

Making RBF part of Organizational DNA: A Case Study

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I. A Successful Experiment

All organizations strive for results but most do not offer their employees an organizing frame or structured set of skills to achieve desired results. Between 2008-2015, a Seattle-based nonprofit, Building Changes¹, experimented with using Results Based Facilitation (RBF)² as an organizing frame and set of skills.

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The experiment with RBF produced progressive skill development as documented by annual self-evaluation and observation. In addition, staff and community members reported that the use of RBF skills contributed to making progress on agency and community results.

In 2016 Building Changes deemed the experiment a success and included building results leadership skills as a key component in its 2016-2020 Strategic Business Plan.

II. Using Multiple Change Strategies Over Time



The experiment began with RBF training. Overtime, the training was reinforced by multiple strategies including the provision of access to materials and tools; senior leadership modeling the skills; skill assessment and development becoming part of daily work; linking RBF to individual and agency performance goals; and, providing ongoing skill refreshers. A combination of formal and informal authority contributed to RBF becoming part of the daily planning, decision-making and communication practices of senior and middle managers and the norm of behavior for all staff.

¹ Alice Shobe served as Executive and Deputy Director of Building Changes 2008-2015. Sarah Rajski was first trained in RBF in 2011 and continues this work as Senior Manager at Building Changes. Sarah and Alice are both qualified RBF coaches and facilitators.

² Results Based Facilitation (RBF) is a specific, hands-on method to support people to move into action and get different and better results in their meetings and conversations. This method was created by Jolie Bain Pillsbury, PhD and is documented in her Results Based Facilitation Books: Introduction, 1 and 2. The RBF method is useful in one-on-one conversations, small groups, and large groups whether you are a meeting participant or meeting facilitator.

III. Formal Authority

To reinforce practice, the senior leader team used their formal authority to make changes to the organization's planning, budgeting, and human resources processes from 2008-2016. They:

- Framed RBF as the “how” to implement a new strategic plan and achieve ambitious goals to significantly reduce family homelessness in Washington State.
- Used budget authority to make investments that accelerated adoption³.
- Formalized the role of RBF coach as part of a staff person's job description.
- Added annual RBF skill self-assessment and development goal setting for all staff.
- Instituted RBF overview to new staff orientation.
- Ensured that in the first six months of employment all staff acquired RBF Foundation Skills.
- Prioritized and displayed on posters 3 RBF skills per year for organization wide application.
- Included 20-minute skill refreshers in of regularly scheduled “all staff” meetings⁴.
- Created a facilitation kit in a wheeled bag for staff to check out for meeting preparation.
- Added 20-minute RBF Skill Introductions to Quarterly Board Meetings

IV. Informal Authority

Employees throughout the organization were given opportunities to adopt, use, model the use of and encourage others to use RBF in daily work. They:

- Used Situation Behavior Impact (SBI) feedback after meetings to focus skill development.
- Encouraged all staff to have an RBF development plan;
- Modeled and labeled use of skills in meetings;
- Co-facilitated internal meetings to create practice and mentoring opportunities;
- Rotated co-facilitation of staff meetings to create practice opportunities;
- Created an agency agenda template based on RBF agenda format.

V. Adoption and Spread

These implementation strategies led to the adoption and spread of RBF internally and externally.

Implementation strategy	Contribution to Adoption and Spread
Leadership team attends a 2-day RBF 101 ⁵ workshop.	RBF enactments and interrupt coaching made the training feel different and more relevant to real work.
Prioritized RBF 101-301 training for staff working with external partners.	Staff in external roles appreciated the value of RBF when it helped them succeed in their high-stakes work with partners.
Staff initiated brown bag luncheons to support each other in preparing for meetings and debriefing their use of RBF.	High voluntary participation in meetings that included a mix of peer-to-peer consultation and skills refreshers provided by more seasoned staff accelerated skill development.
Internal meetings became practice RBF laboratories.	Created safe place for practice and offered more opportunity for risk taking/learning by employees at all levels.
Expectation set to use RBF agenda format for all internal and external meetings.	RBF agenda format adopted by partners because ‘something different happened in Building Changes’ meetings’.
A few skills prioritized each year to make RBF less overwhelming.	Rapid increase in competency was visible internally and externally and contributed to spread.
Published annual assessment of staff RBF competency.	Staff could see progress in self and agency and celebrate learning and progress.

³ Invested in internal staff becoming RBF qualified and MBTI certified and allocating staff time to skill development.

⁴ First year prioritized the following Foundation Skills: using B/ART, 3R agendas, action commitments and synthesizing.

⁵ RBF 101 develops foundational skills; RBF 201 & 301 develop the advanced skills.