

# The Oxygen Committee: New Employees, New Ideas

November 2012

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Park**

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## CASE STUDY TOPICS ADDRESSED

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### Select the relevant categories for this Case Study

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## IDEA/PROGRAM/PROJECT DETAILS

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**Intent of the idea/program/project:** The Oxygen Committee: The purpose of the committee is to learn from employees who have worked for the city one-year or less. We call it the Oxygen Committee because we believe as new employees that they bring a “breath of fresh air” to our organization.

**Innovative Characteristics:** Meeting with staff who had worked with us for less than one year and getting their advice. We meet twice a year for 75 minutes. Dialogue focuses on two questions: What are doing right that we should keep doing and build upon? What is missing that, if it were present, would help us become a better workplace? We wrap it up with a film about the culture in St. Louis Park. Then we follow with a WELCOME BREAK so all employees can stop in and have a healthy snack and meet the new employees.

**Resources Committed, if any:** Time for the facilitator (city staff) to schedule, run the meetings, and follow-through with appropriate people after the meeting.

**Organizational Savings, if any:** None.

**Anticipated Outcomes:** When we started we didn’t have a specific outcome other than to truly listen to our new employees.

**Actual Outcomes:** This far exceeded our expectations. We continue to be amazed at suggestions. They aren’t big expensive ideas. And, they are the kind of ideas that strengthens our culture of learning, anticipating, innovating and adapting.

**Obstacles Encountered:** This was a new way of doing business. The Oxygen Committee consists of all layers in the city. It wasn’t so much of an obstacle. And, it was important to make sure it was done in an inclusive way for all.

**Lessons Learned:** Meeting twice a year was the perfect amount of time. Follow-through of ideas is critical. Let the Committee know that just because they say it, doesn’t mean we can do it. Give them credit for the changes.

**Organizational Impacts/Improvements:**

Here are just a few samples of changes we have made because of the Oxygen Committee:

- New signage for first floor was recommended to help guests find the receptionist area. This was implemented.
- City Tours offered to all new staff and veteran staff also welcome if space available.
- Training flyers now remind staff that it's free and how to register.
- Job postings are now emailed to all staff so they know what's open.
- Feature employees in the newsletter to get to know them better.
- Annual clothing sale with city logo now happens every year.
- City Managers Digest should be available to everyone.
- More recycling bins.
- Provide a cell phone listing for employees.
- Employee access to the gyms in the new fire stations.

**Recommendations for Application in Other Communities:** Take the time on the front end to plan it out and get buy in from supervisors. Keep track of the suggestions and bring them back to those that make a difference. When something happens because of these ideas, give credit to the Oxygen Committee. Finally, almost always someone asks us if they can stay one more year on the Oxygen Committee—our answer is always “thanks for asking and no. This is only for those folks who are new.”

**Was a Private Consultant Used?** No.