**ENCOURAGING THE USE OF**

**PROCESS IMPROVEMENT METHODS**

**IN CHINESE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES**

by

Stuart A. Umpleby

Department of Management

School of Business

The George Washington University

Washington, D.C. 20052

umpleby@gmail.com

and

Jing Tian

Center for Excellence in Public Leadership

College of Professional Studies

The George Washington University

jingtian@email.gwu.edu

September 28, 2012

Presented to the

Bureau of Quality and Technology Management

Guangdong Province

People’s Republic of China

**A demonstration of group facilitation methods at**

**The Center for Excellence in Public Leadership**

**Washington, DC, U.S.A**

**September 19, 2012**

**INTRODUCTION**

On September 19, 2012, during a meeting hosted at The George Washington University Center for Excellence in Public Leadership in Washington, D.C., Dr. Stuart Umpleby conducted a participatory planning exercise. The purpose of the exercise was to demonstrate group facilitation methods as a method of organizational problem-solving.

The exercise used a series of questions drawn from the method of Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005). There are several advantages to Appreciative Inquiry as a method of facilitation:

1. The focus is on the future (how to move forward) rather than the past (what went wrong).

2. Problems are not addressed explicitly, because people become defensive and do not want to be blamed for what went wrong. Problems are dealt with implicitly by the gap between what is succeeding and what the objectives are.

3. Sharing successes energizes and motivates the group. Also, sharing successes enables people to learn from each other.

4. A key claim is that “the answers are in the room.” Successful practices are not widely known if group discussions focus on problems rather than successes. Focusing on successes, and why they were successful, enables people to make use of readily available knowledge.

To discuss each question we used the Consensus Workshop method, developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (Stanfield, 2003). The Consensus Workshop method entails five steps:

1. Context – explain the purpose of the activity and the method to be used.

2. Brainstorm – participants write their ideas on half page sheets of paper.

3. Cluster – put similar ideas from participants together on a “sticky wall.”

4. Name – identify the key idea in each cluster.

5. Resolve – ask if anything has been left out.

The Workshop Method has several important features.

1. An advantage of having people write down their ideas and then post them is that more people get their ideas into the conversation. Just asking people to speak up leads to some people dominating the conversation.

2. All ideas are accepted and put on the board, though clarification can be asked for.

3. In most public conversations the leader speaks and the audience listens. In facilitation the leader asks questions and the audience provides answers. One purpose of the conversation is for the members of the group to learn what they themselves are thinking.

Normally Appreciative Inquiry uses five questions:

1. What is working?

2. Why is it working?

3. What is our vision of the future?

4. How will we personally benefit by achieving this vision?

5. What needs to be done to move toward our vision.

Due to limited time, we only answered questions 1, 3, and 5. Each of the questions was answered using the five steps in the Consensus Workshop method.

The participants considered several possible focus questions and chose the third.

1. How can we ensure food safety in the region?

2. How can we ensure special equipment safety in the region?

3. How can we encourage the use of ISO9001 or other process improvement methods in government agencies in China?

Below are the results of the exercise. If two people suggested the same idea, the number (2) appears next to the idea. Clusters of ideas are presented in order from the cluster with the most items to the cluster with the least items. The format in which ideas are presented is usually adjective, adjective noun. However for needed actions, the last step, a format of verb, adjective, noun is used.

**RESULTS OF THE EXERCISE**

1. **What is already working in the Bureau of Quality and Technology Management of Guangdong Province?**

* *Strong leadersh*ip in support of ISO
  + Motivation and leadership
  + Leaders’ attention (3)
  + Required by supervisors
* *Reasonable organizational structure*
  + Hierarchical management
  + Effective structural management
  + Good organizational foundation
  + Good management
  + Good organizational structure
* *Good work ethics and capability*
  + A management team with high capability
  + Good human resources
  + High participation
* *Good rules and regulations*
  + Existing regulatory documents
  + Some colleagues are familiar with ISO9000
  + A good documentation process
* *Clear job functions*
  + Position establishment and adjustment
  + Clear job functions (2)
* *Good training programs (3)*
* *Thorough political chain of command*
  + Process management model
  + Work flow/process
* *Good supervision*
  + Supervision process
* *Good infrastructure*
  + Unified work facility
* *Useful end of year summary (internal audit)*
* *Stable funding*

1. **What is our vision of the future?**

* *Higher efficiency* 
  + increased efficiency
  + finish sooner
  + high efficiency
  + increased efficiency
  + effective operation
* *Effective execution* 
  + achieve the goal
  + orderly operation
  + error-free institution
* *Standardized management* 
  + clear job functions
  + order and standardize
  + standardized process
* *Higher stakeholder satisfaction* 
  + societal satisfaction
  + customer satisfaction
* *Employees are happy* 
  + more vacation time
* *Clear responsibility*
* *Justice for all stakeholders*
* *No corruption*
* *Continuous improvement*
* *Improved product quality in the province*

1. **What actions are needed to move toward our vision?**

* *Effective training* 
  + Hierarchical training
  + Employee training
  + More training to master the methodology
  + Training in Great Britain
  + More training
  + Capacity training
  + Improve the overall capacity
  + Increase employee training
  + Study abroad for advanced experience
* *Increase performance evaluation* 
  + Motivation measures
  + Performance - salary system
  + Reward and punishment system
  + Standardized performance evaluation
  + Ensure vacation (15 days/year)
  + Establish and enforce performance evaluation system
  + Position evaluation
  + Competition
* *Improve supervision* 
  + Increased supervision
  + Regulate and enforce
  + Supervision with time specification
* *Transformative function* 
  + Transfer part of the government function to social organizations
  + Simplify functions (transfer)
  + Reduce permission
* *Social participation* 
  + Experts involvement (theoretical and systematic guidance)
  + Enterprise' comments (public opinion)
  + Specialized expertise support
* *Clarify job functions* 
  + Define position
  + Redefine job responsibility, process and requirement
* *Simplified process* 
  + Less hierarchy
  + Detailed process
* *Management evaluation* 
  + Internal evaluation
  + Clean and amend regulations to make it systematic and realistic
* *Ensure enforcement* 
  + Enforce rules and regulations
* *Create a complete record and documentation system*
* *Strive for consensus*
* *Appoint management representatives in process improvement teams*
* *Continuing improvement*
* *Full participation*

**REFERENCES FOR FURTHER READING ON GROUP FACILITATION METHODS**

Bergdall, Terry D. (1993). *Methods for Active Participation: Experiences in Rural Development from East and Central Africa.* Nairobi, Kenya: Oxford University Press.

Cooperrider, David L. and Diana Whitney. (2005). *Appreciative Inquiry:* *A Positive Revolution in Change.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Espinosa, Angela and Stuart Umpleby. (2007). “Reflections on the New Agoras Project,” *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, Vol. 24, No. 1, pp. 15-26.

Institute of Cultural Affairs International, Brussels (ed.). (1988). *Approaches That Work in Rural Development: Emerging Trends, Participatory Methods and Local Initiatives.* IERD Series Vol. 3, Munich: K.G. Saur Verlag.

Spencer, Laura. (1989). *Winning through Participation*. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Stanfield, Brian. (2001). *The Art of Focused Conversation: 100 Ways to Access Group Wisdom in the Workplace.* Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers.

Stanfield, Brian. (2003). *The Workshop Book, from Individual Creativity to Group Action.* Gabriola Island, BC, Canada: New Society Publishers.

Troxel, James, ed. (1993). *Participation Works: Business Cases from Around the World.* Alexandria, VA: Miles River Press.

Troxel, James, ed. (1995). *Government Works: Profiles of People Making a Difference.* Alexandria, VA: Miles River Press.

Umpleby, Stuart, Tatiana Medvedeva, and Alisa Oyler. (2004). “The Technology of Participation as a Means of Improving Universities in Transitional Economies,”  *World Futures*, Vol. 60, Nos. 1-2, pp. 129-136.

Umpleby, Stuart and Alisa Oyler (2007). “A Global Strategy for Human Development: The Work of the Institute of Cultural Affairs,” *Systems Research and Behavioral Science*, 24, 645-653.

**PARTICIPANTS IN THE DISCUSSION**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **Name**  **(Last, First )** | **Organizations** | **Position** |
| 1 | Lin Can | Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Chief Engineer  **(Leader**） |
| 2 | Hu Tai | Discipline Inspection Group accredited of Guangdong Discipline Committee | Commissioner |
| 3 | Tang Wu | Quality Supervision Bureau Inspection Bureau | Director-general |
| 4 | Yang Hua | General Office of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Director |
| 5 | Pang Dachun | Policies and Regulations Division of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Director of Division |
| 6 | Su Hu | Quality Management Division of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Director of Division |
| 7 | Yang Xiangpin | Quality Supervision Division of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Director of Division |
| 8 | Zhang Xin | Food Supervision Division  Of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Director of Division |
| 9 | Zhang Dingkang | Standardization Division of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision Guangdong Province | Vice- Director of Division |
| 10 | Hu Zhukuan | Boiler and Pressure Vessel Safety Supervision Division  of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Director of Division |
| 11 | Zhang Zhiguang | Special Electromechanical Equipment Quality and Safety Supervision Division of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Director of Division |
| 12 | Wu Zhigang | Planning and Finance Division of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of Province | Director of Division |
| 13 | Chen Yangyang | Planning and Finance Division of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of | Director |
| 14 | Yang Bo | Personnel Division of Administration of Quality and  Technology Supervision of | Director of Division |
| 15 | Kong Xiangpei | Grass roots education Division of Administration of Quality and Technology Supervision of Guangdong Province | Director of Division |
| 16 | Chen  Jingxiang | Government affairs Service Centre of Guangdong Quality Inspection Bureau | Director |
| 17 | Shao Haizeng | Government Anti-counterfeit Leading Office | Director of Division |
| 18 | Huang Xin | Compliant and of Quality Inspection Bureau | Director |
| 19 | Chen Xin | Production License Approval Service Centre | Director |
| 20 | Chen Quan | WTO/TBT Notification, Consultation & | Director |
| 21 | Chen Kezhi | of Product Quality Supervision | vice-president |
| 22 | Li Shaoqun | Guangdong Institute of Metrology Science | Senior engineer |
| 23 | Xiong Yong | Guangdong Institute of Standardization | president |
| 24 | Zheng Jiong | Guangdong Institute of Special Equipment Inspection | president |
| 25 | Xie Xintian | Guangdong Institute of Communication Terminals product Inspection | Director |