Striving for Excellence: Organizational Climate Matters

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Library Assessment Conference 2010
Organizational Assessment at the UConn Libraries

- The University of Connecticut Libraries have been practicing multidimensional assessment approaches for more than a decade.

- Influenced by the Balance Scorecard, the Libraries’ first “organizational assessment” was undertaken in 1999.
Organizational Climate Surveys in 1999, 2002, and 2005

- Measured organizational climate factors like:
  - Empowering staff with respect to operational responsibilities
  - Shared leadership and mutual respect among staff
  - Inter-area cooperation
  - Good communications
  - Clear decision-making structure
  - Showing consideration for individual differences
The Advent of ClimateQUAL®

- Having used its own instrument from 1999-2005, the UConn Libraries were excited about participating in the first group of ARL Libraries in 2007 to pilot the Organizational Climate and Diversity Assessment (OCDA) methodology developed at the University of Maryland that became ClimateQUAL®.

- Once the quantitative and qualitative results were received, the Libraries needed help understanding how to interpret the findings and respond so we turned to an organizational development consultant who had worked with us successfully in the past.
“Specifically, a healthy organization has policies, practices, and procedures that empower employees and emphasize the importance of continual learning and innovation to meet the demands of an ever changing environment. It is one in which customer service, employee diversity, and organizational justice are all recognized as critical imperatives that will determine the effectiveness of the organization in the long run (Hanges et al., 2007a, b).

(OCDA Report for the University of Connecticut, p.7—italics added)
Approach

- Discuss organizational values, strategic plan and commitment to change
  - Learning organization
  - Shared leadership
  - Customer focus
  - Staff empowerment
  - Strategic plan reveals the direction, emphasis, implications for change and staff reactions
  - Mental models—using data to question current thinking/strategies
Approach

- Clarify organizational systems analysis approach
  - Experience and/or Perceptions of policies, procedures practice determine satisfaction/commitment
  - Root cause analysis

- Analyze and understand ClimateQUAL results— the initial data
  - Time-bound (possibility of reactions to org. events)
  - Survey population diversity—need to drill down
  - Averages are misleading; some factors more of concern than others? (UConn a learning organization)
  - Need to focus on the critical few
Gather more data

- Select the climate factors to research
  - Less than 50% agreement
  - Significant difference in responses by one demographic group
  - Wide variance from peer institutions
- Plan the focus groups; invite the staff
  - 2 all-staff
  - 1 team
  - Underrepresented minorities
  - Area heads
- Involve leadership group
  - Discuss focus group approach
  - Frame the systems analysis approach
  - Invite their perspective
Facilitate Focus Groups

- Agreement on process/ground rules
  - Facilitator summaries
  - Confidentiality of individual remarks

- Apollo Root Cause Analysis
  - Think of an *event* or a *condition* which might have contributed to the ratings on the survey which was taken last Spring.

- Analysis of Focus Group information
  - Themes / Possible Causes of Ratings
Facilitate Focus Groups

- **Examples:**
  - **Distributive Justice**
    - Condition: The Libraries’ Merit system is…
    - Condition: Hiring and Advancement Opportunities are…
  - **Procedural Justice**
    - Condition: The Merit evaluation process results in…
    - Event: Promotion process: Last go-round…
  - **Authentic Leadership**
    - Condition: Communication system is problematic
    - Event: Last go round, the leader…
    - Event: At an All-Staff Meeting, it was said that…
Recommendations

- Report to Director and the internal OD consultant
  - Importance of ‘placing’ the comments in context of UConn organizational environment
  - Appended Summary and Analysis of Focus Group input
- Discuss with Leadership Group
  - Importance of understanding problems in the policies, procedures, practices
- Report to Staff
  - Importance of participation and systems approach
- Recommend strategies for developing action-oriented, staff-driven changes to existing systems, policies, procedures and practices
Library Actions Based on Consultant’s Work
Project Team 1

Leadership and Team Decision-Making System Project Team Recommendations

- Investigate different leadership models
- Hold individual staff responsible for their participation under the Libraries’ new leadership and decision making structure
- Restructure Leadership Council to include some team leaders
- All Leadership Council members attend leadership training together and periodically participate in team building exercises
- Ongoing training for all team leaders on topics such as facilitation, team building, and managerial skills
- Reduce the number of standing cross-functional teams; and
- Modify the Libraries’ current meeting structure.
Libraries’ Reorganization
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<tr>
<th>Decision Responsibility</th>
<th>Vice Provost</th>
<th>Director’s Council</th>
<th>Program Area Directors</th>
<th>Collections Budget Team</th>
<th>Planning Team</th>
<th>Area Team Leaders</th>
<th>Cross Program Teams</th>
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**L** = Decisions at the Libraries-wide level  
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Project Team 2

Performance Management Project Team

Recommendations

- Revise and clarify Goal Setting and Report of Activity and Achievements forms
- Training on setting SMART goals for all employees
- Mandatory performance evaluation training for all Supervisors
- Mandatory contributions by all team leaders to team members’ evaluations
- Quarterly reviews of all staff
Project Team 3

Hiring, Merit and Promotion Systems Team
Recommendations

- Hiring
  - Search Committees: composition, search process etc.
- Merit
  - Establish a standard framework for University Merit
  - Communicate criteria for University Merit effectively to staff
- Promotion
  - Educational opportunities
  - New career ladders
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Questions?