

## **SOAR Applied: Achieving Better Work-Life Balance A Case Study from SOAR in the Workplace**

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### **The Background**

Suzy was typically spending 90 minutes daily each way on her commute to work. Some days her commute could take over 2 hours. She tried various different routes, but nothing reduced her commute time. As a result, she started to notice how she was increasingly finding herself in a mood of resentment, and had become snappy on the home front with those she loved. This was adding to her stress level, and as a result this was starting to negatively impact her health as well. Not wanting to continue with this any longer, she finally took a stand, *DECLARED A BREAKDOWN* by saying “This isn’t working,” and vowed to find a more workable solution.

### **SOAR Applied**

While she declared the *BREAKDOWN*, she still didn’t see any alternatives. She then remembered the *OAR Model*, where she had learned that we each see and frame our situation differently, and from that framing we each see different possible actions. Thus she finally decided to reach out to her *ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNERS* to help her explore and see possible solutions that she might not see.

Given where Suzy lived, it quickly became clear to them that if she left her home at 6:30 instead of at 7:30, and if she left work at 3:30 instead of at 5:30, she could significantly reduce her commute time, as traffic becomes lighter during those hours. This possible solution had not occurred to her.

Of course, *seeing* a solution is one thing, while *acting* on it is another. Suzy was *LIVING IN A BELIEF* that her team leader would never allow her to come to work earlier and leave earlier. Based on hearsay, she had formed a belief that she had to be in the office between 8:00AM – 5:00PM. The net effect was that this kept her from having the conversation with her Team Lead. For the longest time it remained a *MISSING CONVERSATION*, and there was no change in Suzy’s quality of life.

Then one day her accountability group finally *CARE-FRONTED* her, challenged her belief and how she came to form it, and then held her accountable for going after what is important to her. Given that she had publically declared what she wanted and had sought help, she decided to stretch out of her comfort zone and have the conversation with her Team Lead.

Given the discomfort in having what she perceived to be a difficult conversation, she first waited for the right mood, for she had learned that “the right conversation in the wrong mood is the wrong conversation.” When the timing was right, she initiated the conversation by first setting the context. She *DECLARED HERSELF A BEGINNER* in the domain of difficult conversations. stated that she was concerned that the conversation may not go well, and asked for patience and forgiveness

should she not do it well, and shared what she was facing. She then made the request for adjustments in her schedule.

### **The Outcome**

To her pleasant surprise, her Team Lead quickly said that her proposed schedule is absolutely no issue whatsoever, and if it improves her quality of life, it is perfectly okay to do. In other words, she got the agreement that her new work schedule is perfectly acceptable.

With the realization that the belief she had held for so long as an *ASSERTION* (e.g., fact) was just an *UNGROUNDED ASSESSMENT* (e.g., assumption), and by having courage to initiate the conversation, Suzy gained clarity and reached shared understanding with her Team Lead.

From this point forward, Suzy declared her new work schedule. She also showed appreciation by saying “Thank You” to her Team Lead and to her accountability partners. Her commute each day went down to 45 minutes thus allowing for nearly 2 additional hours to be with her family. Suzy became more enjoyable to be with and around, both at home and at work. She commuted happily ever after – or at least until the next breakdown.