are to take place. The facilitator should always project a positive, up-beat image. In some cases, members of the workforce are contemplating an approach and even the slightest inference of negative predisposition may divert a valuable exchange.

3. Information Presentation. Facilitators must present the accurate image of "being in the know" on issues of importance to the workforce. To set the stage for this image, it is reasonable for a small portion of each "all staff" meeting to be set aside for brief presentations by the facilitation team members present. New employee orientation sessions should always be marked by a presentation by key members of the facilitation team that fully explain the mission and organization of team activity.

4. Dialog of Opportunity. In some cases a conversation may already be happening when the facilitator realizes that the dialog topic can be shifted to one that will potentially leverage capacity. Facilitators are cautioned against "always" shifting topics that appear to be self-serving or only in the best interest of the organization. The facilitation exchange must always be perceived as a win/win option.

5. Information/Data Collection. The need for employee-generated information is always present. Data collected through the facilitation team as opposed to purely management functions (such as Human Resource offices), is often perceived to be more reliable and credible. This may also be true of information gathered via pre-determined interviews or spot interviews. Rather than wait for a specific occasion, it is always a good idea for facilitators to take the time to schedule a few minutes with those they are "shepherding" from across the organization.

6. Inquiry and Resolution Dialog (potential conflict). In many cases, coworkers will seek out the facilitator in an effort to gain information or guidance about a particular topic. In this regard, the facilitator must stick to the facts as known and, initially at least, check to determine that the exchange was accurate. It is always a good idea to keep records of topics of concern to the workforce so those trends can be detected and potential corrective action taken by the appropriate authority - supervisors and/or managers.

7. Advocacy Dialog (of immediate conflict probability). In some cases, the facilitator may be approached to assist a coworker who will not step forward to help themselves (normally for fear of reprisal or some other compelling reason). In this case, the facilitator may take on the role of an intermediary advocate, helping to resolve a potential problem before it becomes more grievous than necessary. The facilitator is cautioned to not overstep the boundaries of authority that already exist (union representation and legitimate supervisory/management authorities). This exchange may require several events before it is complete. Typically the outcome is the recovery of capacity by removing a barrier that prevents satisfactory contribution to be made.

D. Conditions (Scenarios B.5., B.6., and B.7. above).

The three scenario conditions cited above may call for a degree of confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy that are not necessary for other scenarios. Facilitators and supervisors and managers must have "advance permission" to engage in these activities before they actually begin either in response to an occurrence of some sort or as a means to prevent an undesirable incident. If possible, advance permissions can be obtained as part of the Facilitators Charter and License Guide (See Tab 4, Record keeping for guidance).

1. Place. It is always best to have a "private" area for one-on-one or one-on-few conversations. People will feel more at ease in providing confidential information if the meeting takes place in an isolated environment. Under the best conditions, the place ought to be in an area that all participants feel comfortable. This includes the room and furniture arrangements.

2. Rapport. Confidential information is far more apt to be shared between people where rapport exists. This is a feeling that a person gets that the other person in a relationship is perceived to be the same or similar as him or herself. This includes all ramifications of similarity.

3. Permission to Take Notes. The facilitator may ask permission to take notes, and begin to take notes immediately if given permission. Without permission, actual descriptions of any incident are less likely to be accurate when presented to other and the facilitator may express that permission to take notes during the interview(s) was not extended. Time permitting, the notes ought to be transcribed and provided to the person being interviewed to be certain that the description of the incident or condition is accurate. CapacityWare Notes can be used for this purpose.

4. Promise of Anonymity and Confidentiality (when appropriate). If need be, the facilitator may extend a promise of anonymity or confidentiality. If this is done, it must be respected by all concerned. There is a caution in this regard. Keeping secrets will limit the degree to which an exchange can effectively resolve issues if secrecy lasts beyond the initial stages of resolution. Facilitators must make those they interview aware of this limitation before proceeded too far down the data collection process.

5. Potential Use of *CapacityWare™*. ***CapacityWare™*** can be used to both show results and show (and track) performance. In both cases, it can and often does bring about an ideal resolution. In some cases, ***CapacityWare™*** may be important in fostering the development of culture or policy if other means cannot resolve complex workforce issues.

a. Show Data. In some cases, the facilitator may be able to show data that will satisfy the exchange interviewee that action is being taken on an issue. This ought to be a first approach consideration. If the solution to an employee problem is already identified and underway, that may end the potential exchange process with a positive tone.

b. Event Record. At minimum, the Event Record must be updated with the facts of the Exchange to the extent that they are known and can be made a part of the public organizational record. It is also possible to create the record with Notes, print and safeguard the printed copy, while deleting the Note files. When anonymity and confidentially have been promised, attendance records will be limited - excepted for printed and deleted Notes.

6. Commitments and Follow-through. Facilitators cannot commit to the satisfactory resolution to an issue(s) unless their Charter or License permits it. Facilitators can commit to informing and using a process that will eventually results in the disposition of any incident or condition. The concept of the sequence of follow-through activity is one of "containment." Solve the problem at the lowest level in the organization structure possible by involving all parties in a dialog of mutual priority, respect, and consent. In the absence of viable resolution, the facilitator may escalate the issue to any individual within the chain-of-authority competent to act in the best interests of the organization and its members. The time that each level of authority has to contribute to an equitable resolution must be commensurate with the conditions that must be settled/relieved. Issues of safety, for example, must be resolved quickly while issues of long-term minor difficulty may be protracted. The issues must always be focused on organizational capacity - not individual preference. The level of intensity and speed are judgement calls on which Facilitators must collaborate as a team.

E. Integrating Exchange Results.

1. Trends. Trends are conditions that are recognizable and develop over time. Facilitators are often in the best possible position to detect early-warning on developing trends. Managers often detect trends by examining data that is "lagging" - the events have already occurred that would suggest a trend and the data are merely documenting those events. Someone already aware of the fact that this data would make the trend more obvious likely initiates the report that documents events upon which the trends are based. In many cases, that someone was already not listening to them when they reported it earlier by less formal means.

2. Culture versus Policy. Policies are normally developed to provide guidance to a workforce that, left to its own judgement would violate the policy for some reason they believed to be justified. Policy statements are often in the way of "what people want to do," and policy statements do little to alter "what people want to do." Another approach is to shift the culture of an organization so that members of the workforce "want to do" what a policy would compel them to do. The culture is more powerful and will turn the organization toward a win/win every time.

3. Best Practices. Best practices are routines that organizations use to get things done in the most effective, efficient and culturally acceptable way possible - get more done with less. When best practices are "discovered" they need to be published in such a way that the entire organization (and other non-competing organizations) can benefit from them. Best practices are fully integrated into ***CapacityWare™*** cycles so that every best practice can be developed and shared.

4. Informing the Workforce of Resolutions. Well-executed exchanges are one avenue through which problems are resolved. Yet the benefit of problem resolution may not be optimized unless the workforce is informed of what happened. Workforce confidence in the process of problem identification and resolution may be more important than any single solution. Many organizations solve individual worker problems without informing the entire workforce of what happened (within the constraints of confidentiality). Even with some constraints, a case study can often be developed that allows workers to learn without being concerned about confidentiality issues.