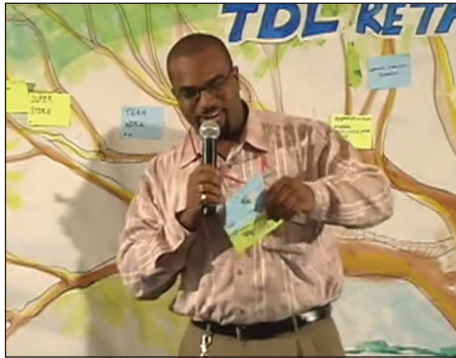




## Using an Inclusive, Participative, Strengths-based Approach to Achieve Customer Service Excellence



### The Challenge

Improving Customer Service excellence was a stated goal for one of the leading grocery chains in the Caribbean in the spring of 2005. Executives believed that a substantial gain in service performance would give their organization a significant competitive advantage. Encouraged by the inclusive, participative, strengths-based approach used in Appreciative Inquiry (a forerunner to People Powered Innovation), the chain's executives engaged Bernard Mohr and his colleagues to help them meet this challenge.

### The Solution

Senior leadership began by requesting a session for the chain's top forty managers. Work with these managers began that summer with a two-day session in which they answered the following questions:

- What does a highly participative, strengths-based approach to change look like and feel like?
- Under what conditions would a highly participative, strengths-based approach achieve the results we need?
- What results would have to be delivered by such an approach for it to be judged a success?

The managers experientially and dialogically explored how the Appreciative Inquiry process might be applied in their company. They conducted a cost/benefit analysis, made a "go" decision, and developed goals, resources, roles and parameters for the overall process.

### Some Results

By the end of the two-day top leader workshop, the group had experienced AI. They talked about the impact and approach to be used and discussed the process of organizational change among themselves and with the facilitation team. Participants had:

- Experienced and understood the highly participative, strengths-based approach of Appreciative Inquiry (part of what is now People Powered Innovation).
- Defined the conditions necessary to make such a highly participative, strengths-based approach work within their business environment – including the formation of an internal diagonal slice stakeholder planning team whose role was to customize the approach and to design the approach in such a way as to deliver the following results:

- a) A compelling vision that guides the entire business value chain on its journey to the next level of results.
- b) To mobilize the entire TDL Retail Division to take the leap to the next level, so as to meet and surpass the targets set by the TDL Group.
- c) Build the internal innovation and change capability that will make the transformation sustainable.
- d) Training of staff to develop and execute business transformation projects using the Appreciative Inquiry approach, tools, and techniques.
- e) Discover the strengths and root causes of success that provide the building blocks for taking the Retail Division to the next level.
- f) Direct participation of all staff in the development of a common vision that engages their 'heads, hearts, and hands.'
- g) Develop a set of strategic alternatives and recommendations that will make the achievement of the vision inevitable.
- h) Develop a set of tactical / functional plans, integrated programs, and a road map that lead to the delivery of the chosen strategies.
- i) Develop a set of measures and practices that enable organization learning and performance management.

### **The Bottom Line**

Once the top leaders defined the boundaries and experienced the process, results were successfully delivered by using a three-day, 500 person large group summit process held early in the fall, with facilitated follow-up over the course of the next few months.

Hi-Lo Grocers created a video to document their experience in using the strengths-based approach of Appreciative Inquiry. In their own words, they describe the steps taken and the successes realized by the project. Click here to watch the video: <https://vimeo.com/479143724/df8e9f99af>

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