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CHANGE IN ACADEMIC LIBRARIES: AS EASY AS 1, 2, 3….8?

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12 April 2007
Overview

- Kotter’s eight step model as a process for successful change
- Two academic library organisational change processes
  - Australia
  - Hong Kong
- A word about organizational change models
Eight Reasons for Change Failure

1. Allowing Too Much Complacency
2. Failing to Create a Sufficiently Powerful Guiding Coalition
3. Underestimating the Power of Vision
4. Undercommunicating the Vision by a Factor of 10 (or 100 or Even 1,000)
5. Permitting Obstacles to Block the New Vision
6. Failing to Create Short-Term Wins
7. Declaring Victory Too Soon
8. Neglecting to Anchor Changes Firmly in the Corporate Culture

Kotter’s Rules for Success

- These are reverse actions to the 8 failures
- They are sequential but often several steps will be undertaken concurrently
- They are divided into 3 broad categories:
  - Preparation (1-4)
  - Action (5-7)
  - Grounding (8)
Two Academic Libraries: Two Change Processes

**Australia**
- Transformational
- Integrating Library, IT and Educational Support into 1 department.
- Several hundred staff affected.
- Cultural change.
- 1996 (the era of Kotter).

**Hong Kong**
- Technical Services Department.
- Workflow/practice changes.
- Several dozen people.
- 2005 (post Kotter).
Preparation (Steps 1-4)
1 Establishing a Sense of Urgency

- Create a crisis, or if one is looming, let it be known
- Set higher targets (outputs, customer satisfaction etc)
- Highlight unsatisfied customers’ concerns
1 Urgency

**Australia**
- Flexible delivery support.
- Dictated by Vice-Chancellor – must be done.

**Hong Kong**
- Financial imperative.
- Voluntary Departure Scheme hitting TS.
- No choice but to change practices.
2 Creating the Guiding Coalition

- A team approach is needed
- Usually consisting of senior staff, managers etc
- Coalition must have power:
  - Titles
  - Information & expertise
  - Reputation/credibility
  - Leadership (essential) and management (less essential) qualities
In both libraries the “coalition” initiated and drove the change process, developed visions, strategies and plans. Subsequent coalitions were established to implement these.
3 Developing a Vision and Strategy

- **Vision can:**
  - Clarify the general direction for change
  - Motivate people to act in the right direction
  - Coordinate the actions of different people

- **Vision must be:**
  - Imaginable
  - Desirable
  - Feasible
  - Focused
  - Flexible
  - Communicable
3 Developing a Vision and Strategy

- Strategy provides the outline for how the vision is to be achieved
- Strategy is detailed in plans which provide specific steps and timetables to implement the strategy
3 Vision and Strategy

**Australia**
- Coalition developed extensive report.
- Rationale, strategy and plans.
- “an integrated approach to developing goals and plans for the delivery of flexible learning, information and technology services”.
- Workshops to develop mission, goals and a new structure.

**Hong Kong**
- Consultant worked with staff through interviews and workshops.
- Developed top 3 priorities for TS.
- Action plan for moving these 3 forward.
4 Communicating the Change Vision

- Understanding a “vision” can be intellectually challenging and emotional.
- Employees need to be informed of (i) the need for change as well as (ii) how the change will be achieved.
- People who don’t want to change will choose not to accept the communication.
- Most leaders/managers underestimate the need for extensive communication during change.
4 Communicating the Change Vision

- Keep the communication simple
- Use metaphor, analogy and example
- Multiple forums
- Repeat, repeat, repeat
- Walk the talk
- Explain (or better still remove) inconsistencies
- Listen and talk
4 Communicating the Change Vision

**Australia**
- Workshops
- “State of the Division” forums
- New executive team.

**Hong Kong**
- Consultant’s report
- Librarians forums
Action (Steps 5-7)
5 Empowering Employees for Broad-Based Action

- **Empower:**
  - To invest with power, especially legal power or official authority. To equip or supply with an ability; to enable.

- **Removing obstacles that disable workers:**
  - Organisational structures
  - People, especially supervisors and others with “power”

- Some people see empowerment as added responsibility

- Provide needed training and development opportunities
5 Empowering Employees

**Australia**
- Virtual teams led by faculty librarians
- New IT/Library structures
- New library “obstacles” (IR vs CS)
- Changing sides
- Spill and fill – removed human barriers

**Hong Kong**
- New management structure for TS
- New management team – the new guiding coalition
6 Generating Short-Term Wins

- These are milestones in the change plan
- They provide evidence of success
  - Confirmation of direction for leaders/believers
  - Conversion for doubters
- Plan for them to occur and make sure they happen
- Celebrate them and reward those involved
6 Generating Short-Term Wins

Australia
- Faculty librarians
- IT certificates for support staff
- Service charter
- Integrated Library/IT service points

Hong Kong
- New structure
- Cataloguing quality control testing success
7 Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change

- Do not declare the change process as “finished”
- Do not over celebrate gains/successes – this can result in complacency
- Use the short term wins to give impetus for other, bigger changes
7 More Change

**Australia**
- Fine tuning continued
- More staff movements
- University-wide overhaul announced

**Hong Kong**
- Not needed
Grounding (Step 8)
8 Anchoring New Approaches in the Culture

- The final step
- “Culturally” anchored only after proven to be superior to past practices
- Anchored when the changes become “the way we do things around here” not sooner.
8 Anchoring

**Australia**
- Original process halted with new change process to affect “all university staff”.

**Hong Kong**
- Anchored.
Degrees of Success
better planning for library and technology across campus and the linking of budgets to plans;

- skills enrichment schemes that led to IT training for library staff and saw several staff changing professional direction;

- an improved focus on service culture with customer service training, service charters for all services and improved feedback mechanisms;

- integrated library and IT help service points in all libraries;

- despite shrinking budgets and staffing, the Library was able to maintain services with university wide surveys showing no decline, in fact improvements, and;

- the University’s Composite Student Questionnaire (CSQ) showed significant improvements in IT services following the formation of the Division.
Australia

- Success limited by:
  - urgency dictated by CEO – few saw the connection between the change and the desired outcome
  - vastly different cultures stronger than thought
  - the IT dept were change-weary
  - short term wins offset by highly visible failures
  - changes insufficiently grounded.
long serving, capable staff relieved of having their work thoroughly checked leading to a boost in confidence;
the first year saw a 122% increase in the number of titles catalogued this included a 485% increase in e-resources and a 42% increase in copy cataloguing;
other major projects were subsequently initiated and completed including a major reclassification of our CJK collection, item creation for all bound journals and OPAC hyperlinks for some 60,000 print volumes recently digitized as part of the China-America Digital Academic Library (CADAL) project, and;
in 2005/06 the Library became the number 1 largest contributor of titles in the world to OCLC’s WorldCat with almost 76,000 titles.
Success boosted by:

- *urgency* created by the soon to depart cataloguers was very real to all staff
- a good degree of change–readiness was apparent
- the restructure was significantly less complex.
Kotter and Other Change Models

- Not all steps applicable to all scenarios
- Existence of many similar “models”
- No one-size-fits-all solution
  “an organization’s preferred approach to change stems from its culture and thus cannot easily be amended or replaced” (Burnes, 1996)
- Difficult to contextualise a model
- Changes often fail due to adherence to such models.
Thank you