

2009-2010 Alliance Leadership Project

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The Project

For my assigned leadership project I chose to lead an effort to enhance management-to-employee communication, in response to a low score in this area on our employee satisfaction survey. First, a monthly employee newsletter was created and distributed through various media across campus. Second, an employee personal email list was compiled so that real-time or almost real-time information could be seen by staff on their home computer, cell phone or personal digital assistant. Finally, an employee portal on the Willamette View website was developed so that staff could access information, tools, forms, event dates and other important resources from outside our campus.

Tangible and Intangible Organizational Benefits

There are three obvious benefits that have resulted from this project. First, we are achieving an enhanced perception by staff of how management reacts to satisfaction results. The idea that “management is doing something about this,” goes a long way with employee morale and view of leadership. Second, staff have become more engaged in two-way information sharing, by actually contributing to the newsletter. Lastly, facility leadership now has a more efficient means of distributing important information. This will improve operational efficiency, emergency communication and employee engagement.

The Team

The team had to be composed of a diverse group in order to achieve the goal. First, our Human Resources Department was needed to contribute employee-related content, contact info and tools. Second, frontline staff – key stakeholders – were needed to help define what they wanted as means of communication. Third, marketing and sales staff provided a layout, theme, printing and other support for each type of media used. Finally, the vendor representative was needed to provide the programming and content for the web portal.

Communicating

Once it was determined what communications methods were going to be used, staff were informed prior to the roll out of the media. Designs, employee information and documents were initially shared with the Leadership Team and a timeline provided as to when the roll out would occur. Once approval was given, staff were informed 30 days and two weeks prior to implementation. Currently, the web-portal is being finalized and staff will be given detailed instructions on its content, access and use well before it actually goes live.

Challenges

- 1) Determining the ultimate goal for the methods to be used.
- 2) The logistics of gathering people and information; determining when to disseminate the information; what was appropriate information
- 3) Helping staff see the value in using these communication methods
- 4) Ensuring time to work on the project, in addition to other duties.

Overcoming Challenges 1-4

- 1) I spent time talking to staff and collaborating within my own department
- 2) A great deal of leg work had to be used, as well as email, phone calls, etc. Additional time was spent creating some basic standards for content, privacy, timing, maintenance, etc.
- 3) Much time was spent speaking with stakeholders to see if they were absorbing the information that was provided and if it was helpful.
- 4) I defined time to work on the project and its phases. I also worked the project in as a part of my usual task list, over time, to ensure adequate time to complete it. It is still not 100% complete.

LPI Leadership Behaviors Learned

- 1) Appeals to others to share dream of the future.
- 2) Praises people for a job well done.
- 3) Asks for feedback on how his/her actions affect people's performance.
- 4) Actively listens to a diverse point of view.

Learning to Use These Behaviors

Over the past year I have learned to use these behaviors more often to complete my work. I am spending more time questioning my own approach and asking others to provide insight on issues. I'm also providing more opportunities for others to be seen as achievers and pointing their successes out to others. I now understand that my tempo affects the work and stress level of others more than I thought it did. Finally, instead of taking quick action on a solution I've developed, I ask for more feedback, even if I know it will be very different.

Plan for Continued Leadership Development

There are two activities I have planned for leadership development in the year to come. First, I will be participating in the next OASHS Leadership class, beginning in September 2010. I hope to learn even more through my interactions with them, and provide insight to them as well. Also, I have taken a new position with our company that requires a significant amount of interpersonal skill leadership and savvy. I hope to use this to hone my skills further.