

## **Research Results**

### **Workforce Effectiveness**

**Industry:** Telecommunications

**Organization:** A large telecommunications company headquartered in the southwestern United States.

### **NEED**

Engineers within the Network Operations and Network Maintenance groups of work in tandem to forecast, install, and maintain phone line capacity for business customers in and around a metropolitan area. In seeking to improve the efficiency of this integrated process and to improve customer satisfaction, the Network Operations and Network Maintenance groups contacted the company's Center for Learning to help identify areas for improvement.

As part of their efforts to diagnose the problem and develop a solution, a performance consultant within the Center for Learning sought the assistance of Avid Learner, Inc.. Working together, the performance consultant and the Avid Learner consultants met with the engineers to identify the types of behaviors needed to increase efficiencies and enhance customer satisfaction.

The behaviors identified as critical were as follows:

1. Demonstrate a marked commitment to solving problems with appropriate levels of involvement.
2. Determine and state desired outcomes prior to starting tasks.
3. Formulate appropriate plans based on desired outcomes.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the customer's perspective.
5. Demonstrate collaboration and teamwork skills by proactively offering expertise to colleagues.
6. Proactively report problems and manage the process to create a solution.



## 7. Demonstrate an understanding of the big picture.

Together, the consultants decided that the How to Be a Star atWork<sup>®</sup> program was the solution to meet the engineers' needs. Each of the critical behaviors is addressed by one or more of the specific high-performance strategies targeted in How to Be a Star atWork<sup>®</sup>.

## RESEARCH

How to Be a Star atWork<sup>®</sup> was implemented in six sessions, preceded by a half-day orientation sessions. A total of 20 engineers from across the two Network groups participated in the program. Participants and their managers each completed survey measures before and after the How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup> program.

These measures were:

### Behaviors

Participating engineers were presented with a detailed list of 35 behaviors related to the desired behavioral changes described earlier; five specific behaviors were presented for each of the seven overall behaviors. The engineers rated themselves on each specific behavior, along a seven-point scale, in two ways:

- How **often** they perform each behavior in their work, given opportunities to do so. (7 = Nearly Always; 1 = Almost Never)
- How **effectively** they perform each of the behaviors in their work (7 = Extremely Effective; 1 = Not at all effective)

The participating engineers rated themselves on these behaviors two weeks prior to the How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup> orientation session. A second set of ratings was collected approximately 45-60 days after the completion of the final How to Be a Star atWork<sup>®</sup> session. In addition, managers rated **how often** the participants performed this same set of behaviors prior to and following the How to Be a Star atWork<sup>®</sup> program.

### Organizational Commitment

Participants also completed a brief survey designed to measure their level of commitment to the overall organization. This survey focused on the organization as a whole and measured the degree to which participants were proud of and committed to Southwestern



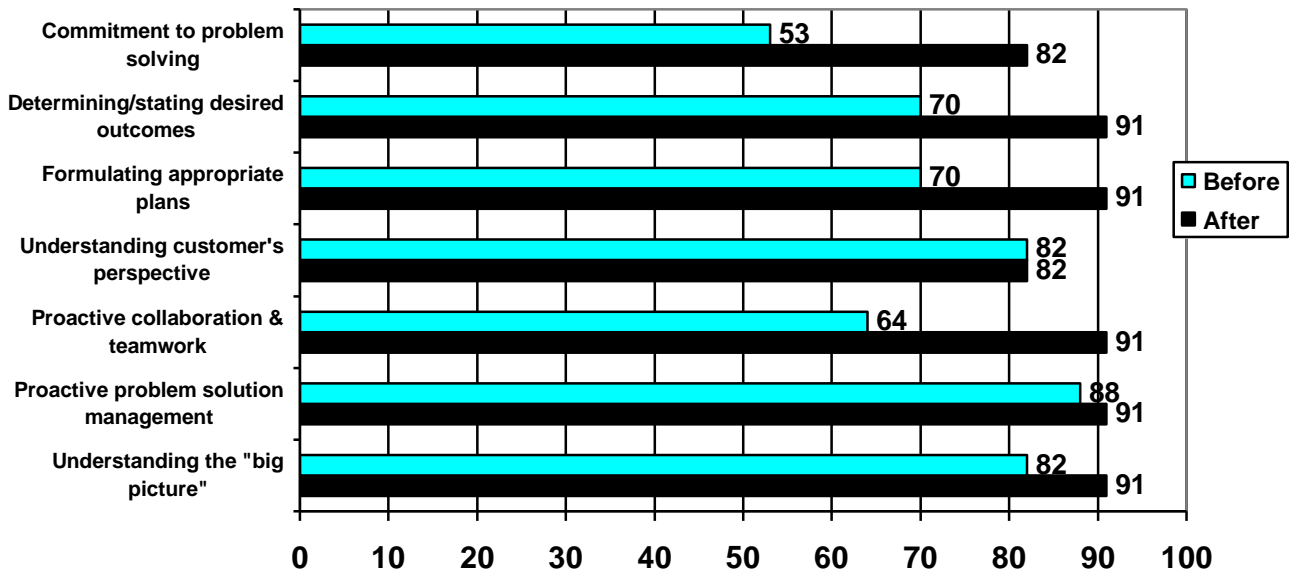
Bell. Responses were measured along a six-point scale (6 = Strongly Agree; 1 = Strongly Disagree). This brief survey was administered before and after the program, along with the behavior surveys.

## RESULTS

*Participants are performing the critical behaviors **more often** following the completion of *How to Be a Star at Work*<sup>®</sup>.*

As Figure 1 illustrates, engineers reported a significant increase (as much as 27%) in the frequency of performing the critical behaviors that had been targeted by the program. This increase was seen across all but one of the behaviors (which the engineers were already performing quite frequently). Participants were likely to have identified more opportunities to perform these behaviors after having completed the program. Helping knowledge workers more readily identify situations where these high-performance strategies may be applied is one of the primary goals of the *How to Be a Star at Work*<sup>®</sup> program.

**Figure 1. Percent engineers performing each behavior Often, Very Often, or Nearly Always before and after Star@Work\***



*Participants saw an increase in opportunities to perform the critical behaviors following completion of the How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup> program.*

The engineers were given the option to respond “Does Not Apply to Me” to behaviors on the survey which they felt they had no opportunity to perform in their work. The following figure presents the frequency with which this topic was selected before and after the program survey.

Percent engineers selecting “Does Not Apply to Me” for behavior frequency of performance items



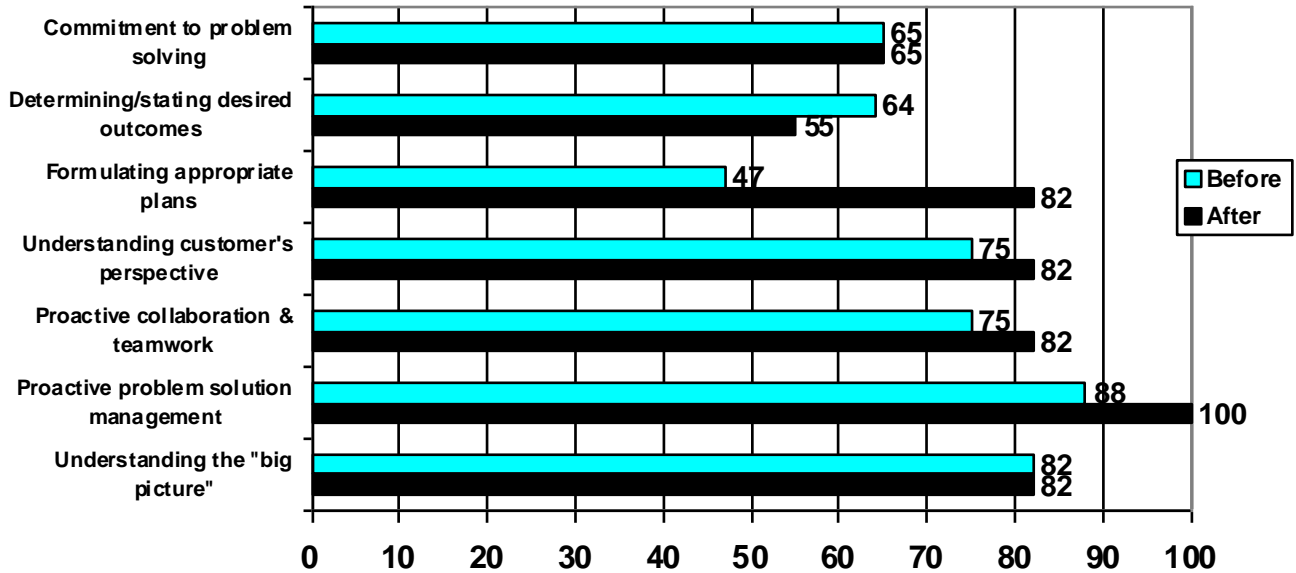
Obviously, the engineers were much less likely to report that one of the target behaviors did not apply to them in their job after having completed How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup>. This change is likely to be due to the awareness that How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup> instills with regard to finding and, when necessary, creating opportunities to demonstrate high performance behaviors.

*Participants are performing the critical behaviors **more effectively** following the completion of the How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup> program.*

Engineers also reported significant increases (as much as 35%) in effectively performing four of the seven behaviors. (See Figure 2.) Participants were particularly more effective at “formulating appropriate plans based on desired outcomes” following the program. Less than half of the engineers reported performing this type of behavior effectively before the program. After the program more than 80% of the participating engineers reported effective performance in this area. Increases in effectiveness were also reported for “demonstrating an understanding of the customer’s perspective” and “demonstrating collaboration and teamwork skills by proactively offering expertise to colleagues.”



**Figure 2. Percent engineers performing each behavior Effectively, Very Effectively, or Extremely Effectively before and after Star@ Work\***

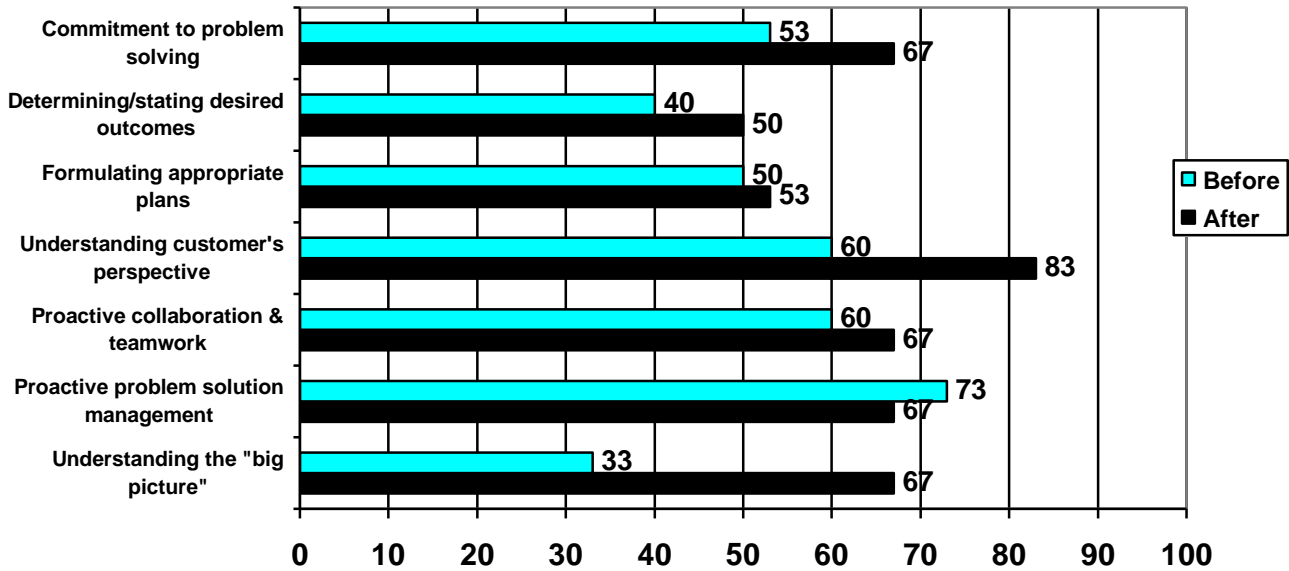


*Managers also reported an increase in the frequency with which participants are performing the behaviors following How to Be a Star at Work®.*

Managers reported an increase in participants' frequency of performance for six of the seven behaviors. (See Figure 3). These increases were particularly noteworthy for "understanding the big picture" (34% increase) and "demonstrating an understanding of the customer's perspective" (23% increase). Increases of greater than 10% were also reported for "demonstrating a marked commitment to solving problems with appropriate levels of involvement" and "determining/stating desired outcomes prior to starting tasks."



**Figure 3. Manager ratings of participant performance before and after Star@Work**



Note: Percent managers rating participant frequency of behavior performance as Often, Very Often, or Nearly Always

The ratings reported by the participants themselves consistently indicated increases in performance frequency and effectiveness. The participants recognized that they were performing these behaviors more often and that their performance was having a positive impact. Further, the managers consistently reported increases in the frequency of participants' behavior performance.

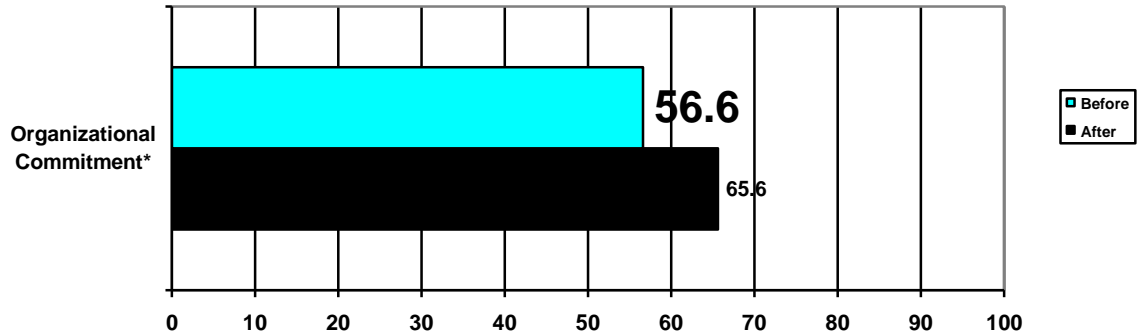
*Participants reported higher organizational commitment following How to Be a Star at Work®.*

The increase in organizational commitment is another encouraging illustration of the success of the How to Be Star at Work® program. The organizational commitment survey measures facets such as loyalty to the organization, pride in the organization, and



willingness to go beyond normal expectations to ensure organizational success. The How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup> experience quite likely had a positive impact on the increases reported following the program. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4.



## CONCLUSIONS

Specific behaviors that were crucial to the effective coordination of the two Network groups were measured before and after the How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup> implementation. Clearly, engineers from both groups reported that they were not only performing these critical behaviors more often, but were much more effective in their performance following completion of the program. Participating engineers were also much more aware of opportunities to perform critical behaviors after completing the Star@Work<sup>®</sup> program. Finally, participants reported much higher levels of organizational commitment following the program than they had prior to the program. In addition to performing the critical behaviors, engineers also reported that they are now better able to recognize unproductive behavior and take responsibility to provide feedback for improvement when the opportunity arises.

Managers also recognized the increase in the engineers' frequency of behavior performance following How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup>. In addition to the day-to-day behavior changes instilled by the How to Be a Star at Work<sup>®</sup> program, the engineers have implemented a new forecasting strategy to alleviate the problem of customers exceeding capacity too quickly. Although the long-term impact of this strategy is not yet apparent,



overloads and blocks on installed networks have decreased significantly in the first two months of implementation.

