

Leading a successful change initiative

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Abstract

In July of 2011 the Hesburgh Libraries welcomed a new University Librarian. Three months later the University announced a staff voluntary early retirement incentive program that would be followed by a request for campus departments to undergo an Organizational Analysis and Design (reorganization). Over a six-month period a Change Team was created to develop, implement and communicate a plan for reorganization. At the end of six months we had a new organizational structure which included changes in leadership, reporting lines, staff roles, and recommendations designed to create a culture shift. By all accounts to date, our redesign met or is improving (as we make adjustments by assessing our efforts at six-month intervals) all of our organizational design criteria. Our process included several key components (use of a player's coach, change style training for everyone, a talent survey, and follow-up assessments to help keep us flexing in the right direction) that helped contribute to our success.

Keywords

- Academic Libraries
- Organizational Analysis
- Reorganization
- Change Management
- Culture Shift

In 2011 the Hesburgh Libraries at the University of Notre Dame began a significant transformation. It started with the retirement of the previous director and the knowledge that with new leadership often comes changes in direction, staffing, and strategic focus.

Within four months of her arrival, the new University Librarian, Diane Parr Walker, was faced with responding to three University requests simultaneously:

- a SVERIP (Staff Voluntary Early Retirement Incentive Program),
- a request for a new strategic plan
- and a recommendation that each division conduct an OAD (Organizational Analysis and Design) in order to implement a new organizational structure that would take into account these multiple retirements, new strategic directions, and results of the analysis leading to the final OAD.

Early in 2012 as we said good-bye to 22 of our colleagues, a newly developed strategy to develop, implement and communicate a plan for reorganization started with the creation of a change team that would lead our organizational analysis and design (OAD).

To guide the organizational redesign process the University provided support in the form of external consultants, university goals and guiding principles that included

- recognition of the University's goals of providing a premier undergraduate education experience, preeminence in research, and a sustained Catholic character that informs all our endeavors
- designing the work of a unit into jobs where staff can achieve a level of competency that allows them to meaningfully contribute not only to their unit's mission, but also to see how their efforts contribute to the overall mission of the University, resulting in increased job satisfaction
- pushing decision-making in our units down to the lowest level of trained and competent employees who are doing the work

- striving for an overall maximum target of 8 layers of employees as measured from front line employees to the President
- analysis of appropriate data to support and inform the organizational design
- assessment of the new design at regular intervals to gauge success

With the guiding principles in hand, the next task was to create the change team that would lead the library OAD.

The formation of the change team that would lead the OAD carefully aimed to balance representation across library divisions and to include both faculty and staff. Each member of the team was asked to bring to their work a big-picture view and the ability to think at the level of the entire organization about two questions: what will make the library better for users and what will make the library a better place to work? Each team member brought perspectives based on their own experience and position in the organization but was encouraged to set their personal bias aside and think at the broad organizational level. This perspective was further encouraged with the inclusion of a “players coach” which will be described in more detail later.

The first order of business was the creation of a communication plan that would outline meeting topics and agendas, a schedule of regular break briefings, open forums, town halls, and a schedule of weekly updates in the employee newsletter. The plan outlined weekly activities from February through June, when the final town hall meeting would be held to share the new organizational structure. One of the most popular newsletter articles included what they called “inquiring minds want to know” posts that were a combination FAQ and sharing of information learned from the environmental scans informing the team’s progress.

Over the first six weeks of the team’s formation, they would ultimately review

- 20 articles
- various leadership competencies
- other academic library reorganizations
- other academic library organization charts

- assessment data from higher education, university surveys and library surveys
- and hold one-on-one interviews with key participants in recently reorganized academic libraries

Along with the external research, the change team gathered all of the information learned through the open forums, break briefings, one-on-one meetings and internal university reports. Together, all of the information gathered in those initial internal and external reviews and conversations would lay the foundation for the new organizational structure.

At the heart of the new structural design, our new University Librarian used guiding principles to communicate her vision for the Hesburgh Libraries: a) customer service; b) make changes that improve customer service; c) results matter; and three areas of focus: a) services and expertise, b) knowledge resources, c) library spaces. Where there were questions about which direction to take, the team would go back to the guiding principles to move forward.

About halfway through the team’s work then they were able to start responding to the questions that were on everyone’s mind, or in other words, they started to answer the “how will this affect me and my friends” questions with the following guidelines:

- There will be no layoffs due to the OAD
- Performance issues will be addressed during the OAD process
- Many position responsibilities, roles and places in the structure will change (we will strive for 4-8 direct reports)
- As positions change, we will provide necessary training as needed
- There will be no salary reductions, or promise of raises
- Critical needs related to the strategic plan or operational continuity will be filled, but we will try to hold things open where we can to allow for internal movement
- We will eliminate 1-1 reporting relationships

- Newly created leadership positions will be filled with a call for expressions of interest and an interview process

At the same time the guidelines were formed we started to focus on the human component of the change process.

Change initiatives are at risk for failure if those who are responsible for the change don't take into account the human element. Everyone responds to change differently, and knowing how an individual feels about change can make the transition easier. When we talk about organizational change it is important to think about how an individual responds to change that is both imposed on, or is happening around him/her. There is a popular change style test called Change Style Indicator by Discovery Learning that is designed to measure an individual's preferred style in approaching and addressing change. In addition to style indicator tests, there are other ways of uncovering the same information. For our purposes, a change management class was created for us by the Office of Human Resources in order to share information about change and the process that we would all be going through. Attendance was mandatory and through the class discussions and exercises people were encouraged to identify with one of the three roles on the change spectrum. Change champions are the people that will create positive expectations around the change, encourage buy-in, help remove barriers, help others overcome fear, and do whatever they can to encourage a positive experience for everyone. Change champions can be people at any level of the organization, most tend to be individual contributors who are trusted influencers throughout the organization. Helpers will support the change if someone else leads, or tend to sit back and wait to see what happens before deciding whether the change is good or not. Resistance to change appears in behaviors such as criticizing the change, or details, ignoring the change, refusing implementation, sarcasm, and sometimes outright sabotage.

Understanding where individuals self-identified gave us an opportunity to meet one-on-one with those who were fearful of potential changes and discover how we could help them feel better about the process.

This was where the "players coach" came to play an important role. The players' coach was a change champion, and was viewed as a trusted resource by many throughout the organization. The coach was not a member of the change team but served as a resource for all library employees and as an advisor to the change team throughout the process. This role was added to provide an extra layer of comfort, trust, and transparency to the change process. Ultimately a third of our employee's would take advantage of this unique role and took the opportunity to:

- ask additional questions, seek clarification throughout the various parts of the process
- share their concerns
- ask for additional information that would provide objective, measurable facts in cases where subjective personal opinions, assumptions and perceptions were called into question.

The coach would ask for permission to share an individual's concerns, and met regularly with the University Librarian to share the pulse of the organization throughout the OAD process.

By early April, much of the feedback gathered from within the organization was used to identify the criteria that would be used for creating the new organizational design:

- Create an organizational structure based on our new broad strategic goals (that were designed by the work of the strategic planning team just before our change team started their work)
- Establish clear expectations and roles for all levels of the organization, e.g., managers as well as team and unit members
- Incorporate employee interests into new placements
- Facilitate transformative change, not just incremental
- Create new synergies by streamlining processes, pairing complementary activities, and inserting change mechanisms into the design
- Support developing needs such as e-publication, archiving faculty research, text mining and digital research

- Empower leaders to initiate change and make decisions / prepare employees throughout the organization to make decisions
- Align library units to best reflect the needs of our users rather than internal functions

This criteria would be used later to help us evaluate the success of the new design.

In order to “incorporate employee interests into new placements”, we created a talent survey that gave every employee an opportunity to fill out a short questionnaire. Included were 9 questions that asked for their education, skills and expertise in various areas, interest in learning new skills or cross-training, and their interest in pursuing a new role. As a result of the talent survey, 54 individuals expressed an interest in pursuing something different, and within six months of the implementation of the new structure, 32 were able to move into new roles. As of the end of 2014, an additional ten individuals either moved into new roles, or decided that other changes that occurred enabled them to remain in the same role; in some cases under new leadership, or in others because they were learning new skills.

With each Town Hall meeting, a new piece of the organizational design was unveiled and as employees learned of each new design, there were continued opportunities to provide feedback. In April the first high level design was shared and indicated that the new structure would include two divisions rather than three, and areas within the divisions would be called programs. Each program would have a Program Director, and each program area was defined broadly with the expectation that the Program Director (all positions that would be posted with an open call for expressions of interest) would fully develop the needs and goals for the programs.

With the initial high level design created, next the team began thinking about expectations, processes and relationships. One month later at a Town Hall meeting in May, the next level of the organizational design was shared. At this level the design indicated which units, or areas of focus were recommended for each program. For example, the Information Technology and Discovery Services program would include units designed to support the web, systems,

and network infrastructure. Also in May the change team shared the remainder of the work left to be done, both in order to complete their charge, and to provide information about next steps:

Change Team May/June:

- Issue organizational chart / sharpen terminology
- Identify recommended scope and focus of program areas
- Identify expectations for program leaders
- Identify expectations for team leaders
- Support culture change by clarifying expectations for broad position categories
- Identify processes and policies that will foster a significant culture change
- Identify initial teams / clarify expectations for initial teams and team leaders

Diane and Advisors

- Appoint Interim AUL's
- Draft PD's and post AUL positions
- Clarify the process for selecting program leaders
- Recruit program leaders
- Identify training needed to help leaders and individual contributors embrace and practice empowerment, collaboration, and strategic focus

New Program Directors and Individual Contributors June-December

- Identify core competencies for program areas
- Clarify processes for filling supervisory and individual contributor positions
- Recruit team leaders
- Clarify roles for supervisor and individual contributors
- Create orientation and training plan to help individuals embrace new roles

In June, the change team concluded their work with one last meeting and then it was up to the University Librarian, two interim Associate University Librarian's (AUL's) and a new team created to interview those who expressed interest in one of the

seven newly created Program Director positions. Everyone was encouraged to apply and all who applied were interviewed by a team consisting of the University Librarian, the two interim AUL's, the Human Resources consultant, and the library's organizational development team. Based on candidate interviews, Program Directors were identified in six of the seven program areas with one program receiving Co-Directors.

The last order of business for the change team was to make suggestions for designing the culture that was part of the charge for the organizational redesign. The suggestions took into account all of the feedback gathered throughout the organizational design process, from the creation of the team charter in January to the last Town Hall in May. Many of the requested changes related to various aspects of our culture that would manifest themselves in the creation of a work environment that would serve as a model for campus and is distinguished by honest and open communication, teamwork, respect for all individuals, a commitment to learning and to service excellence, opportunities for growth, and the agility to adapt to changing campus needs. The recommended actions to promote these changes included suggestions for training of the new leadership; enculturating new employees; providing opportunities for 360 feedback; encouraging and supporting continuous improvement; and most importantly, regular assessment of the new organizational design.

With the work of the change team complete, responsibility now fell onto the newly appointed Program Directors to meet with the staff in their program areas and then interview, recruit and fill-in the supervisor and manager roles. Once the leadership positions were filled we provided learning opportunities that included books and articles on leadership, classes provided by the university's Learning and Development office, and a first-annual Leadership Summit to build a shared understanding of what it means to be a leader in the Hesburgh Libraries at the University of Notre Dame.

The last component of our OAD is a commitment to continuously review and assess the ways we are, and just as importantly, are not, meeting the goals of our reorganization. A new assessment team (with new

membership, no one from the change team) was created using the "next generation of up-and-comers" in the library. The process for assessment would begin and end quickly – announce the team, give the team two weeks to conduct their assessment, one week to compile a report, and then announce the results. Communication of the review, results, and recommendations would come from "the highest level of the library". Before the review began the team defined terms they would be using, i.e. "standards," "process," etc. and then the team received coaching on the difference between real feedback and "noise" and were given pointers on how to shift the conversation when they heard noise. Using our design criteria and our objectives in the reorganization as a guide, the organizational redesign assessment team used the following questions to assess (4) components in each program area:

- a) Are things getting better? Are things getting worse?
- b) Are we meeting standards? Are we not meeting standards?
- c) Are we on strategy/on purpose? Are we off strategy/off purpose?

At 6/12/18 month intervals this new team created a survey, gathered feedback at open forums and through one-on-one conversations all of which allowed employees the opportunity to provide feedback on how the reorganization is working in reality. Overall, 74% of employees have routinely indicated that they are very satisfied or satisfied with the reorganization and feel that we are moving in the right direction. For those areas where there are opportunities for improvement, the OAD assessment team makes regular recommendations to the library leadership team that will continue to help us flex in the right direction. Several recommendations that have been made include the creation of program-wide communication plans that identify communication methods preferred by program members; the creation of a Leadership Development Program to provide individual contributors the opportunity to develop leadership skills; transparency in decision-making; and making teambuilding a priority for units and

programs. Along with the recommendations there is an added expectation that our library leadership will be held accountable for responding to and acting on those suggestions.

One of the most frequently asked questions as we went through our OAD process was “how do you recognize your organization’s change champions?” If you decide to use a change style indicator test, your champions will fall out on the pragmatist or originator scale. However, you can typically find the champions among you in the following behaviors:

- Change champions tend to not like details
- Have high energy (aka “chipper”, “perky”, etc.)
- Tend to be optimistic/hopeful
- Are full of ideas
- Tend to be “big picture” thinkers rather than task-oriented
- They may just tell you that they like change and want to be part of new, different, exciting things

However, they could also be close to checking out, or otherwise disengaged if they are trying to adapt to a culture that discourages creativity or innovation, or includes a lot of “that’s the way we’ve always done things”.

As a result of our reorganization we were able to create new positions, we achieved a higher satisfaction score on a university sponsored survey relating to services and spaces; we were able to offer 42 employees an opportunity to do something different; we infused additional funding into targeted training efforts; created shared understanding around our mission of connecting people to knowledge, and launched a successful year-long 50th anniversary celebration that brought together partners from across campus to celebrate the library’s history and promising future. Overall, our organizational analysis and design set the stage for our transformation to becoming a model 21st century research library.

Appendix 1: Change Management Checklist

What is the Change?

Why are we Changing?

How will it Affect Me and My Friends?

- 1) Are there compelling reasons for the change? Are those reasons clear and easily understood by all?
- 2) What is your plan for communicating the change?
 - a) How often will you communicate (before/during/after the change)?
 - b) By who (who will create the messages)?
 - c) Do all stakeholders need to hear the same message?
- 3) What are the potential barriers and roadblocks to the change?
- 4) Do our compelling reasons align with our organizational strategy (strategic goals/initiatives)?
- 5) Who will guide the change?
- 6) How will we know if we have been successful?
- 7) How will we ensure that the change sticks and becomes part of our organizational culture?

What will actually change?

- People?
- Processes?
- Positions?
- Priorities?

Who are your:

- Champions (bring them on board to help communicate, encourage, and process the change)
- Helpers (will be encouraged by either the champions or the resisters)

- Resisters (important to understand why they are resistant – just don't like change? Feel threatened by the change? Have concerns about impact?)

How well do people trust your leadership?

When and how will the change be introduced?

Who will be responsible for enforcing/reinforcing behaviors needed to make the change stick?

How will you coach and support people throughout the change and beyond?

What metrics will you use to indicate progress? Success? Impact? Red flags?

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