

SACSCOC 2018 Institute on Quality Enhancement
and Accreditation

8 Proven Steps To Effectively Lead Change
In Higher Education

Lynn G. Gillette

Question

- Consider a change initiative at your current or past institution(s) that did not go well.
- Why do you believe the change was unsuccessful?

What constitutes a change?

- When people have to change the way they do their job, a change initiative is in play.
- That is why there is often resistance to change.

Examples of Change

- Asking faculty to change pedagogy.
- Improving advising across campus.
- Implementing a new information system.
- Reaffirmation of accreditation.
- Transforming an entire university.

Examples of changes that are not change initiatives

- Hiring a new faculty member, department chairs, etc. New hires are examples of tactics that may be related to a change.

Question

- List five reasons why people would resist a change.

Leading Change

- What are the key elements of ensuring a change initiative will be successful?

- John Kotter in his book, Leading Change, developed a methodology for leading change that works.

Step 1: Create a Sense of Urgency

- Build a case for change.

- Use data, consultants, accreditation, financial concerns, or whatever to convince others that the status quo is no longer acceptable.

Create Urgency

- Have others conclude that something needs to change.

- Create urgency that the status quo is no longer acceptable.

- Data analytics and a learning organization can increase urgency and keep urgency high.

- The urgency is not about the specific change initiative yet.

Create Urgency

- “People will find a thousand ingenious ways to withhold cooperation from a process that they sincerely think is unnecessary or wrongheaded.”
- “Never underestimate the magnitude of the forces that reinforce complacency and that help maintain the status quo.”

Create Urgency

- Do not force the change. Top-down change seldom works.
- This is the most important step.
- If you cannot create a sense of urgency, I would not go forward with the change.

Step 2: Create a Guiding Coalition

- Select a team to lead the change. Do not lead the change by yourself.
- Get the right people. Consider position power, expertise, credibility, diversity, management, and leadership skills.

Guiding Coalition

- Avoid snakes and people who talk forever – unless you can control them.
- Weak committees cannot lead the change.

Guiding Coalition

- A strong guiding coalition:
 - The right composition of people
 - Trust
 - Shared objective

Step 3: Develop a Vision and Strategy

- Do not start a change with a vision. That is too forced and too authoritarian.
- Let the guiding coalition (you may or may not be a member) create the vision and strategy.

Vision

- The vision paints a picture of what the change initiative will accomplish and why that matters.
- The vision guides people's actions and thoughts, and it needs to be communicated all the time.
- The vision directs, aligns, and inspires, and may decrease micromanagement.
- The vision may or may not be written.

Vision

- The guiding coalition creates a strategy on how the vision can be achieved. The strategy should instill confidence in the people that need to change. If it instills confidence, the change may work. If it does not, the change will not work.
- Seasoned veterans have seen many change initiatives come and go. They need to believe the strategy will work before they invest time and energy with it.

Step 4: Communicate the Vision

- Communicate the vision and strategy often. Put everyday activities in the context of the change. Make the change part of the conversation.
- Be sure your actions are consistent with your words. Walk the talk.

Communication

- Communicate a lot and give people time to think it over, and emotionally come to grips with what it might mean for them. This helps people let go of the status quo.
- Listen to people's concerns. Two-way communication is crucial.
- Listen for barriers to implementing the change so that you can address them.

Communication

- Too many leaders/managers communicate too much other stuff (they are all over the place). As a result, the key communication about the change is lost.

Step 5: Empower Faculty and Staff to Implement Change

- Often we resist a change because we are not sure we can do what is being asked.
- We will seldom volunteer that information.

Empower Others

- Provide quality training for everyone that needs to change.
- Remove obstacles that would impede faculty and staff's ability to implement the change.

Empower Others

- Potential obstacles:
 - Formal structures that make it difficult to act (silos, bureaucracy, micromanagement).
 - A lack of needed skills (technical and attitudinal).
 - Information systems.
 - Personnel systems (evaluation, compensation, promotion).
 - Supervisors who discourage actions aimed at implementing the change.

Empower Others

- If obstacles are not removed, employees will become discouraged, unmotivated and stop working to make the change a success.

Step 6: Generate and Celebrate Short-Term Wins

- What is a short-term win?
 - A positive result from the change that is clearly identifiable.
- Seasoned change agents plan for short-term wins and celebrate them.

Short-Term Wins

- Short-term wins build the credibility needed to sustain efforts over the long haul.
- Plan for short-term wins. Make sure information systems can track the data (metrics) you need to demonstrate success.
- Determine what your short-term wins might be before you implement the change.

Short-Term Wins

- Provide momentum for the change.
- Provide evidence the change is working.
- Reward change agents who have worked hard to implement the change.
- Undermine cynics.
- Keep supervisors on board! (Keeps resources flowing your way.)

Step 7: Consolidate Gains and Produce More Change

- Use the credibility from short-term wins to fully implement the change, and to remove obstacles that you did not have the power to address before.
- Do not celebrate short-term wins too much; keep momentum.

Step 8: Anchor the Change in the Culture

- The organization is truly changed for the long term only when the change becomes a part of the norms of behavior – a part of the culture.
- Norms of behavior persist because group members teach these practices to new members, rewarding those who fit in and sanctioning those who do not.
