DEALING WITH RESISTANCE TO CHANGE: THE CASE OF ASSURANCE OF LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

One of the biggest issues facing Colleges of Business as they embark on a program of continuous improvement with the implementation of Assurance of Learning programs is the resistance to change. At first glance Assurance of Learning looks like a simple repackaging or minor changes of the assessment model the AACSB was using prior to 2003.The truth is that the changes are significant in at least four areas: scope of assessment, evaluation tools, principle evaluators, and use of the assessment. The first major difference is the scope of the assessment. The second difference deals with the methods used to assess the program. The third difference deals with the evaluators of the learning outcomes.

The bottom line is that AOL's success depends on faculty "buy in" and the college's ability to meet the new requirements mandated by the AACSB.

RESISTANCE TO CHANGE

People naturally resist change as a survival mechanism. Resistance to change has been studied in a variety of industries and situations. Bhattacherjee and Hikert (2007) describe resistance to information technology in a medical setting. Perceived threat was a significant predictor of change resistance. Lapointe and Rivard's (2005) study of physicians concluded that resistance behaviors will occur if new systems present any threatening consequences. Personal computer usage resistance was studied by Venkatesh and Brown (2001). In an older study, Markus (1983) observed significant differences among accountants when new systems were introduced.

INFLUENCE TACTICS

We advocate the leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship as advanced by Furst and Cable (2008). This theory posits that exchanges between employees will be governed by the relationships that they have developed. Previous research indicates most change efforts fail and that the LMX model helps to identify the reasons. The hard strategies fail when low LMX is present; this is not the case when higher LMX levels are present (Furst & Cable, 2008).

The overall conclusion of recent research on resistance to change is that the success of influence tactics can vary under different scenarios, and the nature of the relationship between employee and employer and the reasons for resistance to change are key. Therefore, understanding these LMX relationships is very important in implementing organizational change.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Every university is different, and dealing with resistance of change is dependent on the reasons for resistance to the adoption of AOL and the relationship between the parties involved. This suggests that simple approaches to get faculty "buy in" like listing of three or four things that worked at one school will not work. It is necessary to consider faculty members' reasons for resisting the change and their relationship with the administration.

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