

How it makes a difference

What would we unlock if we focus on what we do well together, in order to tackle what we don't?



What is Starfish?

Starfish is a simple, innovative and cost effective way to tap into the knowledge, experience and passion that people across your organisation have and make things - for example, raising productivity, improving quality, boosting customer service or making cost savings.

Starfish is based on the assumption that the people who really understand your business – the people that know how results are achieved and what makes things happen – are your employees. Not just the senior managers – the people that do the job, day-to-day, on the shop floor or in the office, factory or call centre. In modern organisations it seems that one of the side effects of effective management has been to develop structures and cultures where peoples' ideas and innovations get trapped. Despite all our best intentions for knowledge management, do we really feel that we are fully benefiting from our workforce's vast collective experience?

Starfish opens up conversations about what makes the business work by getting everyone talking about the great things they do and the simple changes that could make a difference. Carefully guided, this process can achieve a striking impact on performance and organisational culture in a very short space of time – days and weeks, rather than months and years.

How does Starfish work?

The Questions of Difference Starfish process is highly flexible to meet your particular needs and context, involving:

- Consultation to understand the strengths and achievements of your organisation, and the challenges currently being addressed
- Identification of the key themes for staff engagement (such as quality or customer service)
- Crafting questions and piloting a conversation brief (avoiding jargon) to prompt conversations that will make a difference
- Design of a simple process to enable everyone to pair up with one other person – possibly someone from a different location or function – to take half an hour or so to have a conversation guided by this brief
- Recording little or no data. The participants identify for themselves the actions they will take (actions that require no additional management permission or resources). In addition, a simple process captures ideas that deserve to be cascaded to a wider audience
- Key measures of success are monitored so the impact of the process is determined
- The process can be repeated over a period of months (possibly connecting people with new colleagues) to turn the spotlight on other challenges and build on the momentum established

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How can I ask my question in a way that feeds the relationship? That gives it life?



Experience has demonstrated that Starfish brings many benefits – impacting on efficiency, motivation and culture. Employees are reminded of the things they do when they are working at their best. Innovations that make a real difference are widely implemented. Perhaps most importantly, people recognise that their managers value their opinions and experience and re-engage with the organisation as though they were new recruits as a result.

What impact could Starfish have for you?

One global Bank used the Starfish programme to get 2,500 staff in conversation about what was working within one operational area and what ideas could be put into practice to improve business performance. Using this affirmative approach, Starfish began with a leadership programme team that recognised fast, successful business results were dependent on engaging staff and management at all levels of the organisation. As people faced complex challenges, it was vital to create a nimble and dynamic process that transformed business opportunities and engaged staff in an affirmative way, creating a climate for innovation and quality improvement.

One key question for every member of staff to consider was, “What action can you take to improve our performance tomorrow that requires no additional permission or budget?”

The outcomes wildly exceeded all expectations around improving staff morale and overall business performance. As a result of the Starfish programme:

- Customer Satisfaction increased by 30% - the highest ever scores
- Fraud fell from £6.0 to £1.2 million – UK industry leader
- 1,557 ideas were generated, 387 of which made cost savings of £726,500 within a year
- Staff awareness of customer service increased, as levels of empowerment and morale soared
- Senior management team increased its visibility
- Effective inter-departmental collaboration was boosted and customer complaints sent directly to the executive fell by 37%