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YWCA of Fort Worth

The YWCA of Fort Worth “helps transitionally homeless women gain the skills to become self-sufficient.” Whether they are escaping an abusive relationship or have aged out of foster care, the YWCA Fort Worth is there to act as a stepping stone to successful living for these special women. Consisting of four staff members and their supervisor, the Development Committee is responsible for raising funds, increasing its donor base and recruiting volunteers.

The Development Committee of the YWCA loved their professional work and liked each other a great deal on a personal level, however they had identified that a lack of focus and poorly defined professional boundaries were causing unmet goals and missed targets. Discussing performance evaluations was difficult due to the friendships involved and not wanting to hurt others’ feelings. On the positive side, the team was very creative and appreciated the differences within their teammates.

In the first activity, the team was asked to motivate a horse to move from one spot in the arena to another without touching the horse. The horse represented a donor and completion of the task represented receipt of a large donation. The entire team had an “aha moment” when the horses reflected to them “exactly what happens in the office.” With new clarity about the problem, the solution became readily apparent. The team changed tactics, harnessed their creativity and got the results they were looking for.

The team returned to the office armed with an action plan formulated in the arena. It became apparent through debriefing how ineffectively they were operating. With new understanding of how they could improve their processes and procedures, changes were implemented that saved the organization thousands of dollars. In following up three months later, they reported that what they had learned in the arena had indeed been incorporated into daily office life and “the metaphor of moving the horse had become a part of their spoken culture.” They were impressed with how effective the session had been and how quickly things changed for the better.