

# Quality

## Endeavors

News from the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment • No. 88 February 2006

## Leading a Successful Innovation Initiative

### WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO MAKE AN INNOVATION OR IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVE SUCCESSFUL?

Over the past year, 26 groups in Mastering SuperVision have been answering this question as part of the Leading Improvement in Your Workgroup module provided by the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment. Their answers may surprise you – for their simplicity, straightforwardness, and obviousness. We share their thoughts with you as a quick guide for you to use in reviewing how you are supporting innovation, improvement, and goal accomplishment at Penn State.

This month **Innovation Extracts** is expanded and incorporated into the main article to share some recent literature on leadership for innovation and improvement that parallels the thoughts of the Mastering SuperVision participants.

### Observations from Mastering SuperVision

Many of the groups identified similar categories of behavior to lead innovation, although there is variation in what they named the categories (and over 50 categories were named). We have clustered some of these categories and behaviors, to emphasize the similarities and patterns and to focus on the most frequently identified categories.

Overall, the groups recognized **communication** most often as a key category. Some of the specific behaviors under the category of communication included: listening to others, gathering input, respect for all, and clear expectations. Some other frequently cited categories of behaviors included encouragement/open-mindedness, leadership/attitude, goals/needs, feedback/process

assessment, and teamwork. Some specific behaviors mentioned for **encouragement/open-mindedness** included consensus building, having an open-door policy, openness to feedback, and showing confidence in others. **Leadership/attitude** behaviors included being fair and honest, flexible, and able to delegate. Setting clear goals and creative thinking were included in **goals/needs**. **Feedback/process assessment** behaviors included follow through and recognition of positive steps. **Teamwork** behaviors included cooperation on complex tasks and being a team member, not just a teacher. Figure 1 provides additional specific behaviors for these key categories. You can view all of the suggested behaviors to model at [http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/newsletter/BehaviorsToModelMS-Feb\\_2006.pdf](http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/newsletter/BehaviorsToModelMS-Feb_2006.pdf).

It's important to point out the interrelationships of each of these categories. Teamwork requires clear communication, obtaining input from others, seeking feedback, and consensus building. Data and goals are needed to help teams identify and address problems and solutions.

It's also important to point out the difficulty of categorizing these interrelated behaviors. In many cases, when the lists from different groups were compared, the same or similar behaviors had been placed in different key categories (respect is part of both communication and encouragement, for example). Finally, while not categorized in exactly the same format, the groups generally identified behaviors that fit with Penn State's definition of continuous quality improvement - a people-based management system that seeks to continually improve performance and exceed customer expectations by using data to improve key processes - and its four components: teams, stakeholders, data, and processes.

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Figure 1: Some Key Behaviors for Successful Innovation

<p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active listening</li> <li>• Better communication among coworkers</li> <li>• Clear direction</li> <li>• Clear expectations</li> <li>• Communicate info that is important to others</li> <li>• Communicate success when innovations work</li> <li>• Gather the input of others</li> <li>• Respect to all voices at the table</li> </ul>	<p><b>Encouragement/Open-Mindedness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Let others be creative</li> <li>• Reward success</li> <li>• Show confidence in ability of employee</li> <li>• Show enthusiasm</li> <li>• Consensus building</li> <li>• Open door - and e-mail and personal contact</li> <li>• Respect for others' ideas</li> <li>• Appreciation, openness to feedback</li> <li>• Encourage everyone's input</li> <li>• Supports professional development</li> </ul>
<p><b>Leadership/Attitude</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads by example</li> <li>• Flexibility in adapting to different personalities</li> <li>• Team builder</li> <li>• Dependable</li> <li>• Trusting</li> <li>• Fair</li> <li>• Positive attitude</li> <li>• Coaching</li> <li>• Ability to delegate</li> <li>• Initiative</li> <li>• Risk taking</li> <li>• Honesty</li> </ul>	<p><b>Feedback/Process Assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow through</li> <li>• Provide feedback</li> <li>• Customer centered actions</li> <li>• Find and try new tools to reduce labor intensive processes</li> <li>• Recognition of positive steps</li> <li>• Streamlining processes</li> <li>• Question processes</li> <li>• Discuss anticipated challenges and changes</li> <li>• Reflection/evaluation of current processes</li> <li>• Actively looks for ways to improve</li> <li>• Seek data</li> </ul>
<p><b>Goals/Needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define individual goals</li> <li>• Set clear goals for unit (strategic plan)</li> <li>• Creative thinking/Not "how do we do it now", but "how do we want to do it"</li> <li>• Commitment to customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Aware of the "big picture" – where the unit is heading</li> </ul>	<p><b>Teamwork</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cooperation on complex tasks</li> <li>• Team oriented</li> <li>• Promotes teamwork</li> <li>• Facilitate team oriented problem solving</li> <li>• Be a team member and not just a teacher</li> </ul>

## Key Leadership Qualities from Recent Literature

At the fall 2005 Mastering SuperVision graduation ceremony on December 19, 2005, guest speaker Nancy Eaton, Dean of the University Libraries, shared the six most important leadership qualities identified by Bill Creech in *The Five Pillars of TQM: How to Make Total Quality Management Work for You* (Truman Talley Books/Dutton, 1994). They are:

1. **Courage:** In dealing with others, in sticking to principles, and in being willing to change your mind or admit that you don't know and need to find out
2. **Confidence:** Believing that you can do it, without being arrogant, recognizing the need to keep growing and learning, not being threatened by change
3. **Savvy:** Understanding reality as well as theory, recognizing what you don't know
4. **Maturity:** Making reasoned decisions, respecting the dignity of all
5. **Integrity:** Being honest, willing to give or receive bad news, sharing information
6. **Desire:** Leading to make life better for others and help the organization succeed

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Peter Drucker defined innovation as “change that creates a new dimension of performance.” *Leading for Innovation and Organizing for Results*, published by the Drucker Foundation (2002), brings together the thoughts of 23 contributors. Some of the common themes in the essays address the importance of an organizational culture that encourages and supports innovation, a leader who lives and demonstrates the organizational values and culture, and an atmosphere that allows for risk taking and testing and tolerates failure. Howard Gardner and Kim Barberich address the importance of values and ethical behaviors on the part of the leader, specifically a sense of responsibility, honesty and accountability, faith in the organization, and the belief in their contribution to a common good. Robert Knowling emphasizes the importance of a clear vision and strategy, and measures that help people focus their efforts. In our age of rapid technological change, James Burke looks at leaders as facilitators and mentors rather than providers of answers and solutions.

In *Continuous Quality Improvement in Higher Education* (American Council on Education/Praeger Series on Higher Education, 2004), John Dew and Molly Nearing address the components of successful leadership for improvement and innovation in a university environment. First, expanding on earlier models of leadership styles, they recognize the continuum of faculty and staff involvement in decision making, ranging from low, in which the leader decides and announces a decision, to high, in which decision making is delegated to the group. They add to the traditional model the outcome of a leader making no decision, which can lead to chaos, and also recognize that, with low involvement in decision making, the group may ignore the decision. Second, Dew and Nearing address the importance in an academic environment of knowing in advance what process will be used to reach a decision, and ensuring that there is consensus regarding this process and agreement that the process is fair and effective. Finally, Dew and Nearing introduce the LUIS model, used at the State University of New York, Binghamton, to reach consensus, in which participants agree that:

- I can Live with this decision
- I Understand this decision
- I was Involved in this decision
- I will Support this decision

## Applying These Insights

The key components to lead effective innovation are some pretty basic items. Comparing the observations from Mastering SuperVision to the approaches identified in recent literature indicates this is information most of us have. Identifying these behaviors in Mastering SuperVision helps supervisors see actions they themselves can take to encourage improvements and enable successful innovation. They may need occasional assistance or training from an organization like the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment to learn a specific tool or facilitate a particular event. But most of the time, the Mastering SuperVision participants, and the rest of us, just need to pay attention to what we are doing on a day by day basis, how we are making decisions and dealing with the people around us, and put these basic ideas into practice. We have more knowledge and wisdom than we may realize. We just need to apply it.

## NEW! INNOVATION INSIGHTS #13: The Relationship between Continuous Improvement and Strategic Planning

Both continuous improvement and strategic planning are organizational learning processes, sharing, among other things, data-driven decision making, broad communication, assessment, and strong leadership commitment. Innovation Insights #13, *The Relationship between Continuous Improvement and Strategic Planning*, at <http://www.psu.edu/president/pia/innovation/>, provides more information about the place of these two activities in higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## QUALITY ADVOCATES

### NEW! Approaches to Managing Departmental Budgets

Friday, February 17, 2006

8:30 - 10:00 a.m.

404 Old Main

This year and next, academic and administrative units are being asked to recycle funds and identify opportunities for cost savings. Join us for the February 17<sup>th</sup> Quality Advocates meeting when the topic for discussion is approaches to managing departmental budgets in times of constraint.

Panelists will include:

- Caroline Eckhardt, Department Head of Comparative Literature, College of the Liberal Arts
- Richard Koubek, Department Head of Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering, College of Engineering
- Jacqueline Stefovich, Department Head of Education Policy Studies, College of Education

Moderator: Louise Sandmeyer, Executive Director of the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment

## Using Data for Academic Management: Sharing Best Practices

Friday, March 24, 2006

8:30 - 10:00 a.m.

315 Rider II

Conversations with deans, associate deans, department heads, and other academic leaders suggest a sense that there is potentially powerful information that is not fully utilized because of the limitations of time, staffing, and expertise. On the other hand, much interesting work definitely is being done; that work could probably be better leveraged if it were to be more widely known and adapted. This session will highlight successful approaches to data collection and utilization, especially at the college level. The smart use of information can help to enhance decision making in areas such as faculty capacity, performance, and productivity; student outcomes; curricular change; student recruitment and retention; and other matters that are at the heart of effective academic management.

Panelists:

- Raymond Lombra, Associate Dean for Administration, Research, and College Advancement, College of the Liberal Arts
- Karl M. Newell, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Education, College of Health and Human Development
- Lisa R. Shibley, Institutional Research and Assessment Officer, Penn State Berks

Moderator: Michael J. Dooris, Director, Planning Research and Assessment, Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment

Quality Advocates discussions are open to any member of the University community who has an interest in planning, improvement, or assessment. If you would like to attend one or more of these events, please call the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment at 814-863-8721 or email [psupia@psu.edu](mailto:psupia@psu.edu)

Penn State campuses interested in participation via videoconference should contact the Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment.

## SUPPORT FOR PLANNING, IMPROVEMENT, AND ASSESSMENT IN YOUR UNIT

The Office of Planning and Institutional Assessment is available to consult with units and facilitate the implementation of Penn State's strategic priorities. It is the Office's mission to support the University's efforts to plan, assess, and improve programs and services. The Office uses organizational change tools to help units assess their needs, develop strategic plans, improve key processes, and develop collaborative team environments. There is no charge for the Office's consultation services. If you would like to discuss the planning, quality, or assessment needs of your unit with one of our consultants, please contact the Office at 814-863-8721 or e-mail [les1@psu.edu](mailto:les1@psu.edu).