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ABSTRACT

It is important that student affairs professionals lead organizational changes to provide the best service to students in light of outside factors. Utilizing a theoretical model for participating in organizational change can enhance the ability for a change to meet its intended outcomes. This article details how the Office of Multicultural Affairs at Bowling Green State University utilized John Kotter's eight step change model to implement an appreciative advising model. Information on appreciative advising, the eight-step change model, and the implementation is provided.

INTRODUCTION

Change in the current era of higher education is important because of the greater sense of accountability and the more diverse campus population who engage in campus differently (Kezar, 2014). The utilization of a theoretical model for implementing organizational change is an important step in creating a successful, long lasting change (Kezar, 2014; Kotter, 1996). The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the Office of Multicultural Affairs at Bowling Green State University utilized John Kotter's change model to implement appreciative advising throughout the office.

Change is defined as "intentional acts where a particular leader drives or implements a new direction" (Kezar, 2014, p. xxii). Change can be revolutionary or evolutionary depending on the scope of the change being implemented (Burke, 2011). The change initiated in the Office of Multicultural Affairs is an evolutionary change as it balances the need for innovative programs with refinement of current practices (Demers, 2007). To best understand the organizational change implemented the Office of Multicultural affairs, one must be aware of the context of the office within the university.

Context

Bowling Green State University (BGSU), located in Bowling Green, Ohio, is a mid-size, public, predominantly White institution, comprised of traditionally aged, in-state students (BGSU, n.d.a). The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA), housed within the Division of Student Affairs, is an important office on campus that focuses on three main initiatives: multicultural programming, diversity education, and retention of diverse student populations.

(BGSU, n.d.b). The office consists of full-time staff, graduate assistants, graduate interns, and student workers.

One of the signature programs in OMA is the Falcon Success Initiative (FSI), a retention program designed to cultivate and support multicultural student success at Bowling Green State University. Within the first year of the program, each student is required to individually meet six times with their success coach to discuss their academic social, and emotional transition into the college environment. Additionally, FSI students are required to attend six cohort meetings throughout the academic year. The cohort meetings provide students with connections to campus resources, as well as, opportunities to engage in dialogue around diversity and multicultural competence. This program is rooted in the work of Drs. Bloom, Hutson, and Ye (2008) as it incorporates appreciative advising.

Appreciative Advising

Appreciative advising is a framework based on Cooperrider and Srivastva's 4D appreciative inquiry model (Bloom et al. 2008). The 4D appreciative inquiry model has four phases: discovery, dream, design, and deliver. Bloom and Martin first presented the use of appreciative inquiry within advising (Hutson, Ye, & Bloom, 2014). In 2008, Drs. Bloom, Hutson and Ye published their seminal work on appreciative advising. The appreciative advising framework drew upon the 4D appreciative inquiry model by expanding to six phases: *disarm*, *discover*, *dream*, *design*, *deliver*, and *don't settle*. It is defined as the "intentional collaborative practice of asking positive, open-ended questions that help students optimize their educational experiences and achieve their dreams, goals, and potentials" (Appreciative Advising, n.d).

The first phase is disarm. This phase acknowledges how students can be intimidated arriving for a meeting (Bloom et al., 2008) and how it important it is to develop rapport. This phase begins before an appointment arrives, including creating a welcoming and positive atmosphere on the website by including pictures of staff and some information about them (Appreciative Advising, n.d). As students arrive, the advisor should walk to the student and use verbal and nonverbal communication to enthusiastically welcome them. As the advisor walks the student back to the office, it gives them the opportunity to engage in small talk (Bloom et al., 2008). As the student arrives in the office, the environment should be an engaging and welcoming by including pictures and comfortable seating.

Once the appointment begins, the advisor attempts to learn more about the student. The discover phase includes asking positive, open-ended questions to learn about the student's strengths, skills, interests, and abilities (Bloom et al., 2008). This phase allows for advisors to hear the student's story, including their accomplishments, achievements, background, and interests. This phase transitions into the dream phase where advisors inquire about the student's hopes and dreams (Bloom et al., 2008). After establishing life and career goals, it is important to co-create a plan with the student in the design phase (Bloom et al., 2008). It is important that it is the student who creates the plan and that the advisor just guides in the process. This phase includes planning not only courses but also extracurricular activities, leadership positions, and utilization of campus resources (Bloom et al., 2008).

The deliver phase is where the advisor serves as a resource while the student executes the plan (Bloom et al., 2008). In this phase, the advisor demonstrates confidence in the student while also reviewing the plan, creating to-do lists, and welcoming the student back if they run into

obstacles. Lastly, in the don't settle phase, advisors hold students accountable by setting high expectations and challenging students to improve (Bloom et al., 2008).

Appreciative advising is a framework for advisors aimed at improving student retention and success rates (Appreciative Advising, n.d). It is for advisors to "challenge the deficit mindset through the advising process, highlight student strengths and empower students to redefine their own success in higher education" (Hutson et al., 2014).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Kotter's change model was first published in 1995 after conducting research on successful organizational change efforts. Under the premise that organizational change does not happen easily, he developed an eight stage process for creating major organizational change (Kotter, 1996). The eight stages are (1) *establishing a sense of urgency*, (2) *creating the guiding coalition,* (3) *developing a vision and a strategy*, (4) *communicating the change vision*, (5) *empowering broad-based action*, (6) *generating short-term wins*, (7) *consolidating gains and producing more change*, (8) *anchoring new approaches in the culture*. These steps can allow for a successful change in various organizational contexts (Kotter, 1996).

The first step to create major change is establishing a sense of urgency. During this step, organizations must critically examine their product delivery and identify opportunities to improve. A key component during this step is to eliminate complacency: members of the organization must want to improve. Next, a guiding coalition needs to be created. The guiding coalition should include people who have positional power, expertise, credibility, and leadership. During this stage, trust is most important so that the change efforts are not undermined. Next, the organization needs to develop a vision for the change, as well as strategies to meet the change. The fourth stage involves communicating the change vision. A vision is useless if others in the organization are not familiar with it.

These first four stages (establishing a sense of urgency, creating the guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, and communicating the change vision) happen before the change actually begins to occur. According to Kotter (1996) "the first four steps in the transformation process help defrost the status quo" (p. 22). Unfreezing the status quo and creating an opportunity for change to occur is essential for the change management process.

Steps five through seven (empowering broad-based action, generating short-term wins, consolidating gains and produce more change) focus on the introduction of the change into the organization. Step five, empowering broad based action, involves the initial implementation of the change into organization. A vision is essential during this stage as a vision clarifies the general direction of the change, motivates people to take action, and helps coordinate the actions of various people in the organization. To create an effective vision, Kotter recommends involving the guiding coalition, utilizing teamwork, involving both head and heart, and establishing a timeline. It is also essential that one mitigates obstacles and change systems that make changes more difficult. Step six involves generating short term wins. Short term wins provides motivation for implementing the change, improves the vision and strategies, creates more teamwork amongst colleagues, and builds momentum. Step seven requires that the organization consolidates gains and produces more change (Kotter, 1996). Step seven involves forward thinking such as making additional changes, empowering individuals in the organization, and allowing others to participate in project management.

In the last step, one must anchor the new approaches in the culture. During this step leaders must articulate the connections between new behaviors and success, while developing methods to continue in leadership development and continuation of the change. To best develop these changes, changes must be viewed in a circular rather than linear fashion. Once one change is over, another starts and resets the change cycle.

UTILIZATION OF CHANGE THEORY IN THE OFFICE OF MULTICULTURAL AFFAIRS

Kotter's change model served as the framework for unveiling the appreciative advising model in the Office of Multicultural Affairs. It is important to note that this change is still occurring and evolving: change is never complete. The first step in Kotter's change model evolved from student feedback about a retention program in our office, the Falcon Success Initiative. Though successful, students expressed a desire to have a more personal experience that blends academic and social support while in a multicultural environment. We examined the delivery of our retention program as it was based in an intrusive approach. We needed to enhance the student's experience and appreciative advising was selected as it met our goals.

The next stage in Kotter's model involves creating a guiding coalition. Our guiding coalition consisted of the director, the coordinator for academic and assessment initiatives, two graduate practicum students, and a student worker. This coalition followed Kotter's recommendations of selecting a group of people that have various levels of expertise and experience. The director provided the strategic goals, the coordinator conducted research and best practices, while the graduate students began to explore the actual practice of an appreciative advising approach. As a way to enhance participation across the office, an undergraduate student worker worked on the project to help us in developing marketing materials. These skills and expertise assisted as we completed steps three and four: developing a vision and strategy, and communicating the change vision.

Step four, communicating the change vision, started as the guiding coalition to spread information about appreciative advising. The professional staff in the officer were introduced to the appreciative advising model and asked their feedback. We also engaged our front desk staff and taught them the model because they serve an important role in disarming students, the first stage in appreciative advising. Next, we created posters and handouts that explain our retention programs and how we utilize an appreciative approach. Finally, we shared information on our adaptation of appreciative advising in various forums across the university and beyond including conference presentations and workshops for university employees.

Step five in Kotter's model is focused on the implementation of the action. During this step, Kotter recommends changing structures or systems to help achieve the vision. To implement appreciative advising, we changed the intake process for students who arrive at our office. Students are greeted by our front desk staff and then the front desk calls the OMA staff member by giving the name of the advisee to the OMA staff members. The staff walks to greet the student rather than having the student come to the advisor. Additionally, we changed the way that we packaged the program by rebranding it from the "Falcon Watch" program to the "Falcon Success Initiative". The new name reflects the focus on success rather than an intrusive approach.

Step six involves generating short-term wins. To generate short term wins, OMA conducted assessments throughout the year including after each cohort meeting, at the semester

midpoint, and a final evaluation. We also worked with the division of student affairs assessment committee to track retention numbers for students. The office celebrated these positive small victories and considered how we can improve based upon constructive feedback. Additionally, we shared these wins with other departments on campus.

Steps seven (consolidate and build on the gains) and eight (institutionalize the change) are still occurring. To consolidate and build on the gains, we are expanding the number of students who participate in the FSI program through targeted outreach. Additionally, we understand that the adaptation of the appreciative advising is still in the beginning stages. To achieve step eight, institutionalize the change, we plan to anchor these changes in our culture through our staff onboarding, publication of our programs.

CONCLUSION

When implementing a change into office culture, like whether or not to implement the Appreciative Advising Model, we have three recommendations. First, utilize theory into practice. Our office found success using Kotter's change model and appreciative advising. Research best practices and what theories will best suit your office. Second, involve multiple people in the conversation around the change. Ensure a variety of voices are being heard, from the department head to the student worker, and especially the opinions of the students being served. Finally, remain vision focused. While it may be easy to haphazardly get-by, push through and stay the course. Discuss the desired learning outcomes and vision for students at the university. In order for a change to be a success, everyone needs to be on the same page. Change is necessary, improvement is vital, and when both are embraced by a team, student success can be achieved.

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