

**From:** *Mr. Facilitator*      **Subject:** Focus Group Report

**Date:** March 31, 2003

**To:** *Names of various related managers etc*

Following is a report on the proceedings and outcomes of the focus group session conducted on March 25, 2003, in the *Edmonton Store*, from 1 to 2:30 p.m.

Participant comments were worded by consensus to emphasize “what” over “who” issues/concerns. The participants, who opted to exclude supervisory personnel from the session chose survey statements selected for dialogue. Both *Mr. Supervisor* and *Mr. Store Manager* were present at the opening of the session and demonstrated their desire for involvement in and support of this process. They then left the meeting after initial introductions.

**Statement # 65: I believe that *Name of our store* is a successful company.**

**Findings:**

1. Employees expressed appreciation for the foundation of the *name of our company* Core Business Values upon which the company operates and stated that they believe in them.
2. All agreed that they very much appreciate how our company is open and shares all of the relevant performance numbers which reflect how the employees efforts result in profitability (specific mention made to *Mr. CEO and Mr Operations Manager*).
3. All agreed that they are appreciative of *Our companies Name* policy to use process to discover the alignment between *Our companies Name* corporate “talk” and its customer service “walk.”
4. There were numerous comments made supporting how good employees feel when they have had opportunities to hear directly from customers about the professionalism of *Our companies Name* work.

**Recommendations:**

All agreed that Mr. *CEO, MRS VP* and those delivering developmental curriculum have been consistent in their message. They expressed a desire to see communication continue and look forward to more one on one performance dialogue.

**Statement # 42: Management decisions typically make good business sense and are effective in our company.**

**Findings:**

1. Participants expressed agreement that at times, management's decision to talk about work being done with customers, rather than have the technician actually doing the work communicate about what is being done, causes confusion and damages *Our companies Name* credibility, as explanations are inaccurate or in some instances, wrong.
2. All agreed that while management is aware of certain "high-dollar" tooling needed, that tooling has not been acquired while lower priority and lower dollar tooling is purchased without delay. Too frequently, technicians have to wander around between shops looking and/or waiting for specific tooling in order to complete work (adversely impacts ability to make flat rates).
3. All agreed that technicians are not encouraged to make observations and/or recommendations about how best to provide legendary customer service. Too frequently, decisions are made regarding work assessment, parts ordering and flat rate pricing before the technician who will be doing the job has had an opportunity to evaluate the job. All agreed that this isn't always necessary (it is perhaps the exception, rather than the rule). However, certain technician's levels of experience are greater than the experience of managers making such decisions – i.e., they have experienced performing this type of work in the past where the manager has had little or no experience.
4. All agreed that there are frequent occasions where they are told to do work/order parts which is/are not necessary. They agreed that they do not feel comfortable voicing their disagreement (technical opinion) if it differs from the decision made and therefore, simply do as they were told. They expressed concern over this type of situation running up costs as unneeded parts are ordered and later returned or restocked with a cost, and failures that could have been repaired at lower customer cost are not.
5. All agreed that fair treatment is not consistently applied, and cited Saturday working assignments as an example. There have been occurrences where the supervisor would ask some employees if they were available to work on Saturdays - and tell others that they *must* work.

**Recommendations:**

1. All suggested that when the supervisor is bringing a customer to the work area to see work that is being done; the technician doing the work should talk to the customer if that is a job outside the supervisor's area of expertise. All agreed that they have experienced too many times when they are tasked to "lay-out" the work (defective parts for example) and then must explain the work and progress to the supervisor, who then attempts to explain it to the customer, often misstating facts. Everyone agreed that this process slows

down work. They agreed that they should lay the work out, eliminate the step of familiarizing the supervisor so he can be the one who talks to the customer, and talk to the customer themselves. Some reported that they have had customers leave with the supervisor after his briefing, only to return and ask the technician for clarity. They all agreed that some customer contact training may be required and that their supervisor should know the status of work, but were insistent that the current process bogs down flat rate times and adversely affects the technician's self-esteem.

2. Costly yet essential tooling must be identified and a purchase plan detailing priorities and expected procurement dates should be completed. Possibilities for shared-shop utilization should be dialogued and be flexible to account for certain repairs that might require such tooling on an "announced timeframe/schedule" to allow for inter/intra shop application.
3. Technician specialization and talent should be documented and those determined to have experience exceeding that of the supervisors/managers on specific jobs should be involved in repair diagnostics and flat rate quoting. Such a practice will affect employee self-esteem by recognizing experience and talent and providing a more fulfilling work environment.
4. All agreed that some strategy for intra-departmental communication regarding status of in-shop work should be instituted. Too frequently, there is too little communication amidst often changing work assignments, resulting in technicians not being kept abreast of work status. If this information were shared more liberally, more experienced technicians would be better able to share their experience with those lesser qualified thus improving the likelihood of flat rates being met.
5. There was consensus that all employees should be treated fairly and consistently and any practices which might be construed as favoritism should be discontinued and avoided.

**Statement #25: Performance measurements in our work area are fair and accurate.**

**Findings:**

1. There was consensus that all dread performance evaluations because they are an overwhelmingly negative experience where nothing good is said (about you). Some comments might be seen as "okay," but there are few if any, positive, self-esteeming comments made.
2. All agreed that during performance evaluations, when disagreements regarding employee development levels surface, such disagreements are resolved by the supervisor and/or manager simply telling the employee that they (the employee), are wrong.
3. All agreed that the balance between demonstrating a caring attitude toward the employees and concern for production/performance is inappropriate. Communication about work is frequent and communication about employee issues/concerns is rare.

4. There was consensus that performance measurement by flat rate has only been explained and agreed upon recently (within the past month). Some evaluations of employee talent (A, B, C), which were revealed by the supervisor after the acquisition appear to be very biased. One employee others look to for guidance and consider an “A” was rated as “B,” when one less qualified was rated an “A.”
5. All agreed that employee treatment is sometimes viewed by the employee population as “preferential.”

### **Recommendations:**

1. All agreed that the supervisor needs to avail himself of *Our companies Name* leadership and managerial developmental training enabling him to learn new and necessary leader and manager skills. Emphasis should be placed upon changing verbal and non-verbal behaviors which detract from employee self-esteem. Employee behaviors not in alignment with expectations should be addressed as a behavior issue and not a personal or personality issue.
2. Same as above. All expressed agreement that disagreements in perceptions between employees and supervisor with regard to employee development level should be resolved through dialogue and should result in agreement. Unmet expectations resulting in lower supervisor perceptions should be countered with recommendations for employee improvement and include a timetable with tracking measurements built in to gauge progress toward goal achievement.
3. Same as above. All expressed agreement that the supervisor and management should make a more concerted effort to recognize and reward (when appropriate) good and/or sustained superior performance. There was an overwhelming expression that a little positive feedback will go a long way.”
4. Same as above. All agreed that quoting a standardized flat rate before allowing the technician who will be doing the work to weigh in is often going to result in flat rates not being met (in some cases), because the supervisor/manager are not as qualified as the technician(s). All agreed that this need not be a rule, but as a exception in response to certain customer needs or, for unusually “involved” suspicions of failure causes, getting the technician involved will be better for all stakeholders.
5. Same as #1 above.

### **Facilitator Conclusions:**

*Mr. Foreman* must be involved in developmental opportunities as soon as is possible. Further, his request for coaching/mentoring with regard to leadership and managerial skill development should be supported. Communication between *Mr. Foreman* and his employee group must improve and for a time, perhaps should involve *Mr. Formans Supervisor* as a participant or observer, allowing him to share his knowledge, experiences and skills as a leader in support of *Mr. Foreman* efforts. This employee group is aware that their

collective and individual styles have to-date, not made [Mr. Foreman](#) job any easier. They indicated their awareness that they can not select their boss, and must demonstrate their willingness to allow [Mr. Foreman](#) time to improve his skills as they too, must concentrate on improving their own. [Mr. Foreman](#) has asked that I work with him as a mentor/coach and I have freed time to accommodate his request.

This report should be shared with/among all addressees in a controlled setting, collected thereafter and considered “professional confidential,” and protected against indiscriminate disclosure.

[Mr. Facilitator](#)