

CASE:

ABSA Vodacom

A strategic business alliance and seven new products - in two days



ABSA is one of the largest banks in South Africa. Vodacom is Vodaphone's South African subsidiary. These two big players realized that if they were able to collaborate they could generate some significant new business opportunities.



Aligning a bank and a cellular service provider looks like a great idea - but a great idea that stays an idea is not so great in the end. For two years ABSA and Vodacom had talks and meetings. Their agenda points were aligned nicely but the parties had difficulty digging deeper into the relationship: How can we trust each other? Who is going to profit most? What if Vodacom gets a banking license and takes off with the business on their own?

"This was a relationship breaker for us," says Innovation Consultant Peter Engelbrecht from ABSA. "Yet we had not been able to deal with the subject openly."

An intensive two-day LEGO SERIOUS PLAY session turned this upside down. The process catalyzed a breakthrough in the two groups' thinking - recognizing that customers could be shared and not divided into "ours" or "yours."

"LEGO allowed us to say things in third person," says Engelbrecht, "so people were less afraid of talking honestly." This shift in thinking dramatically changed the communication landscape and further enabled the partners to develop no less than seven new products. In short, the "talking" changed to "doing."

"Within two weeks a task team was up and running - within six weeks we had jointly developed the new products," explains Engelbrecht.

LSP helped settle all the issues and allowed for work to begin on the new business opportunities much more efficiently than the strategic tools ABSA and Vodacom had previously been using. From this two-day LSP turning-point session on, the partnership has been proving steady and immensely successful - so much so that South Africa's telecommunication giant Telkom has signed on to join the alliance.

- Workshop delivered by LSP partner Aligned Leadership, South Africa