



Lighthouse Institute Customer Success Story Public Sector - City Government

AT A GLANCE

Summary

Organizational change and ineffective group dynamics lead a division within the City of Tacoma's Information Technology Department to actively develop positive group norms and a team oriented culture.

Key Challenges

- Segregated work groups needing to work collaboratively
- Lack of tools for working together at a high-functioning level
- Workgroup relations

Solutions and Services

- Targeted on-site and off-site training opportunities
- Tools for individual and workgroup success
- Collaborative and consensus building techniques

Key Benefits

- Efficient and productive employees
- Respect of individuals in the workplace
- Enhanced morale and workplace relationships
- Improved communication and ability to work successfully through conflict

City of Tacoma - Information Technology Department

Facilitating Cultural Change

The City of Tacoma's Information Technology (IT) Department provides services to 3,500 internal customers and 197,000 citizens. The systems maintained by the department include the customer information system, human resources documents, financials, utility billing, budgeting, permitting, tax and licensing, and various work management systems. The Enterprise Applications Support Division (EASD) staff of 55 meets a vast range of these information needs through 10 workgroups.

The City of Tacoma EASD made the decision to face organizational issues that prevented the division from functioning well as an interdependent group. "The teams (within EASD) were segregated by workgroup and then by function. By virtue of the service we provide, cooperation across workgroups is required. To better serve our customers, (we) needed to enhance workgroup relations." says Alan Alvarez. Key personnel changes had occurred at this time as well.

The Challenge

According to manager Kathy Palon, morale was low. Bradd Busick, Manager - Change Management put it this way, "The City of Tacoma faced a cultural challenge due to the amount of mistrust, poor communication skills and meeting etiquette. We also lacked an understanding of how to work through conflict,

which created unnecessary tension." The challenge was to facilitate this team away from an ineffective dynamic to become a high-functioning, inter-reliant, and efficient work group.

The Desired Outcomes

According to Alan Alvaez, EASD wanted individuals to see beyond organizational titles and to move towards enterprise and teamwork, increasing the productivity of the group. "We needed more cohesion and camaraderie," added Kathy Palon.

"We realized the importance of investing in our team as we move toward being more productive on behalf of our customers. As such, we sought out Lighthouse Institute to aide us in furthering the self discovery process and how one person may impact an entire team either positively or negatively." explained Bradd Busick.

Jeremy Porter was brand new to the EASD work team at the time Lighthouse Institute became involved. He shared, "As a new employee I wanted to see relationships built and strengthened as well as a strong team environment formed. I also wanted to grow personally."

Opportunity existed for providing tools to the work team that would facilitate a healthy dynamic and improve customer



A collaborative and unifying teaming process

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Jeremy Porter



service and overall productivity. The tools would assist in developing the group as a whole as well as the individual members.

The Solutions

“We selected Lighthouse Institute (LI) because of their integrity and no-nonsense approach to individual and organizational development. Further, LI is able to quantify the benefits of their offerings which correlates with increased productivity and efficiency. LI was also willing to partner with the City for a longer engagement than just one or two classes. This allowed us to be more strategic with the sequence of offerings and built trust between our staff and the LI staff due to the continuity.” said Bradd Busick. “LI offered a hybrid of self discovery and group exercises, some onsite and others offsite. This unique approach allowed for a dynamic evolution as (we) were not stuck in a classroom listening to lectures. Each LI offering was carefully constructed and tailored to the real life situations we face on a daily basis as opposed to a textbook or video learning approach.”

According to Kathy Palon, the processes offered by Lighthouse Institute offered a chance for new management and new employees to be integrated in to the work group, provide skills to work better as a team, and create understanding that one cannot do everything by themselves.

“Lighthouse provided a common vernacular to unite our team towards productivity, a better understanding of self and others through exercises in motivation, exercises in teamwork and allowing people’s strengths to be utilized, exercises in communication to ensure that (individuals) are valued, (and tools for) balancing work-life to ensure continued productivity of workers.” explained Alan Alvarez

The Benefits

Alan Alvarez identified the benefits of the Lighthouse Institute processes as improved respect of individuals in the workplace, a common lexicon/experience/education when describing workplace conflicts and issues, and methods for building consensus. “Our organization runs more efficiently because of our relationship with LI. Our meetings are run more professionally, our staff treats each other with respect and more importantly, they have a better understanding of themselves and how they relate to their co-workers.” explained Bradd Busick.

Jeremy Porter shared his perspective. “The

major benefit I see is a deeper level of self awareness and a higher desire and understanding of quality ways of relating to others.”

“The Lighthouse Institute gave employees the opportunity to explore themselves and others on a deeper level. The personality test for example helped others see where their strengths and weaknesses lie so they can focus on those areas. By posting and discussing these personalities, others were able to understand the learning styles and communication styles of their coworkers and then make adjustments on how to relate to that person. There has also been an amplified ability to disagree agreeably by implementing the thumbs up – thumbs down voting method.”

“Attending the challenges off-site allowed for people to see both themselves and others on a deeper level – to get to know other’s comfort zones and to challenge ones personal limits, to let the guard down and build relationship without the pressure of the corporate culture, to understand who is a leader in certain situations and why others may not be, and to build trust and respect in a safe, team oriented environment.”

“The major benefits for me personally was recognizing my communication styles and being able to make adjustments in the areas I was failing. The training also gave me a base to feel more confident in myself and comfortable in my position and with my team. Ultimately it was a seed for me to grow into an indispensable employee and an influential leader.”

The Payoff

“Happy employees equal efficient employees,” says Bradd Busick.

According to Jeremy Porter, “Lighthouse Institute made a lasting impression on me. It has been a form of fertilizer for building my confidence level, molding my leadership skills, helping me provide outstanding customer service, and most importantly, building solid relationships with individuals both inside and outside of the organization. If I was the only one who could claim this then I would still say the RIO would pay itself back in great dividends.”

What might similar results return to your organization?