Organizational Leadership: MMI 481

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Journal 2: Organizational Change

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## As we move into the module on organizational change, I will begin by defining change as a transformation process. I believe it is important to understand the key word in the statement is process. Although change can be planned and organized, it frequently results from crisis. In this module, I had the opportunity to explore the deeper meaning of change, how and why change occurs, rationale for skepticism when faced with change and strategy to implement change.

**What were your key learning’s from this module?**

The material in this module focused on how leaders influence people. The primary learning I gained was the concept of vital behaviors. The book *Influencer: The Power to Change Anything* began with explanation and examples of vital behavior. While examining vital behaviors through examples, I learned that there are ways to ensure vital behaviors. The means to ensure vital behaviors are defined in the model known as the six sources of influence. This model demonstrates strategies to motivate work in the form of motivation or ability. The three sources that further define the strategies include personal, social and structural.

Additional learnings gained from this module included what leads an organization to change and how and why people react to change, positive or negative. After I had a clearer understanding of the common reasons for resistance to change such as the effects on themselves and fear of failure, I was able to apply these feelings to behavior. I learned observing for resistant behavior includes the following: Asking for more detail, being flooded with detail, questioning the timing, claiming confusion, displaying silence, intellectualizing, and total compliance. Observing for these behaviors is important in differentiating the person with true concern versus the “whiner.”

The example that exemplified the teachings of this chapter most for me was the story about Guinea worm disease. This story illustrates how finding the root cause leading to continued spread of the disease was tied to behaviors. New behaviors were taught (a vital behavior) to eradicate the disease. This story brought to light how incorporating members of the community in the process of change led to sustainability. I equate the strategy to what might be implemented in a corporation to promote teamwork. In order to promote team cohesion, it would be important to assess for root causes (or behaviors) that would lead to resistance within the team. Strategy can be developed around findings of the assessment to incorporate the team.

**What beliefs and understandings were confirmed?**

The beliefs and understandings that were confirmed were presented in Chapter 10. This chapter discussed how to utilize all the concepts learned in this module for successful change. As I read the information and reflected on the learning’s indicated above, it led me to the reasons many leaders are not successful with change. I believe leaders frequently have a vision of what behaviors and processes they want, or expect, but miss steps in the implementation. For example, has a thorough analysis been completed to determine why the desired behavior does not occur and are there barriers preventing the behavior?

An example that comes to mind for me is related to a process I suggested that would eliminate duplication of process save time and money for our department. Due to the size of the last organization I worked, we ran our systems on multiple domains. In addition to the production domains, there were multiple domains designated for testing, training, and integration. In addition, there was an unrelated system with the sole purpose of maintaining system specifications. A frequent issue was the specifications did not match the production systems so we were not able to validate the source of truth when systems were out of synchronization. The simple solution was to implement a consistent process that included change control for updating the specifications in conjunction with any production changes. The reaction to the suggested change from leadership was a more senior staff member "owns the process” and therefore it was left to the staff to change. Unfortunately, the leader did not want to “dictate” change and therefore left it to the team to “figure out.” You can see from the situation, behavior was not changed because the leader did not identify the behaviors leading to the inconsistent processes. Most importantly, change was not implemented because the leaders did not reevaluate and adjust the plan as the organization grew and changed.

**What theories or practices did you disagree with?**

A theory that I have some disagreement with is the idea that if you understand behaviors of change, you can change anything. I believe there are situations that are not within control of the leader and therefore change would be challenging if not impossible.

One other idea, which I thought would be included in the module, was the ability to lead. What does it take to be an effective leader? The *Influencer* discussed that by utilizing their teachings, anyone could promote change. Similar to the philosophy that anything can be changed, I believe it does require some personality characteristics to be successful. One reason for this belief is the idea that people interpret things they read, see, and hear differently. I believe some of this interpretation comes from experience and the environment one is accustomed. Additionally it takes knowledge and the ability to be open and understanding to others’ differences in order to be successful in persuading change. This was a topic in the discussion boards that became evident through some examples. The most memorable example was the leader that scolded a staff member for assisting a customer. I would not have expected this style or behavior demonstrated by the leader, but it clearly reflects his character.

A final area that I will mention briefly is the idea of rewards and punishments. As stated in the book, this is dangerous territory and through some examples shared throughout the course has proven to be the case. While I agree to a limited degree that reward can be beneficial, too often I have experienced reward being given for doing what is expected. I believe there is a fine line between being held accountable and being rewarded for an exemplary performance.

**What are your personal strengths and challenges in this area?**

I believe my background and training as a registered nurse is what lead to what is now my strength as well as my challenge, analytical thinking. I think like most people, I do not like to fail. In my background as a nurse, it was especially important to understand your role not only as caregiver but also as patient advocate. In the role as nurse we need to make sure, we are doing the right thing for our patients. We must make choices and decisions that will prevent patients from further illness or harm. Throughout our training, we were questioned by instructors why you would or would not provide certain care or medications to a patient. We were always taught to think about impacts of actions both positive and negative. For these reasons, I believe this behavior has been ingrained in me as a professional to ensure I am always doing the right thing for the right reason.

As I stated in my past journal, my personal strengths can often be my challenges. It is becoming apparent to me that the strengths and challenges a person encounters can cross over to other areas for various reasons. In the case of change, I have learned that what I view as being an analytical thinker may in fact be viewed as being resistant or noncompliant. I learned through this module that at times when I believe I am making sure I am clear on expectations or we have covered all bases with the change, this behavior could be misinterpreted as negative behavior. My new challenge is to ensure I am not perceived as negative or resistant to change. I plan to accomplish this through limiting questions or taking some of my questions out of a group setting and clarify directly with my manager so she will have a clear understanding behind the rationale for my questions. This will also allow me time to evaluate and prioritize any concerns.

In the last couple of positions that I have been employed, I was the only or maybe one other nurse in the role. The other employees had not experienced the same type of training and therefore I think it was more likely to be perceived as being resistant to change or noncompliant because they did not understand my background and experiences.

**What key concepts and/or tools will you apply and how?**

I believe applying the concepts and theories learned in this module will be of great benefit in my personal and professional life. In my current position as Research Lead/Project Manager, responsibilities include running meetings and making suggestions for the addition of research as well as modification of current research. I have been in meetings, which ideas have been proposed and one individual always jumps in with excuses why we cannot do the study prior to evaluating any supporting evidence. The learnings in this module has provided me with the ability to assess behavior of team members. As we move forward to determining research strategies, changes required to conduct research and the impact of outcomes, it will be critical to understand the behaviors of team members. I think understanding behaviors relating to change and those of resistance will guide me in becoming a more influential leader and member of future teams. As I mentioned previously, when in the role of team member and not lead, I will be conscious of questions and comments ensuring not to be perceived as being opposed to change.

On a personal level, these same behaviors can be detected in my teenagers when they decide they do not like the rules or decide to be uncooperative. I plan to use the learning’s to assist in identifying vital behaviors and using the six sources of influence to obtain positive outcomes for both the their benefit and my own. One on my children is a master of excuses or resistant behavior. I will change my approach by clearly defining expectations or responsibilities and defining consequences that are clear, concise and “painful” (loss of cell phones, cars, etc).

This module is best summarized in a quote by John F. Kennedy, “Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future."