

Financial Services Case Study

“Love, Not Fear”: Transforming People and Teams after a Massive Downsizing



Organizational Change Project: Rebuilding Teamwork, Trust and Performance

Executive Summary: Global financial services company Citigroup (New York, NY) partners with InnerWork change consultants to rebuild morale, productivity, and customer focus in a major I.T. division.

Creating Organizational Transformation in the Financial Services Industry

Recently, Citigroup was undergoing massive change and reorganization due to the competitive forces sweeping the financial services industry. Also, the company was involved in ongoing mergers and acquisitions. During recent consolidations after merger activities, one of their internal Information Systems division underwent significant job cuts and layoffs. One large department of 150 people in this division experienced a twenty five percent (25%) reduction in force. Department management reorganized the remaining employees into a "work team" structure, and focused the teams on key internal business units. However, there were serious performance concerns.

There was very low morale among the remaining employees, known as "the survivors". Trust levels between staff and management were very poor, as well as trust levels between all staff employees, who were a mix of the original "heritage" companies. Though they were encouraged to be "high performance work teams", there were poor levels of teamwork, finger pointing and blame fixing, and disorganized approaches to servicing the business unit customers. Due to the layoffs and job cuts, there was a significant amount of fear and mistrust of management, and even some co-workers.

InnerWork's Change Management Project Solution

The InnerWork Company met with department management and the organization's Chief Information Officer. Using our Transformation Project approach, we designed the following solution over a six-month period.

We first encouraged department management to organize a small leadership team, called the "Guidance Team", to help us define and guide the effort. InnerWork (and this internal client team) then developed an integrated curriculum of Self Change, Team Change, and Business Change programs, which we scheduled to be delivered through a three day program off-site program. This training was to be supplemented by four one-day monthly training sessions onsite to deepen learning and accelerate the "turn-around" process, both from a human and business operations perspective.

Before the intervention began, we also outlined the project's measurement system. This involved examining twelve key behavioral measures of individual and team performance (see below), as well as three key business measures / results that were considered important. The project was to create:

1. a significant reduction in software development time;
2. a significant increase in mainframe system uptime;
3. a significant increase in work team productivity

Also, working with the direction of the "Guidance Team", InnerWork was to provide targeted facilitation and coaching on an as-needed basis through the six-month period. It was predicted that issues might arise like resolving deep-seated conflict between key people, stress mastery and life balance coaching for some employees, facilitation on identifying and resolving key customer concerns, and process improvement activities on two key processes.

The Results

The project was launched, but conducted as a pilot with one third of the department initially participating. The response was overwhelmingly positive, and we implemented the balance of the game plan in the following six months.

Within six months, the department experienced a dramatic change in performance, both internally and with their business unit customers. Also, we facilitated the conscious creation of a work place "community", where people now spent time together outside of work on social outings and projects like inner city Habitat for Humanity home reconstructions. The culture of the entire department had begun to radically shift away from "we are survivors" to "we can make things happen".

Over the six month period, the "whole person" / "whole team" behavioral changes were impressive. Using a baseline set of measures to benchmark these indicators before the project started, we conducted post measures at one month, three months, and six months after the project began. Here are the core behavioral changes from the baselines:

- 76% increase in trust levels
- 32% - 85% increases in various measures of team effectiveness (problem solving, team cohesion, team communication, risk-taking, team accountability, conflict resolution, team support, customer focus)
- 48% increase in open, honest communication (a key factor on building trust)
- 75% increase in personal power / ability to respond to change
- 68% increase in personal emotional mastery
- 65% reduction in stress
- 75% increase in commitment to the organization

Also, because of the low morale and "survivor" attitudes that existed prior to the project, InnerWork took a measure on the amount of "Fun" people were having at work. This measure had gone up 82% from the baseline! Equally impressive were the changes in business results. There was:

- a 75% reduction in cycle time for software development;
- an increase in mainframe system uptime from 92% to 99%;
- a 33% - 50% increase in work team productivity

All of these were all very significant gains on the precise performance issues affecting the department. Also, the department had resolved over 30 quality and productivity issues affecting customer service levels in the six-month period. The business unit customers were so delighted with these newly inspired employees, they awarded the department with a company-wide service award.

Love, Not Fear

How does anyone explain this outbreak of team spirit? One team leader had an explanation: "The principles we are applying, when understood and taken together, give us a picture of a new way we can live and work. It's an inside-out approach to change. If managers ask: 'How do you get our work done more efficiently with a better end product?', I'd tell them that, along with improving the work process, go out and build trust, communicate honestly, support each team member, and find ways to drive out the fear and relearn the idea that it's important for everyone to seek balance and wholeness in and through our work. When this catches fire, an epidemic of sanity—even love— can spread."

Said one of the senior Citigroup managers, "I think what's really exciting is that we built a community as we served our customers. It's a feeling of belonging, and our people are unwilling to think, speak, and act like victims anymore. I think each of us is discovering how much power and control we really do have to make a difference."