

Creating a customer service culture in the public sector

Industry Local Government
Diagnostic Tool OCI
Total Staff 700
Annual Budget A\$64 Million

The Challenge

Figure 1 shows the culture of the Council before the changes were implemented. Whilst this is a reasonably healthy culture profile, the organisation was in a state of flux due to a number of changes including CCT (Compulsory Tendering), and the challenge of moving from a public service approach to a more commercially orientated and customer service focus. Large scale redundancies were also causing stress and tension in the workforce and workplace.

The re-test 18 months later (Figure 2) shows a clear increase in the Constructive Styles and a reduction in all but the Oppositional in the Aggressive Defensive Styles.

The Passive Defensive Styles also reduced dramatically, a clear shift to a more committed and empowered workforce.

A further re-test 3 years after the first survey (Figure 3) shows continuing improvement in the culture.

- Winning of the Victorian State Customer Service Award for their Organisation Development and Customer Service division, and subsequent nomination for the National Award.
- Topping 7 of the 11 customer satisfaction categories in an independent State Government review of State Local Authorities.

Outcomes

The impact of this Constructive culture on improved customer service has been dramatic. As a result the organisation has been recognised in two independent customer service awards.

Key Strategies

Key tools used in this intervention include the Life Styles Inventory (LSI), which was used with all Directors and extensively in some divisions.

The Group Styles Inventory was also introduced as a key process to facilitate an understanding of the impact of individual behaviours in group interactions.

Figure 1: N=193

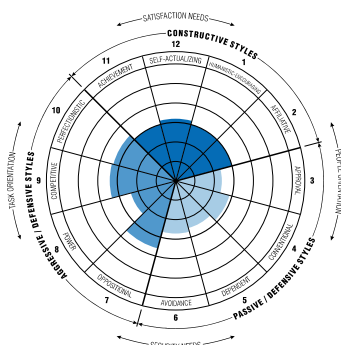


Figure 2: N=207

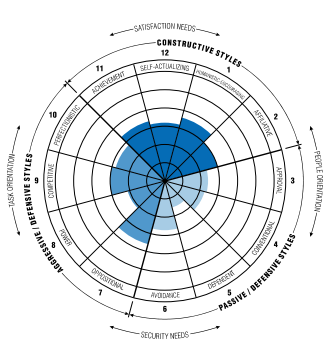
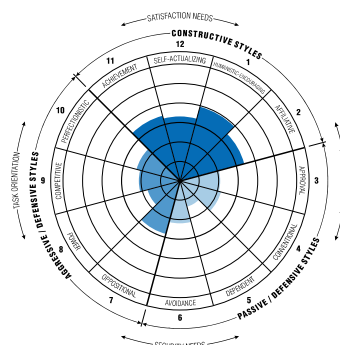


Figure 3: N=245

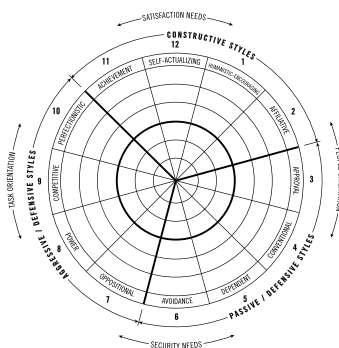


Creating a customer service culture in the public sector

These were implemented in conjunction with problem solving and decision-making simulations. A lot of work has been done internally on why the organisation needed to change and the benefits of a positive change process.

The morale, turnover rates and staff satisfaction levels are amongst the best measured by Human Synergistics.

About the Circumplex



Research & Development by
Robert A Cooke, Ph D and
J Clayton Lafferty, Ph D.
© Human Synergistics Int.

Humanistic-Encouraging (1 o'clock):

People are expected to be supportive, constructive, and open to influence in their dealings with one another.

Affiliative (2 o'clock):

People are expected to be friendly, cooperative, and sensitive to the satisfaction of their work group.

Approval (3 o'clock):

People are expected to agree with, gain the approval of, and be liked by others.

Conventional (4 o'clock):

People are expected to conform, follow the rules, and make a good impression.

Dependent (5 o'clock):

People are expected to do what they're told and clear all decisions with superiors.

Avoidance (6 o'clock):

People are expected to shift responsibilities to others and avoid any possibility for being blamed for mistakes.

Oppositional (7 o'clock):

People are expected to be critical, oppose the ideas of others, and make safe (but ineffectual) decisions.

Power (8 o'clock):

People are expected to take charge, control subordinates, and yield to the demands of superiors.

Competitive (9 o'clock):

People are expected to operate in a "win-lose" framework and work against (rather than with) their peers.

Perfectionistic (10 o'clock):

People are expected to avoid mistakes, keep track of everything, and work long hours to attain narrowly-defined objectives.

Achievement (11 o'clock):

People are expected to set challenging but realistic goals, establish plans to reach those goals, and pursue them with enthusiasm.

Self-Actualising (12 o'clock):

People are expected to enjoy their work, develop themselves, and take on new and interesting activities.



Auckland
10 York Street
PO Box 37-483
Telephone 09 309 9010
Facsimile 09 379 2263

Wellington
1 Willeston Street
PO Box 27-327
Telephone 04 470 7700
Facsimile 04 470 7711

Sydney
8 Windmill Street
Millers Point NSW 2000
Telephone 02 9271 5900
Facsimile 02 9247 6310

Melbourne
470 Collins Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000
Telephone 03 9675 0100
Facsimile 03 9629 3095