

Question-Driven Leadership

audacious group performance



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Case Study: A New Luxury Spa Handles Scheduling Conflicts

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Situation: In an increasingly popular destination location, the new, high-end spa and inn was growing faster than the managers could integrate the scheduling requirements of their expanding staff. The situation resulted in 1. a growing reputation among the local community of therapists that this was an unreliable business to work for and 2. the spa was losing business because they were not living up to their customers' expectations.

Process: We were invited to facilitate a meeting with the entire 50+ person staff of therapists, supervisors and managers along with the spa owners for an after-hours problem solving session to address the complexity of scheduling around the real-life needs of therapists. These therapists had chosen their profession largely on their need for flexible hours, either because of family duties, other work obligations or lifestyle preferences. "Disgruntled" would adequately describe the atmosphere of the room in spite of an abundance of pizza and wine provided by the owners (not our normal optimal training food!).

Using the Segue™ process, the question they chose to address was "How can we schedule therapists and clients to better meet everyone's needs?" Because of the nature of the Segue™, every opinion and partial idea and possible practice was spoken and heard. Everyone in the room had something to say and everyone was listened to. Partial ideas triggered new ways of looking at the situation. Every person who was affected by the situation was involved in creating a solution.

Conclusion: The unique scheduling model the managers devised out of the input from the large group could not have been imagined by any one individual or any committee. Everyone owned the success of the outcome because they personally contributed to the process that created the final solution.

Results: What emerged was a mix of some old and some innovative ways to schedule which better matched the needs of the therapists with the flow of clients. Today, the inn is known nationally for its service and the spa has a high retention rate for therapists and managers.

Unexpected results: Prior to the training, the therapists tended to be more protective of their needs and preferences and less flexible regarding how the scheduling worked for them. The nature of the Segue™ being an exercise in speaking directly and listening without interrupting or judging created an atmosphere in which many of the individual therapists were willing to relax their individual requirements and be a little more flexible. They were willing to be more flexible because the managers and owners were obviously listening to them and valued their contribution to the overall success of the new business. **This factor is the key ingredient that cemented the success of the plan.**