Organizational Change Reflection Paper

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Based on the analysis made for Company X leadership, three of the eight steps will be discussed in connection with my personal experiences. The paper was based on Kotter’s Eight-Step Process for Leading Change. Of these 1. Create a sense of urgency when introducing the change effort, 3. Create a vision for change and make change a part of the vision, and 4. Communicate a plan for change (Kotter, 1996) are chosen for discussion.

**Create A Sense of Urgency**

Readiness for change enables maximum preparation which transports benefit. These benefits include improved efficiency, lower costs and improved quality (Sharma, Herrnschmidt, Claes, Bachnick, De Geest, & Simon, 2018). Kotter believed that change generally fails if there is no sense of urgency created first (Kotter, 1996). It is a basic idea that stems from the saying—if it is not broken why fix it. Truly, this hints toward laziness. In the fact this belief is so widely felt that even one of the videos in a class on Organizational Change had the title, “Is It Because of Laziness or Exhaustion?” (FastCompany, 2010). However, it is because of reasons such as these that urgency is so important. In one instance in the school I work at the administration instituted a policy change which effectively replaced lunch free time with clubs in the school. The student body met this change with major opposition. One of the students went as far as creating a petition which accumulated signatures from about half of the student body--thankfully only a few of the faculty. It is year three of the implementation; the change is a success. The administration held several meetings with the faculty which created critical support. Many of the faculty sponsored clubs. I sponsored a music club as well. This year Live Oak Middle School was visited by several other schools as-well-as state officials which ended in receiving the coveted “Schools to Watch in California” award. This award brought much-added revenue and pride for the student body and faculty combined. If the administration were unsuccessful in distributing a sense of urgency to the faculty thereby gaining the needed support such an honor would have never become a reality.

**Create a Vision for Change**

Articulating vision means communicating in a way that teaches new behaviors, empowers others to act on the vision, and encourages risk-taking, nontraditional ideas, and activities through innovation (Weiss, 2012). Kotter (1996) describes possible errors including a lack of urgency and no guiding coalition when there is a lack of communication of the vision. There are effective tools to use other than Kotter’s eight steps. Smart Goals help with vision, as does the Appreciative Inquiry Model. This model begins by asking the question “what is possible?” The verbiage of this four-phase system resonates vision to me. 1. Discovery Phase. 2. Dream Phase. 3. Design Phase. 4. Destiny Phase. While the discovery phase is purposed to mobilize a positive change, the dream phase requires one to envision the greatest potential for that positive change (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). Finally, destiny involves the sum of the actions inspired by the other phases. One of my favorite scriptures tells of destiny. Jerimiah 29:11, “For I know what I have planned for you,' says the LORD. 'I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope” (New English Translation). As a minister, this is the hardest thing. In the year 2000, I was sent to a small town in Northern California to pastor a church that had been closed for years. I had all kinds of vision for the church. However, the community did not share the vision. The former pastor and the laity embarked in a war that ended in the closure of the church. For three years I visited everyone every week in their homes, prayed, and worked. At one point I was forced into taking on a job with long hours to support my family and the church. The vision almost took hold. Unfortunately, the third year everything took a downswing, and after a visit from the denomination, it was decided that the land and church were to be sold. This broke my heart. The biggest thing I learned was this; vision unshared finds its end in heartbreak. One of the videos in the class was of Professor Kotter warning students that business administrators must cut away those that aggressively oppose vision and change (Kotter, 2011). It may be required to let loose all the people we tried so hard to help through the years and focus on those who are willing to dream.

**Communicate A Plan for Change**

Building a team is necessary to communicate the vision, to serve as role models, to educate, encourage, and to provide feedback. One must find champions for the cause. Communicating the plan is were buy-in achieved (Auguste, 2013). Koster (1979) states that leaders must be honest and authentic when communicating and repeating the vision. Each step of the plan has the same goal in mind. A step by step structured hierarchy is helpful. Each step should have a smart goal that is accomplished before moving to the next step, while each smart goal is in line with the desired vision and outcome. One thing that seems to be missing is the communication of needed resources. “Hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12, KJV). In other words, it may be dangerous to hold a vision for too long without acting. On the flip side, dreams without resource are referred to as “pipe dreams.” Faith can carry one, but if vision is not shared, it will not grow. Currently, I am on staff at a church where the leadership is desperately trying to get the people to share the vision of a new building. Proclamations like, “We will be in our new building by…” have gone out and returned unfulfilled. Though the associate pastor is sharing the vision, still efforts to possible find a new building already built are underway. The property for the new construction is currently not being utilized. The church tore down the house that was there, and now it sits there. The problem is that not many of the congregation of this small church can see the new building in their mind's eye. This is the result of differed hope. About ten years ago the pastorate introduced the original idea, then proceeded to have all the plans drawn up but then began to peruse other things. Today, the idea of a new building has lost its luster due to previous failed attempts to disseminated vision. This pastor many times enjoys being the driving force, which means there is no team of champions. Some people have come alongside, causing the purchase of the property, and the demolition, but now-- with efforts of finding an alternative building--the original vision is losing its footing. What will happen only time will tell.

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