

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DAUGHTERS OF TOMORROW'S METHODOLOGY

CONSTRUCTING THE STRENGTHS-
BASED APPROACH FROM THE
GROUND-UP

Executive Summary

Countless social service providers across the globe follow a service framework that focuses on the assets, capabilities, and the desires of their clients, known as the strengths-based practice, traditionally adopted with the conscious strategic decision-making of the organisation. In the case of Daughters Of Tomorrow (DOT), one of many agencies following the strengths-based model in Singapore, the framework is interestingly not a systematic practice decision by its management, rather an organic result of the way in which the charity fundamentally views the beneficiaries it serves. This gradual emergence of the practice within DOT's work can be traced to a few key characteristics of the organisation, its structure, and the philosophy embodied by its staff values. This brief, published during the non-profit's eight birthday, highlights the key fundamental characteristics of DOT that has allowed for the strengths-based practice to be built from the ground-up.

Client-centric service mentality

Analysing the staff's philosophy on social service and the way in which they practice social service

assistance showcase how the organisation engages in strengths-based practice. Similar to the way in which the framework pays special attention to understanding each case in a holistic manner, nine out of ten core team members at DOT believe that they must personally understand each beneficiary's unique circumstances and aspirations before they can assist them. Seven out of ten believe that they must personally communicate with each beneficiary to move their case forward, signalling to a strong relationship-based service practice. Having bridged 61.8 per cent of its graduates into their initially preferred industries, and another 10.7 per cent to industries they were open to explore, the client-led services at DOT are offered in a cooperative method, which gives precedence to beneficiary's strengths and aspirations, as opposed to only their struggles.

Investment to community development

Aptly named "Daughters" Of Tomorrow, DOT not only focuses on gainful employment, but hopes to create impact for the future generations of its beneficiaries. To achieve this, the non-profit invests

Executive Summary (continued)

in community development activities. 209 former graduates and current beneficiaries actively support each other on their various journeys in the online support group DOTTERS. The Community Childminding Network, a community-led initiative, which DOT has acted as a strategy consultant for, has helped clock in more than 10,000 hours of low or no-cost childminding between low-income mothers in Singapore. Moreover, the agency continuously invites its former graduates to give back to their community by becoming DOT volunteer mentors or childminders, or by even joining DOT as a team member, which in turn helps deepen DOT's own learning on the beneficiaries it aims to service.

Relationship-focused staff composition

Understanding how the strengths-based practice naturally emerged for the charity lies in who the charity employs. Currently, more than one third of DOT staff are former clients while more than half are former volunteers. Shared experiences between staff and clients organically lead to a relationship-focused service approach as it recognises each

beneficiary as an expert of their own circumstances. This in turn compels the agency to be flexible in its structure to provide personalised and holistic services. Indeed, while the agency's core mission lies in gainful employment and economic upliftment, DOT's services go beyond employment bridging as it offers in-house confidence, skill, and financial training courses; befriender support; caregiving assistance; emotional support groups; and post-employment social mobility programs.

The future of the strengths-based approach at DOT

In the context of the contemporary social service sector, relationship-focused agencies like DOT will eventually find themselves under the pressures of a marketised non-profit industry. While venture philanthropy operates on values similar to venture investments, DOT will continue to find its own balance between responding to business-like funding concerns and staying committed to the morals and methodology of the organisation.

