In Other Words, Results!

Leadership Development Excellence at the CPF Board

Since 1955, the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board has administered a social security savings plan to all employed Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents to enable their financial security in retirement. Their vision is to be a world-class social security organization dedicated to ensuring the secure retirement of all Singaporeans.

The CPF Board accomplishes their vision by offering comprehensive and effective CPF schemes to their customers, by making sure those customers are well-informed, and by establishing cost-effective business operations through competent, engaged employees.

Over the years, the CPF Board has recruited capable people from diverse backgrounds to serve at all levels of the organization. The leadership challenge faced by CPF Board managers in the new economy is in leading a diverse group of knowledge workers of different age groups and cultural backgrounds towards a common purpose. Managers and executives can sometimes be confronted with new employees with very different outlooks. Inexperienced young executives might be called upon to lead their teams and manage the workforce.

Derek Tan, Chief Human Resource Officer of the CPF Board, said, "People have to learn to adapt quickly, unlearn what they knew before and relearn in new ways because capable leadership requires learning adaptability and is the key to an excellent organization. This is what drives results at the CPF Board."

In CPF Board's 2008 employee opinion survey, the supervisors' index, which measures employee satisfaction with their immediate supervisors, declined from the level it once was in 2006.

The supervisors' index shows how favorably employees view their supervisors by compiling the results of several survey questions. The survey asks the employees how good their supervisor is at

building teamwork, responding to suggestions for change, delegating responsibility, and resolving conflicts, among others.

According to Linda Chan, Senior Deputy Director of Capability & Organisation Development of the CPF Board, this downturn in the supervisors' index was largely due to the period of rapid growth and expansion experienced by the board in those two years. Leadership training became a necessity to ensure staff felt supported and were effectively engaged in a team.

The CPF Board worked with the NBOGroup to provide a customized *Supervisory Management Skills* program for all supervisors and line managers, where leadership goals are aligned with values and leadership philosophy of the organization.

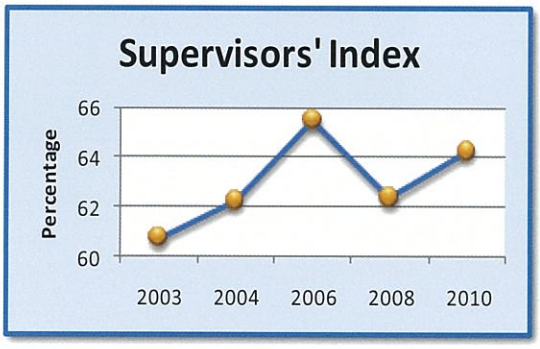
Senior Manager, Soann Chng and Assistant Manager, Tham Chien Ping from the Capability & Organisational Development Department of the CPF Board worked closely with the NBOGroup to tailor the program according to the needs of the

Board. They interviewed key managers to discover the real issues faced by managers, and turned those issues over to the NBOGroup to be implemented as part of the training program.

In each two-day *Supervisory Management Skills* program conducted by the NBOGroup, representatives from CPF Board's Learning and Development department as well as Human Resources department were present to share exactly how the program fit into CPF Board's leadership framework.

The NBOGroup also developed a special program for IT professionals who were either supervisors or team leaders, and who were responsible for leading culturally diverse groups of people. *Leading Effective Teams* teaches participants how to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, how to understand others' personalities and their own, and how to strengthen relationships through negotiation. "Even higher level managers wanted to attend the course!" said Linda Chan. "That's how popular it was!"

In the second quarter of 2010, the CPF Board conducted another employee opinion survey. Everyone was delighted to see a two percentage point improvement in participants' rating of their supervisors. Significant improvement had been made!



The questions related to the supervisors' index in the employee opinion survey were on skills that included taking action on suggestions for change from staff, building teamwork, motivating, delegating, and resolving conflict. In the 2008 survey, of the top ten most favorably rated items on the survey, none were related to supervisors. And of the top ten least favorably rated items, five were related to supervision. But in 2010, four of the ten most favorable items were related to the quality of supervisors while none of the least favorably rated items were on supervisors.

Chief HR Officer, Derek Tan, remarked that it is "gratifying to see the results of the training initiatives. Learning took place when I see an observable change in a person."

Participants were pleased with the results of the training programs. They gave an average rating of 4.5 out of 5 in areas of training effectiveness, training methodology, and quality of trainers. "People could identify with the program content," said Linda Chan. "The scenarios were real and applicable, and the participants found it very beneficial for their work."

According to Chien Ping: "Our partnership has gone beyond the given contractual engagement in training programs or workshops that we have. It is a relationship that goes into building trust, belief and support for each other."

By early 2010 the supervisors and managers at the CPF Board had made radical improvement in goal setting, delegating, coaching, and empowering their direct reports. In doing so, they were able to change employees' attitudes, influence their behavior, and effectively motivate employees.

This increase in effective leadership is attributable to the CPF Board's diversified approach to leadership. In this way, the CPF Board is bringing about their vision to be a world-class organization by investing in the development of their employees.

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