Change Leadership: Leading by Empowering and Innovation

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Abstract

According to Machiavelli, "there is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success, than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order of things." Five hundred years later this is truer than ever before. Today's ever-changing, agile environment is constantly reshaping the way we learn, the way we think and the way we transform ourselves and others in order to adapt or embrace the new order of things, the inevitable change. Usually, we think of change as being imposed on us, but as a leader of change, one faces many more challenges in the process of introducing, conducting and executing change. Today's leaders of change need to have the ability, strength and vision to become catalysts of change. They need to sharpen their transformational and instructional leadership skills, and possess tools to overcome obstacles and empower their followers.

1. Introduction

This paper intends to demonstrate how Effective Change Leadership can facilitate and inspire positive change within the organization. This particular Change Leadership model and its concepts are linked to the local context of Hawaii LTD, DLI with examples of how leading change through innovation, empowerment of faculty and investment in their abilities and creativity dramatically changes the organizational culture, motivates, inspires, and creates a culture where the challenge is embraced by all.

2. From Idea to Joint Vision

2.1. Background

It all started with the Need—meaningful incorporation of technology in language teaching. Our main resources were: faculty and existing curriculum. Our tools: iPads, iBooks Author, widgets, technology and methodology trainings. Timeline 1-3 months for first piloting of new lessons; Timeline 2-6 months for complete re-design of the curriculum.

2.2. Communicating the Needs and the Vision

The first step was to introduce the Need and the Goal. The obvious and immediate need was the application of new technology—iPads and iBooks. This required a complete revising and adjusting of the whole existing curriculum to fit new tools and new way of thinking and teaching in the era of "digital natives"—students vs. "digital immigrants"—teachers. The goal was to use the tools, in this case new technology, in a meaningful way by relying on students'

ability to hypertext, employing and promoting their multiple intelligences, using gamification as a concept to encourage students to learn languages, etc. This idea sounded so "out there," it was so innovative, inspiring, and logical, but at the same time very unrealistic and scary for many. Even at the first meeting with the faculty I could see the range of reactions and emotions on their faces, from disbelief to absolute annoyance. I could feel in the air the instant reaction of "Yet another new thing that we have to try!" My excitement and passion about the new adventure we were about to embark on were embraced by some, but definitely not by all and I knew, then and there, that if I wanted the faculty members to accept the idea as their own, it had to be equally shared, and supported through their full participation and commitment.

"Even those who fancy themselves the most progressive will fight against other kinds of progress, for each of us is convinced that our way is the best way." – Louis L'Amour

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3. From Resistance to Integration

3.1. Overcoming Resistance

"People don't resist change. They resist being changed!" – Peter Senge

Having a necessity, and an obvious need to execute a change is sometimes helpful at the initial stage, but unless the idea that you have as a leader is truly embraced by your followers, and unless they truly believe that they will equally and fully participate in its execution, the change will not happen the way it is envisioned. Resistance is a difficult yet unavoidable part of change. As good leaders of change we understand the differences of the people we lead and how to use their strengths (Kotter's 8 steps Change Model) so that we can minimize the resistance, but that is easier said than done. In reality, all people resist being changed regardless of their education, age, or background, because the hardest thing to change is our beliefs, attitudes and experiences. "Even those who fancy themselves the most progressive will fight against other kinds of progress, for each of us is convinced that our way is the best way." (Louis L'Amour). That was the case with the Hawaii LTD faculty members who were already successful and experienced, had excellent results, and the students who were satisfied with the courses' outcomes. So, the obvious question in dealing with this change came up: Why should we change anything if everything is working so well? Just as prescribed by Kubler-Ross Model, we went through all stages of resistance: denial (don't fix it if it ain't broken), emotional (problem finding), acceptance (problem solving), and commitment (increase in morale).

3.2. Integration

Hawaii LTD went through the above specified stages in our own way, by integrating each and every faculty at every level of the change process, based on their skills, experiences, interests, potentials and different levels of expertise.

As in the Table 1 below, we went through 3 phases of Integration:

- Innovating

- Growing
- Empowering

"Giving everyone a chance and the freedom to be innovative and creative in their own way and at their own pace is the crucial ingredient to creating a happy and motivating work environment."

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4. From Innovation to Empowerment

4.1. Phase 1 - Innovating

In this phase we formed a group of combined experts—tech geniuses (experts in new technology) and academic geniuses (experts in teaching methodology). We trained them on basic hardware and software use and allowed them to experiment. The first lessons were mostly focused on technology per se, but less on the methodology. We re-trained the group on the meaningful use of technology for language learning and let them further experiment and innovate. They first piloted lessons-products in front of other colleagues which inspired and encouraged the rest of the faculty to integrate themselves into the project, and incited them to innovate.

4.2. Phase 2 - Growing

We formed the teams with Mentors from the "Experts" group who trained the rest of the faculty. At the same time, the "experts" continued to be additionally trained in both software (widgets use for example) and methodology. Once all the faculty members were trained, everyone shared their lessons-products and the first lesson was piloted in the classroom. Seeing the excited, proud faces of our faculty members when they realized what an amazing product they made with their own hands and creative minds, and when they saw the immediate results in the classroom, was absolutely priceless and beyond rewarding.

4.3.Phase 3 - Empowering

Once the faculty felt comfortable with innovating with the new technology and proud of the impact and value of their own products they gained the qualities and attributes of a leader. They started recognizing themselves as not just teachers, but also as curriculum designers, innovators, visionaries… They dared to train others, to present what they learned and produced, to write and publish about their experiences and accomplishments.

Table 1: 3 Phases of Integration

Phase 1 - Innovating	Phase 2 -Growing	Phase 3-Empowering
Small group formation	Teams forming (Mentors)	Teacher/Designer
Small group training (Technology & Methodology)	All faculty members training (TTT)	Teacher/Presenter

Phase 1 - Innovating	Phase 2 -Growing	Phase 3-Empowering
Small group design experimenting	All faculty experimenting	Teacher/Publisher
Small group modeling	All faculty modeling	Teacher/Innovator
Evaluating	Evaluating	Teacher/Visionary
First Lessons Piloting	Classroom application	Teacher/Catalyst for future change
Re-evaluating	Growing	Empowering

5. Conclusion

Giving everyone a chance and the freedom to be innovative and creative in their own way and at their own pace is the crucial ingredient to creating a happy and motivating work environment. When your creation is a product of your brain and your heart, that is when you feel true ownership. That ownership becomes a seed of the growth, empowerment and pride that you want to pass on.

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