

## NATIONAL BANK OF DOMINICA LIMITED: ACTION LEARNING

The National Bank of Dominica Limited decided that it needed to address the many complaints from customers and its observations of less than optimal customer care. The Bank engaged in an action-learning project and one of the AL teams worked on the problem of making the organisation more customer-focused. Management's initial view of the issue was that the employees just needed to learn how to treat customers correctly. The assigned AL team, however, took a much wider view and addressed most of the major contributing factors in order to propose up to fifty strategies most of which were implemented by management.



An action learning team developed more than 40 strategies to address these challenges. The solutions included rap lyrics for customer service, shirts with logos that fit within the bank's branding scheme, quarterly meetings with fun activities, a "meet-and-greet" training initiative on how to exchange pleasantries with customers, and a new reward system for service staff. Sample rewards are vouchers for vacations, shopping trips, and electronic products (such as netbooks and iPods), items that are less expensive than those top management had been considering.

### 1. Top 3 critical success factors for the AL program at NBD

- Strong commitment from the CEO who warmly invited participants; insisted on full participation of managers; gave full recognition to the participants by authorising a program on national television to cover the project.
- An excellent WIAL coach, who built appropriate rapport with all participants, prepared them adequately for using AL, and set the tone for team meetings to ensure action and learning
- The openness of participants to the process and how they sustained their enthusiasm throughout
- The AL process as well as the composition of the team which was drawn from staff across departments and levels contributed to the richness of the output.

### 2. Particular Contribution of AL

- Unlike other programs, the AL project brought together active minds from across the organisation, mixing pay grade levels and



disciplines. This generated richer discussion and more comprehensive solution paths.

□ The AL project seemed to create a greater sense of ownership among participants evidenced for example in a recent situation in which they readily gave up their Saturday in order to facilitate customers who had experienced difficulties with the bank's cards during the week. Previously employees resisted working on Saturdays. Management had also revised the reward system based on the AT team's recommendations so that it was more appealing to employees.

□ Several of the participants showed improved leadership behaviours with some of them rising in the ranks; retention of this talent also seemed to be enhanced through their initial involvement in the AL project.

### **Success of Action Learning**

The strategies, geared to enhancing the sense of belonging as well as self-esteem of employees, remain in place today. The National Bank of Dominica Limited subsequently earned the prestigious award for Customer Service issued by the regional regulator of banks - the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. It is likely that the Action Learning experience is indeed responsible for a number of the participants remaining with the Bank and playing effective leadership roles at their respective levels.

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