

Determining Ownership

Group Exercise

Description

This activity involves the full group in problem solving to determine problem ownership.

Learning Points

After completing this activity participants will be able to:

- use positive evaluation
- develop solutions from the ideas
- realize that only the problem owner has the power to act
- accept that if a person does not have the power to implement the solution then it is not his/her problem.

Method

1. Have each attendee create a "problem statement." It should be a real-life situation. Choose one attendee's problem statement.
2. Assume the role of process leader and write the problem statement on a board while the problem owner gives the background and ideal solution. At the same time, distribute the Problem Solving Process rules.
3. Ask for solutions from the other participants who will assume the role of contributors.
4. Record each idea for the group to see.
5. Allow the idea generation phase of the problem-solving process to come to a natural conclusion.
6. Invite the problem owner to evaluate the ideas.
7. Ask the problem owner to select ideas that are new, appealing and feasible.
8. Invite the problem owner to compile the selected ideas into a preferred solution which will form the basis of an action plan.
9. Ask questions to make sure the problem owner really does have the power to implement the proposed course of action.

10. Ask the problem owner to commit to implementing the action plan upon returning to the workplace.

11. You may choose to repeat this activity a number of times to provide practice for the participants in the role of process leader, and to allow problem owners to practice positive evaluation and development of action plans.

Trainer Notes

At the end of the idea generation phase, the problem owner has a number of ideas available to assist in the solution of the problem. The contributors will have generated the ideas, the process leader will have recorded the ideas on the flipchart, and the ideas will be on display in front of the meeting. The problem owner now has to choose one, or more, idea that is new, appealing and feasible.

There is always a tendency for the problem owner to make negative remarks about an idea and then discount it. The point of meeting is not what is wrong with the ideas, but what the problem owner likes about the ideas.

Now is the time to introduce Rule 3: three positives before one negative. Before the problem owner can introduce a disparaging remark about an idea, he or she must say three good things about the idea or give three benefits for using the idea. If the problem owner cannot think of three positives to say about an idea, then the negative is not allowed. If the problem owner cannot think of three positives about an idea then it can't be a very good idea so reject it. Do not allow the problem owner to suggest only one positive in order to be allowed to say the negative. Some problem owners will be tempted to choose an idea in order to be allowed to make a devastatingly funny rejection. You must be strict in these instances—three positives or no negative.

The negative for any chosen solution may become the next problem statement and the process repeated. In this way the benefits of the chosen solution are retained and the disadvantages are removed.

Conclusion

Explain that while ideas are generated, no evaluation is allowed. At the end of idea-generation phase the problem owner evaluates the ideas using three positives before a negative and chooses the preferred solution. The preferred solution, which must be new, appealing and feasible (Rule 4), leads to deciding the next steps or action plan. The “problem owner” must have the power to act to implement the action plan (Rule 5), and must make a commitment to implement a solution upon returning to work.

Handout:

Problem-Solving Process Rules

Rule 1: No questions.

Rule 2: No evaluation.

Rule 3: Three positives before a negative.

Rule 4: Preferred solutions must be new, appealing and feasible.

Rule 5: The problem owner must have the power to act.