

Leading Age Oregon  
Leadership Academy 2012-2013  
Project Summary  
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## Renovations to Redevelopment: Leadership Academy Project Summary

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My project for the year was to complete all the renovations required prior to the redevelopment project planned to start in 2014. The core of my job is to renovate vacant apartments for Marketing to bring in new residents. This primary function continued to be an important responsibility. In addition, I needed to renovate apartments for existing residents to move out of the areas to be torn down. Furthermore, there were temporary arrangements required to move offices and activity rooms. Both of the additional types of renovations required some strategy and processes that were different from the norm. A big part of this project was to establish the strategy and processes early on to ensure I could deliver on the promises made by the senior leadership at Rose Villa. Simply getting to work was not a wise path. I knew this would take some fundamental planning so we could be equipped to succeed given all the obstacles.

There have been many benefits to my project for Rose Villa. There are the tangible results of accomplishing what is crucial to allow for a much larger redevelopment project. The goals set for this project are going to have a direct affect on future success. My project was more about the intangible benefits. My goal was to not only accomplish the tangible goals of the renovations but to build a organizational system that can continue to be used in the future. This included helping to define how all the interested parties involved communicated, arrived at decisions, and how the collective plan was executed from concept to completion.

I needed a lot of people on my team to complete this project. The entire senior management sets a lot of the principles and goals that I act upon. The Facilities department as a whole must be able to execute the plan. Marketing needed to understand how their interests fit in with a broader set of goals and how that affected my production capabilities. I needed everyone to express their interests given their roles, but also how to consolidate everyone's interests and have them effectively work together. I needed my crew to understand not only what our broader goals were, but what the purpose was and is. I needed buy in from the people I rely on to execute the plan. The biggest stakeholder in this process has been the residents that are being displaced. This could have been a very difficult thing if not managed properly. It was important for residents to buy into the greater mission and yet feel taken care of.

I communicated with all the stakeholders in various ways, depending on what was appropriate for their role. There were routine meetings that we constantly updated fluid information and requirements. There are schedules to track strategic goals. There are schedules to set production goals. There is reporting to communicate financials, dates, and scope of work. One of my leadership traits is attention to detail and questioning the process. A big part of that is to draw people out to express their interests and to express to that party the competing interests so that everyone can both feel informed and arrive at the best possible decision.

There were many real challenges to accomplishing this project. The 2 most obvious are time and money. I spend a significant portion of the organizations budget. We are on a deadline that if missed has big implications for the organization as a whole. Meeting a broad spectrum of resident expectations and

communication needs was extremely challenging at times. It was a big challenge early on to help all parties, especially senior leadership to understand how broad goals and competing interests create problems that need to be solved.

I overcame the challenges in several ways. One very key leadership trait is to be competent. I have a business finance degree and I am a journeyman carpenter. I have skills, knowledge, and training across several skill sets that have allowed me to communicate with all the various parties and their competing interests. I helped with financial modeling so that there was an accurate understanding of costs associated with the goals. I used my leadership skills to define the processes in 2 ways, one based on strategic goals, and two based on limitations of resources. In other words, I had to get intentions and reality to match up. I overcame the challenge of the residents needs in several ways. Most important, I communicated with them in a manner of integrity. If I said I would do something, I made sure I did it. If I didn't think I could perfectly meet their expectations, I communicated why that was, and gave them alternatives that were as close as possible. There were countless crucial conversations. The key, I found out, was to win early and often. If I set the tone early that I met or exceeded expectations I built a reputation that spread to other residents. This made my job easier as it went along in some ways.

There were not many surprises along the way because I thoroughly questioned and explored the process early on. However, I am constantly surprised how difficult it is to make great decisions given limited information, and the fact that there is almost never a perfect answer. It was also a surprise to me how many people with job titles of leadership often are weak in the area of decision making skills. The way I deal with that is to constantly try and frame the problem in the simplest terms, what is the main objective, and what is the best way to achieve the objective. It is so easy to make a problem more convoluted than it needs to be. It doesn't necessarily make the decision easier, but can offer a lot of clarification as to what question is even being decided.

The leadership qualities that were critical for me to learn were, active listening, showing how interests can be realized, and seeking constant feedback. All of those don't come naturally to me and yet were very important for me given that there are so many people engaged in this process, affected by the outcome, and have competing interests. All the qualities can be summarized by the word respect. I had to learn how to respect other people's roles and interests in a way that produced a great process.

There is really only one key way I have learned how to implement these leadership qualities and that is by finding examples of people who are good at it and emulating it. I have found that it is really rewarding to implement a leadership skill and see it contribute to success. It reinforces as you go along the value of growing as a leader. Simple pragmatism is a great motivator as well. I have to do whatever I can to succeed at a difficult task.

My plans are to continue to find projects and organizations that challenge me and give me a diversified set of experiences. I do not see staying in a situation that only requires me to maintain, I want to build. I want to be around great leaders and learn from them. I want to learn to ask questions and pursue professional relationships that both compliment me and challenge me to grow.