FAQ -How to plan a reorganization

How do I begin the process of a reorganization?

Below are steps to help you in your reorganization. We highly encourage you to contact our HR office so that we can assist you through these steps.

STEP 1 – Define the Problem

- Determine whether existing jobs and structures are meeting department goals
- Consider what factors contribute to effectiveness of jobs and structure
- Identify methods for collecting input from staff
    - Verbal, written, and surveys
    - Problem-solving teams
    - Review committees

STEP 2- Identify New Structure

- Distribution of functions throughout the organization (definition of functions to be performed, groupings of functions, and the relationships among functions)
- Vertical and horizontal authority relationships
- Think outside of the box – are there other units doing similar work? Can a strategy to capitalize on economies of scale to reduce redundancies across campus?
- Communication/decision-making process (how formal decisions are made and by whom, and the information system established for decision-making)
- Internal departmental policies (the decisions, rules, or guidelines established in production, personnel, purchasing, research and development, and other areas)
- The attributes of department employees (includes abilities, skills, experience, and other behavioral issues)

STEP 3- Develop a Reorganization Proposal

- Timeframe
- Reasons for reorganization
- Before and after organization charts
- Position descriptions for new, changed positions
- Names, titles of employees to be affected by changed, new reporting lines, physical relocation, reduction in time, or salary implications
- Review of Affirmative Action impact (if applicable)
- Determine skills needed for each position
- Compare current skills with what is needed
- Determine training needs and resources
- Clarify mission, goals, and standards for success

STEP 4- Create a Communication Plan

- Identify the different groups who will need communication and the different messages/information they will need
- Determine series of review and update meetings with leadership
- Determine schedule of informational meetings with staff
- Plan communications outside department to announce reorganization
- Set up individual meetings with employees whose jobs will change significantly
- Review, reassess, and gather input during implementation
- Determine methods to get feedback during implementation
- Facilitate communication by remaining open to suggestions and concerns
- Schedule regular staff meetings
- Encourage all team members to share information
- Support brainstorming and consensus decision-making where appropriate
- Include systems that will provide regular feedback from management, staff, and client groups

How do I ensure my department is accepting and not resistant to the reorganization?

- The purpose of the reorganization needs to be clear. When employees don't understand why changes are implemented, anxiety and suspicion often fill the information vacuum.
- Employees must understand the need for the change. Even if employees understand the reasons for change they may disagree with management's perspective and decisions made.
- Employees must be involved in the planning. People support what they helped create. If employees do not believe they have enough input in planning change, resistance may increase.
- Communication regarding the reorganization is clear and frequent. Even if the change affects only one other person, communication can be easily distorted.
- Key people in the organization must advocate the change. If employees believe their boss or other important individuals/groups don't support the change, acceptance is difficult to secure.
- Avoid excessive pressure. When employees are already feeling overworked, the additional pressure brought on by the change may create resistance.

- Communication to all stakeholders that the initial restructure is a work in progress and some aspects may need to change as the new duties and responsibilities become a part of the day to day operation.
- Employees may need to be reassured in the following areas:
  - No negative impact on their social relations. If employees view the change as adversely affecting the way they relate to people significant to them, acceptance is reduced.
  - Will not decrease their autonomy, the level of challenge the job offers, the type of feedback they receive, or the degree of importance the organization places on their jobs.
  - If employees have been exposed to a long history of poorly-executed changes. If the employees believe that the organization is involved in another ill-planned reorganization, their enthusiasm will be greatly diminished.
  - Mistakes will happen. The employees cannot fear failure. Change involves learning and learning usually involves mistakes; when people are not given the freedom to make mistakes while learning, they may be afraid and easily discouraged.
  - The employees may lack confidence in their capacity to implement the change, or in management's commitment to the training they need.
  - Employees perceive that organizational objectives of the change and their own personal goals are incompatible. Resistance is increased if employees believe the change will block or significantly restrict the achievement of their own personal ambitions.

Why is communication critical in a reorganization?

To Get Information Out

- To clarify the reasons for change
- To describe the benefits of the change
- To offer a detailed picture of the new organization
- To describe how the change will take place
- To provide information on support/resources

To Gather Information

- To get input from the people affected
- To get feedback on how the change is proceeding

To Affect Attitudes and Behavior

- To show that change is a beginning, not an end

- To create an atmosphere that supports the new identity/culture
- To encourage risk-taking and openness to change
- To move toward a collaborative team approach

To Offer Support During the Change

- To acknowledge loss/fear/resistance
- To show how loss will be counteracted by the advantages of the new organization
- To provide tools (training/information/praise)
- To reduce isolation and foster teamwork