



EQUILIBRIA™

A MAJOR ZOO LOOKS AT INTENTIONAL LEADERSHIP TO LEAD THE PACK

With more than 6,000 animals and more than two million visitors each year, the Houston Zoo is one of the fastest growing zoos in North America. As the number one attraction in Houston for visitors, it is a welcoming venue to connect communities with animals, and inspire action to save wildlife.



This success doesn't just happen. Behind the scenes, the dedicated staff works around the clock to care for animals, provide education and to ensure the Zoo is a desirable destination for Houstonians and visitors alike. With more than 450 employees working in shifts, communication and seamless decision-making are critical to ensure all 22 departments are performing at their highest levels.

Valuing the importance of continuous learning, Houston Zoo leadership turned to global coaching organization Equilibria in 2015 with the goal of developing a foundational program that would create a cultural DNA of trust, open communication and accountability among all layers of the staff.

PERSONALITY AS A COMMON LANGUAGE

The cornerstone from which Equilibria began building was, not surprisingly, with leadership itself. The first step was to uncover organizational strengths and gaps where leaders and teams needed the most help in better engaging with each other. Then the real work began.

One of Equilibria's most experienced coaches with an expertise in working with education and non-profit organizations, Dr. Rosalinda Mercado, began consulting with the Zoo's manager of training and development to customize a program that would focus on creating a common language for Zoo leadership and staff based on personality diversity. It was determined that leaders would participate in four sessions over a period of a few months to gain an understanding of how to integrate Equilibria's approach into the Zoo's daily operations. A second group of sessions for supervisors and other team leaders would follow, with eventually all staff members trained.



Equilibria's free-of-charge Personality Diversity Indicator (PDI) was taken in advance by session participants to learn their E-Colors, the coaching company's proprietary means for identifying personality patterns and communication styles. The colors (red- the doer, yellow- the socializer, blue- the relater and green- the thinker) are markers for personality and behavioral tendencies. This simple yet highly effective tool heightens an individual's awareness of how they and others on their team instinctively act and react in situations. Equilibria believes that self-awareness is the key to making intentional choices that lead to better outcomes.



EQUILIBRIA™

www.equilibria.com
info@equilibria.com

A TOOLKIT FOR TRUST, ACCOUNTABILITY AND INTENTIONAL CHOICE

With greater self-awareness of their strengths and potential limiters, Zoo team members began embracing and leveraging diversity of thought and behavior in new and meaningful ways. Adding to their understanding was training by Equilibria on Personal Intervention (PI), a tool that helps individuals and teams make intentional choices and respond appropriately rather than instinctively react to a situation. Wrist bands with “pause” and “play” icons were distributed to Zoo employees to wear as a reminder that we don’t all think and act the same and how their words and actions can help or hinder their performance if not managed appropriately.

“When we began working with Equilibria, we needed a foundation for everyone at the Houston Zoo to build on. The E-Colors have given us a starting point to build trust and accountability while communicating more effectively and efficiently with everyone we encounter.”

Angie Fontenot, Veterinary Hospital Manager,
Houston Zoo

Zoo supervisors and department heads began tailoring their conversations to get more interaction from their teams and to build trust through open dialogue. Depending on who was in a conversation, there may have been more emphasis on data, or perhaps fewer words used to communicate an important point. Most importantly, the lessons employed by Equilibria were engaging and easy to remember.

BRINGING THE E-COLORS TO LIFE

As Zoo leadership and staff became more energized through E-Colors and Personal Intervention mechanism, they increasingly found ways of embracing the power of personality diversity. They are able to wear their colors on their identification badges and include their E-Colors on their electronic signatures. Two years after the Zoo’s introduction to Equilibria, E-Colors wristbands can be seen on employees across Zoo grounds. Team activities to encourage people to make smarter choices, or behavioral changes when communicating with others continue to be an integral part of everyday life at the Zoo.

In order to make Equilibria’s approach sustainable and scalable, certain Zoo staff members have elected to become E-Color Champions. In this “train the trainer” model, Equilibria coaches those who have embraced the personality diversity approach so that they can continue to build on the program and train new members of the Zoo family. Equilibria has happily passed the torch to these Champions, and is available to them only when and as needed.



THE CIRCLE OF LIFE

As the Houston Zoo continues to be known as Houston’s conservation leader and take its rightful place in the global movement to save wildlife, it has embraced the need to build trust and communication from within leveraging its human capital. Equilibria is proud of its role in helping the Houston Zoo enhance its potential as leaders on the world stage by creating a culture of improved communication and intentional decision-making.