Course Learning Outcomes for Unit VI

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

6. Develop strategies for reinforcing new behaviors and gathering interpersonal data during the change implementation process.

Reading Assignment

Chapter 6: Reinforcing New Behaviors

In order to access the resources below, you must first log into the myWaldorf Student Portal and access the Business Source Complete database within the Waldorf Online Library.


Unit Lesson

Let's first consider why organizational leaders should develop strategies for gathering interpersonal data through the change process? As we have been learning in this course, effective change requires intervention that is purposeful and relevant to the change initiative at hand. Organizational leaders must plan strategies relevant to the current employees and those employees' skills and behaviors. The interpersonal data is required because, just like it sounds, the data is personalized to the current work group, and the interpersonal facets, which are how they relate to one another, need to be examined. In order to reinforce the desired behaviors, the change implementation plan requires systematic planning for various areas. Spector (2013) outlines the areas in need of strategy to be the organizational structure, systems, and technologies. If we do not examine the interpersonal data that is involved in these change process areas, the outcomes can lead to a failed change intervention.

Now, let’s consider this: how does leadership develop strategies for gathering interpersonal data through the change process? We begin by determining what information is needed to understand the change initiative better. Then, we develop a process for surveying the appropriate employee groups by asking questions, listening, and observing. Spector (2013) illustrates how Macy’s, a large national retail chain, restructures during a recession. The goal is to revive their own market at a time when jobs had been eliminated but revenues still needed to climb. Their strategy, a program called My Macy’s, gave regional managers discretion to tailor the needs to local customers’ preferences. Corporate market research was not involved. The success of My Macy’s allowed for Macy’s to recover from the recession instead of collapse.

The first step for how Macy’s developed their strategy was selecting an appropriate organizational focus. They surveyed and analyzed regional input and selected the strategy of regional differentiation. They needed to let go of the formal structure in order to achieve this strategy and allow autonomy from region to region to individualize market needs. Responsiveness to the external marketplace proved an effective way for leaders to understand the impact that various structural choices have on employee focus.
When a new strategy calls for a new focus, the structure of the organization will need to change as well. Sometimes this means departing from values and traditions that are extremely difficult to part from. There are countless examples with the advent of technology, the Internet, and computer advances. For example, nurses now train with simulation equipment until a procedure is perfected, reducing the number of procedural errors. While this is a great outcome, many nurse training programs are in heavy debate and potentially nurse educators may be out of a job. In another service industry, traditional nursery schools need to acquiesce to the needs of the two-parent working family and provide full-day services instead of strictly half day. Mixed views on the need for structural change require the need to develop strategies for gathering interpersonal data through the change process.

Organizational structure refers to the departments, units, or divisions that are created in order to focus organizational efforts. There are choices to make in any organizational chart, particularly with regard to function, when change initiatives ensue. Sometimes, there are various charts for one company (functional departments versus product-oriented divisions). We can see this within most organizational models at universities and colleges. There are content-specific departments within divisional programs of study. Functional structures for most corporate-based organizations typically include financials, human resources, research and development, sales, engineering, production, marketing, and business development. Despite each functionally oriented department, the simultaneous capacity to respond together in a well-planned coordinated effort, depends on technical expertise and market responsiveness.

Spector (2013) spends some time in Chapter 6 illustrating how employees are hired and move vertically within an organization based on technical competencies and commitment. Many of the behaviors associated with the upward mobility in a company may be ineffective in building interconnected ways of working toward innovation. If employees have limited opportunity to develop ways of working across departments, then an “us versus them” mentality can evolve and an internal competition will create strong structural barriers. A divisional structure can help overcome that mindset and allow employees to focus on marketplace responsiveness. In the case of a software developing company, for instance, a top-down organizational structure could adopt a geographical structure, wherein the geographic responsiveness is far more effective.

Dual focus on internal focus (functional structure) and external focus (divisional structure) are often difficult to have in an either/or status, but organizational leaders can increase the complexity of internal focus to accommodate change needs (Spector, 2013). Using a matrix structure, leaders can develop a way of looking at the people in the organization from a vantage point where they can view not only function but also other focal points such as their role, talent, or region. The dual focus, or matrix focus, can be required in order to gain a vantage point for where to find particular information or where to reinforce particular behaviors. Other strategies in Chapter 6 include a focus on supply chain and horizontally linked structures.

As you consider the role of structural intervention at your organization, look at strategies for gathering interpersonal data through the change process. What questions do you ask? Who do you listen to and observe? Look at examples Spector (2013) presents such as with IBM and its decentralized structure. Also, think of Lewin’s refreezing technique. Do either of these apply? What kind of incentives can be used to support new behaviors? Are there new pay incentives that can align with desired performance behaviors? Consider intrinsic and extrinsic ways to reinforce behaviors that would not interfere with pay equity. How would a new pay incentive be introduced and sequenced? Would you use any of the strategies outlined by Spector (2013) in Chapter 6? Finally, how can technology be used to influence desired behaviors in the change implementation? How can that plan be sequenced out?

In this unit, you begin with discussion board participation and describe what is appealing about incentive systems to organizational leaders during a change implementation process. Be sure to share examples of when it would be useful to create new incentives early on a transformation process. What new behaviors are desired?

Also in this unit, you will be submitting a paper explaining strategies for gathering interpersonal data through the change process and which change implementation theories would have helped the administrators at Springfield General Hospital in the case study “Making the Problem Worse” on pages 147-148 in the textbook.
Reference