Library Management and Organizational Change

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INTRODUCTION

As academic libraries continue to develop a virtual presence, they must cope with the rapidly evolving rate of change and respond proactively to their changing environment in order to take advantage of the opportunities for increasing their visibility, restructuring to meet the needs of their users, and achieving their objective of remaining the preeminent source of information within the academy.

COMPONENTS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

The literature reflects four major areas in organizational change: the *structural* (or planning) aspect of change, the *cultural* aspect of change, the *personal* (or *individual human*) reaction to change, and the *political* aspect of change. Lewin's (1958) fundamental description of structural change has been incorporated into many process-oriented models of organizational change developed for organizations to better understand and direct the process of systemic change (Schein, 1987). Since cultural change often affects organizational identity, managers should focus on communication, leadership, and emotional components of change (Caldwell, 2003). Personal transition stages of individuals in the change process include the release of individual identity, ambiguity, and establishing a new beginning (Miller, 2002). The political aspect of change is reflected by Bolman and Deal (2003) in the use of reframing through the use of organizational metaphors as one of the skills of the "new" manager.

MANAGING CHANGE

Effective and successful organizational change incorporates and manages perspectives and models concurrently. As managers develop infrastructures (processes and values, and organizational capabilities) that are more effective (Christensen & Overdorf, 2000) or change institutional identity to assist in the creation of processes and values (Newman & Chaharbagi, 2000), it is important to understand why change does not happen. Mutually reinforcing barriers to implementing change are: top-down or *laissez-faire* management style; unclear strategy and conflicting priorities; an ineffective senior management team; poor vertical communication; poor coordination across functions; and inadequate down-the-line leadership skills and development (Beer & Eisenstat, 2000).

Although libraries of colleges and universities are changing faster than their respective parent institutions, library administrators must still address patron needs, provide services and handle service provision networks, initiate collaborative arrangements, improve staff skills

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and abilities, and enhance the image of the library (how the organization is regarded by important oversight bodies), and cope with new ways of funding and performing services (Spies, 2000).

Implementing Large Scale Programmatic Change

Innovation, defined as new ways of thinking of, generating, and coping with change (Jarratt, 1999), often means dramatic organizational change, such as cross-functional teams and the creation of new functional units and programmatic areas (Bishop, 1999). Implementing these innovations involves managing both the strategies and the elements of the organization that will have to be changed to enable the organization to anticipate, respond to, and shape future challenges (Morton, Brookes, Smart, Backhouse,& Burns, 2004). Even short-term change initiatives that focus on costs and/or changing established working practices have immediate and inevitable impact on the organization may be highly traumatic for staff (Hailey, 1998). Therefore, one needs to "marshal knowledge about changes, organizations, and corporate behavior—so that corrective actions may be undertaken to bring back balance and relative stability" (Geisler,1997, p.4) .

The judicious use of human resource interventions, the maintenance of organizational identity, and the supportive actions of its line managers help staff through the process of change (Hailey, 1998). More important than a manager's commitment to change is the commitment of line managers to people management. According to Hailey (1998), commitment to the management of people by supervisors ensures that staff members are counseled on a regular basis, both formally and informally; that their personal career development is discussed (with or without vertical career opportunities); and that they receive regular feedback on their performance. If these things are already in place, department heads and supervisors can facilitate change within their departments or units. Middle managers, who see themselves as change agents, are critical to encouraging adaptive change by staff. By doing "real" work themselves, demonstrating optimum skills, and encouraging and assisting staff to do their best possible work (Lamsa & Savolainen, 2000), managers can focus on a few key measures in critical areas and promote the belief that they are accountable for their work.

Performance Measurement

Performance measurement systems can create an essential feedback and learning mechanism in support of key management decisions, especially when criteria measures institutionally focused performance. A successful system also functions as a communication and information system, particularly for senior staff and administration. Basically, performance assessment should allow: up-to-date job descriptions that will ensure staff membersknow what is expected of them; continuing communication between supervisors and staff; recognition of staff for doing well; and staff development processes (Lubans, 1999). Effective people management assists line managers in handling change management.

What are core competencies in existing and potential staff as multiple assignments and opportunities emerge within the library? The literature on change management emphasizes three core competencies: a demonstration of interpersonal competence, personal integrity, and the capacity to think systemically and in an integrated way about how work systems and people need to collaborate. If these skills are present (or can be developed) within existing staff, staff may obtain a variety of professional competencies for managing individual and team projects, as well as system-level initiatives.

Managing Structural Change

Marketing, business, and annual operational plans, with formal objectives for individual staff, follow strategic planning. Wide variations in management practice indicate the need for major improvements, particularly in terms of adopting a strategic approach to the planning and delivery of library and information services. A clear framework of strategic objectives and priorities, formulated through a participative planning process, facilitates delegation of decisionmaking and resource allocation, allowing quick, flexible responses to identified customer needs. As libraries become more "virtual." academic library administrators must determine if the existing management and structure is both responsive to the changing user needs and utilizing technology to its best advantage (Spies, 2000).

Managing Cultural Change

To manage change successfully, library directors must choose the appropriate change path and design its implementation to suit their own situation. This requires an understanding of key internal organizational features, such as staff identity, aspects of the organization they wish to preserve, the degree to which the organization as a whole is aware of the need to change, and the level of capability for change possessed at all levels (Oliver& Roos, 2003). The culture shifts created during virtual library projects are similar to the changes libraries encountered during the mid-1980s when they purchased

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