

Would you like to engage your employees and provide them with tools for working together?

By Catherine Armstrong

Janice supervised a group of eight supervisors across different divisions in a busy service company. Five of her supervisors had been in their positions for over 18 years and the other three had between three to five years of experience. Each supervised 20-25 team members, and for the most part had learned their skills on the job.

When it came to getting work done, the departments were outstanding. Yet, Janice was worried. Her supervisors were finding it harder and harder to keep morale high and were struggling to motivate and coach their staff. Many of them had given up and decided that there was nothing to be done. She wanted them to focus on people rather than tasks, become reenergized and be 'on the same page' when dealing with staff issues.

Janice decided to engage an independent facilitator to encourage the supervisors to take ownership for creating a stimulating work environment and to help them make quality decisions.

Facilitation is designed to ensure a fair process that can help groups accomplish their goals and draws on the gifts and energy of individuals. **A facilitator creates a safe environment that allows groups and teams to define what they would like to accomplish.** He or she supports the group as they work to overcome obstacles and encourages them to come up with strategies to reach their goals.

Before starting, Janice and the facilitator established a common understanding of expectations and developed measurable outcomes. The facilitator contacted the supervisors independently and learned what some of their challenges were and what items they would like to discuss with fellow supervisors. She also let them know that her role would be to involve everyone in decision making and that the group would hold each other responsible for what gets done.

At the first session, each person had a chance to talk about the current situation and how it impacted him or her. They discussed what was working well in their departments and what needed to change. Together they came up with a vision that included motivated and

engaged staff members who continued to provide high quality service to their customers.

Group members realized that they would need to come up with some strategies to make the vision a reality. They agreed that each person would gather concerns and ideas from their staff and would bring those thoughts to the next session.

The group met regularly over the next six months. **The facilitator helped them remain committed and productive by reminding them of their vision and helping the group overcome obstacles.** On occasion, members of the group became stuck and some lost faith in the process. **The facilitator made sure that it was safe to talk about concerns and issues and at times she would point out behaviours that were stopping them from reaching their goals.** She also encouraged them to celebrate their successes along the way and to recognize the gifts and strengths of each team member.

Janice noticed that productivity increased, staff turnover decreased and people seemed more energized. Her supervisors coached their staff to find solutions to problems and encouraged them to take on new tasks.

Over time the group started to look at other issues of concern. They took responsibility for their decisions and realized that they had the necessary skills, knowledge and resources to create a satisfying and productive workplace.



Catherine Armstrong Helps People Work With People. She draws on her twenty-five years of leadership experience to work with companies that want to turn people into better leaders and deal with conflict effectively.

Catherine is the author of [Does Anybody Hear Me: How Leaders Communicate So Others Will Listen](#) and co-author of [Be The Leader They Love: Attracting, Developing & Retaining People While Earning Their Trust](#).

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