Shortening Time-to-Impact: Engaging Diverse Stakeholders to Develop Viable Goals in the School of Education

A Best Practice / Case Study

► Process Improved:
This best practice describes the process conducted by the School of Education to better meet the technology integration needs of the School’s constituents to teach, engage in scholarship, improve student work, and support administrative services. This inclusive process resulted in the development of an increased capacity to recognize issues we might not have seen otherwise. These issues are on the causal path to our vision and are defined in such a way to show whether the change we seek will occur.

► Unit:
School of Education

► Customers of the Process and Their Needs

Customer Group 1
The working group charged with addressing the unsolvable problem using processes that don’t work.

Their Needs
Working policy groups require a process that unpacks the problem to
- allow in-depth examination of the components of the unsolvable problem,
- provide the opportunity for gathering multiple inputs,
- allow for testing those inputs with audiences,
- identify a focus for actions on viable goals to get at the unsolvable problems.

Customer Group 2
Beneficiaries of the policies and practices: faculty, students, administrators, Wisconsin Idea constituents

Their Needs
- To have resources used in the most efficient and beneficial way possible
- To know that policy makers will create positive change on their behalf through an understanding of the barriers each stakeholder group faces.
- To see progress

► Problem Statement:
Problem: Effectively addressing the technology integration needs of faculty, staff, students, alumni, cooperating teachers and Wisconsin Idea constituents to do their teaching, scholarship, student work, and administrative services cannot be done with a single, sweeping policy. Thus, steps were needed to
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unpack the technology integration issue from all points of view, find the common barriers to effective integration, and set viable, short term goals that “knock down” those barriers. OpenEye’s viable goal method provided just such a solution.

► Changes Made
  o The IT Working Group adopted OpenEye’s viable goal method.
  o Changes in policy and practice were identified which would bear directly on the root causes of the problem
  o Solutions that required no capital outlay, but had high likelihood of success were chosen
  o Use of innovative diagrammatic reports. This brought new transparency to policy making and allowed the involvement of heretofore “unheard” voices in the policymaking process.

► Results
  o Greater awareness of the interrelated nature of the barriers to achieving even higher levels of performance.
  o Deeper understanding of how technology can and should be integrated into the scholarship, work and administration of the School of Education
  o A structure for hearing all voices in sticky policy development situations.
  o Points of view and perspectives that were unheard, or untapped, are now visible thanks to the process and the user-friendly reporting which makes it natural to discuss how to knock down barriers to success.
  o Working group members have a vested interest in doing more than showing up for committee meetings. Members leave meetings with a role and a way to contribute back to their units in a focused way.

► Lessons Learned
  o One needs to explain and support and communicate the process to ALL constituent groups.
  o Focus on causes before attempting solutions.
  o The right process can unveil the interconnectedness of stakeholder needs.
  o Understanding the root causes to problems is a powerful tool in policy making. However, language is very, very important. When identifying root causes, be vigilant to word them in a way that is truthful without sounding blameful.
  o Change takes time. Finding the solution takes systematic steps and the setting of small, reachable goals.

► Next Steps
  o School of Education IT support units are implementing a strategy to improve the method by which IT support information is channeled to faculty. This is a strategy that directly addresses one of the root causes of the problem.
  o Based on the root cause analysis, new strategies will be developed to address barriers to success in the area of IT structure and IT communication.
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Include text, pictures, graphic and any helpful background information from the project.