

Plan for a Local Action Think Tank
Improving Performance and Retention Through Cross-Level Problem Solving

Carnegie Mellon Center for University Outreach

A Strategy for Change

The Think Tank does not promise management miracles, but it is showing itself to be a productive strategy for two of the toughest problems in culture change:

1. Creating a community of problem solvers
 - By supporting a substantive, intercultural, cross-level dialogue about performance
 - By generating collaboratively constructed options for action in response to local problems
2. Assessing assets and change in decision making
 - By giving front line workers more reflective control over their own decision making
 - By initiating a staff-owned assessment of a facility's problem-solving assets and patterns of change.

The Process

Carnegie Mellon's Center for University Outreach will support workplaces and communities interested in holding Local Action Think Tanks by training facilitators in the processes, strategies, and technologies used in the Think Tank process. For more information about the Think Tank process, visit the Think Tank website at (Ben, link to front page of website).

Holding a series of local action Think Tanks will:

- Engage the administration, management, full-time and part time staff in the problem-solving process,
- Develop a set of practical options for improving performance, and
- Track the implementation of those options and what it takes to produce change.

Engaging in the Decision Maker's Journey book, as a follow-up to the Local Action Think Tank, will:

- Increase problem solving capacity in a way that links workplace and worklife decision making, and
- Assess participants' growth in assets and reflective decision making at 3 and 6 month intervals

Developing the process and tools for a staff-owned, site-based assessment can track changes in problem-solving assets of both an individual and that person's working group.

The Implementation of a Local Action Think Tank Can Have Important Results

- A much needed indication of respect for the expertise of front line workers, linked with high expectations for professional performance
- A space for staff to engage in personal and professional development based on learning and problem solving.
- A growth in workplace and worklife assets and in reflective decision making skill.