

CASE 14: THE ANSWER IS TRAINING

The Story

The Department of Aging Canadians has recently decided to train 1100 of its line agents in Risk Management. This initiative is aimed at ensuring that clients of the Department get involved in decisions in which they are stakeholders, and at encouraging departmental employees to improve their consultation with clients and their documentation of decisions.

The 1100 employees were trained over an 18 month period, in the five-step decision model. Fairly early in the training, organizers began to receive the feedback that the model was too complex; that line staff would never use it; that decisions were intuitive anyway; that their supervisors weren't interested in receiving the documentation on their decisions; and that opposition was building to the use of the process. In fact, several course participants had gone off and begun developing an alternative and competing process. This was troublesome for senior management, because they intended that everyone use the same process, which was founded on a nationally recognized standard and so they were casting around for solutions to what they saw as an emerging problem.

The Intervention

Training is not implementation. Giving people the skills to do something without giving them the context to perform in will quite simply negate the training effort and the intent of senior management. Senior Management and organizers need to balance their focus on training and implementation strategy that:

- Communicates the intent of the new process to all users and defines the context for usage;
- Identifies the management expectation for the use of the process, e.g. "All risk decisions will be submitted in Risk Management format";
- Ensures that the managers of users are fully committed to implementation of the process and can act as models, mentors and coaches;
- Names champions of the process, e.g. early adopters who use the process effectively;
- Monitor's usage, and communicates success stories.