

AIFT Facilitator Certification Practicum Report

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AIFT Dates: 2010 August & 2011 July

Location: Las Vegas, (Trainer Kathy Becker & Charles R Miller)
San Diego USA (Kathy Becker & Kay Weiss)

Client: Deer Industry NZ (DINZ) & NZ Deer Farmers Association
Governing body & Deer Farmers Advocacy Organisation

Definition

First Contact

The initial meeting with the Production Manager for DINZ was based on a need they had for a facilitated 2 day Strategy gathering, we decided a cross section of stakeholders & using the AI process would benefit this group of normally contentious stakeholders who tended to be problem focused, detail bound & slow to respond to change. A 2-day Strategic Advance was organized with an invitation to a cross section of stakeholders.

Positive Topic

I explored through email & a further meeting with the Production Manager what focus the positive topic would take. I noticed the organization did not have a clear Vision or Mission statement on their website or in their literature. I also had an introduction & opportunity to speak with the stakeholders on a conference call, which further clarified the need for a clear Vision & Mission statement. In conversation we decided to focus on creating a Vision of what the Deer Industry looks like in 2020 using the best of the past to inform this vision.

Description of the attending Stakeholders

A successful Deer farming leader, The Deer Farmer Association Committee, A retired ex Committee member & Deer farmer, The Deer Industry Production manager, A Rural Bank lender, A Velvet exporter. Total = 10 people.

Pre gathering email to Core group

I asked the Core group to answer 2 questions (see attachment "Email Appreciative Question also attached was the Vision Agenda")
The agenda was to form a core group that would develop a Mission Statement, Vision Statement, & Strategies to move the Vision forward.

They received this information 2 weeks before the strategic gathering as a way to introduce AI & help facilitate the strategic gathering. They also received a link to the AI commons as a way to help understand the AI process.

This pre Strategic gathering work helped the stakeholders focus their attention on the Best moments in the Deer Industry & to understand the process of AI, which made the gathering more productive.

Strategic Gathering of the Core Group

11:00am I began the session with an activity asking the participants to create a rope map of NZ then go to the places where;

1. You have your first fond memory & what is it?
2. Where you first became passionate about Deer farming & why?
3. Where your heart is now & why?
4. Where you would like to explore but have not been before & why?

This leads into a conversation about the past stories we have & how they influence our present & future, also what a positive question sounds like.

11:30am: All gathered around a table & on a journey to create context & to understand the basic process of AI in this context. I used a power point to guide the day (see Deer Industry Strategic Vision PP, slides 1-12)

1pm-6pm: AI interview & group share (see attached "AI interview Qs")
(see also PP slides 13-28)

The progression basically followed the PP Slides and Vision Guide work book (attached) with a finish time of 6pm.

Starting the next day at 8.30am was key as the group needed to finish by 2pm, I had my doubts that they would reach the detailed micro inquiry stage so kept them in the Helicopter view for most of the day in order to complete the larger Vision, Mission statements & implementation strategy.

Facilitation

My main facilitation challenge was to get the group out of the detail, which inevitably lead them into a problem focus, the positive questions that helped them reframe this were based around what do you really want? & where is the opportunity? The diverse range of stakeholder perspectives were increasingly shared with "open minds" as the group became more comfortable working with an Appreciative lens.

The modified Interview Guide: attached as "AI interview".

Interview method

The Deer Industry interviews were conducted 1 with 1 in an open garden environment on a sunny day. Each interview was given an hour's time with 15mins to check out & clarify meaning. Once the groups discovered & shared the positive core a second interview took them into the 2020 vision. This created a big picture of a preferred future based on the positive core.

Life-Giving Forces (see attachment "LGFs")

Social interaction

Vision Then and Now

Confidence in industry

Communication & Information rich

Open minded all issues open for discussion

Capability of farmers

Professionalism of leadership, flat hierarchy

Passion, passion, passion, Buzz Excitement

Part of a large family

Camaraderie

Time commitment people give for all

Healthy product produced from grass

DINZ and DFA working well together

Net working between branch and committees

Practical experiences

People within industry punching above their weight

Good leadership that understands farmer's needs

Good local communication from farmers to executives and board

Approachability of DINZ staff

Belief in products

The Provocative Propositions

became their Mission & Vision Statements:

NZDFA Vision:

1. Realising growth –Sustainable Futures

2. A strong Visionary association-Driving future aspirations

NZDFA Mission: A strong visionary Association that inspires profitable growth for a sustainable future for all deer farmers, through effective leadership representation and communication

Some of the Strategic intentions identified

NZDFA Core Business Priorities.

1. Add value to membership through a commitment to understand their issues & represent these effectively where needed: consult / report.
2. Monitor, advise, direct levy investment through board appointments & 2-way communication.
3. Partner industry initiatives like PIP as the public face of productivity. Enhance political / bureaucratic relationships with the ministry, MPI, RC etc

The Strategic Intentions

Due to a short time frame & the depth of exploration into the Vision & Mission statements the group decided on a strategy of taking a month break to percolate their thoughts, this suited everyone so a date was fixed to reconvene & the group.

Follow up Session - Strategic Intentions

The follow up session happened a month after the initial AI. The agenda for this session was sent out in the form of positive questions a week before the gathering, these questions were formed by the Production manager & reflected the groups desire for a positive format. (Attachment: Template for 2020 NZDFA Vision)

This session focused on creating Strategic Intentions around the priorities of what is most important, when will these happen & who will action them. To guide this session I used a power point (attached as Deer Industry Strategic Vision Follow up)

A priority for this session was to develop a strategy to promote the vision at the next AGM; this was achieved with the committee president electing to be the spokes person & being backed by the whole team on the day. The wording of this presentation & a positive intention was also developed. NB: I am not yet in the possession of these notes as they are still being formatted by the organization.

Continued Follow up & Support for the organization.

I am in email contact with the organization re their ongoing development of the strategic intentions; this includes a face to face meeting with the Production Manager to develop further support networks.

Once the AGM happens the committee & I, will meet via a conference call to share what worked well & where to from here.

Appreciative Impressions:

What did you wish for in the inquiry?

To bring a group of stakeholders together in an appreciative environment & to take they're thinking out of the status quo & into a place of innovation.

What did you learn from the inquiry about yourself and your facilitation?

The opportunity to facilitate an organization at a national level lifted my preparation, research & engagement to a new level.

In facilitating this inquiry I realized my greatest role was to keep the focus at a big picture level, to encourage desires & to allow exploration of possibilities through a balance of chaos & control. This was a challenging group with a mix of political egos & strong willed, opinionated stakeholders; I learned how powerful the AI process is at creating positive communication & allowing for new ways of thinking.

I am glad that I have waited to submit this example of my AI facilitation as it best reflects what I have learned, albeit a bit late I feel my earlier facilitations to not be as well delivered.

What was your "personal best" experience related to facilitating the inquiry?

Seeing the positive group engagement at multiple dimensions to become confident with clear communication & the ability to reframe problems into opportunities.

This happened through out the initial gathering & was reinforced in the follow up session when the group flowed back into an appreciative way of being. I realized how the group had learned to be Appreciative inquirers & how this would be the greatest benefit for the organization long term, the Vision, Mission, & Strategic intentions would continue to evolve with the AI process now learned. The example of this was for the follow up session the Production Manager decided to use positive questions to send out as the agenda. (attachment: Template for 2020 NZDFA Vision)

**The Deer Industry is happy to be contacted on,
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Submitted 28th Oct 2012 to: Kathy@companyofexperts.net