ESTABLISHING THE WISCONSIN UNION AS AN IDEAL WORK ENVIRONMENT

► Process Improved:
We are using Quality Improvement and Appreciative Inquiry methods to improve Work Environment at The Wisconsin Union. In September 2002, the Wisconsin Union introduced four strategic directions for the upcoming years. The number one direction was to "Establish the Wisconsin Union as an Ideal Work Place. During the summer of 2002, Wisconsin Union’s Leadership Team read First Break All The Rules, by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, which reviews research showing what the world’s greatest managers do differently. One year later, the Training Resource Center used the 12 questions identified in this book to survey staff regarding the core elements needed to attract, focus, and keep the most talented employees.

► Unit: The Wisconsin Union, including Memorial Union, Union South, food service at three campus conference centers, and six campus delis.

► Customers of the Process and Their Needs: All staff of The Wisconsin Union, including 200 permanent staff and 800 part-time staff. Currently, thirteen of those staff are native Spanish speakers.

► Opportunity Statement: Involve as many staff as possible in defining and improving our work environment.

► Changes Made: This improvement process included:
  • 7-10/2003: Work Environment Survey (in English and Spanish)
  • 10/2003: Fall Connections, an all staff gathering using Appreciative Inquiry’s Discovery and Dream Phases, to identify themes and wishes from the survey
  • 11/2003: Coffee Breaks, Three informal dialogue sessions coordinated by our director, Mark Guthier, to address results of the survey and Appreciative Inquiry process
  • 11/03–6/04: Two committees formed to review data and make recommendations (Design Phase):
    1. Work Environment Committee
    2. SWAT committee (to implement quick fixes)

► Results: Currently, our results include:
  • Staff wishes divided into three areas: Personal, Interpersonal, and Environmental (English and Spanish). Proposal in progress for numerous “quick fixes” and long-term follow-up for sustainable change.
  • Created second survey for top wish, “Employee Locker/Break Room”, to distribute 6/2004
  • Offered workshop, “How To Advance In The State Classified System”, 2/2004

► Lessons Learned:
  • Wisconsin Union staff have multiple definitions of what constitutes an ideal work environment.
  • All staff need to dialogue about work environment, to both air concerns and hear differences.
  • We need to strike a balance between dialogue and data to drive good decisions.

► Next Steps: will include:
  • Delivery Phase: Implementation by specific staff and units

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► Attachments: Flowchart, Work Environment Survey, Summary of Wishes and Follow-up