The University President

Description:

A university president for more than 17 years, Dr. Richard Cyert initiated many organizational changes and innovations in his presidential career, making him an exemplary "change manager." In this video, Dr. Cyert describes the process of implementing the first extensive computer-integrated network in a university setting. The Andrew system was the first to connect students and faculty with each other and with such university facilities as libraries and electronic bulletin boards. In 1980, Cyert and his colleagues developed the concept of a computer-based network and sought industry support. Ultimately, IBM provided financial and personnel support and collaborated in the network's establishment. Cyert describes the process of first building industry support and subsequently generating faculty buy-in. The implementation process he outlines is characterized by a variety of key change features including internal opinion leaders, public forums discussing the innovation, cross-functional committees, and redundant communication. These features created a common vision and support of the change, helped overcome resistance, and spurred active involvement.

Key Words:

- "I wanted to develop a network."
- "... ahead of the faculty ..."
- "I'm rather impatient."
- "... easier to move a cemetery than to move a faculty ..."
- "... sniping ..."
- "... redundant communication ..."
- "... keeping people focused ..."

Change Management:

This video can be used to portray critical aspects of change management and, relatedly, the implementation of new technology. It might be used in conjunction with the change model below.

A Model for Successful Change

Felt the need for change $\textbf{X}$ Vision $\textbf{X}$ Practical first steps $\textbf{X}$ Belief that change is possible $=$ Successful change

1. How does the change process get started? What first steps does Dr. Cyert describe? One first step was giving an "incendiary" interview to the Chronicle of Higher Education before the faculty had even heard of the planned new system. Do you think these steps would be successful outside a university?

2. What is the vision of the change which Dr. Cyert presents to the university? What makes it compelling? To be a "vision" change must be presented in a way that reflects core values and beliefs that the recipients of the change already endorse and support. What core beliefs does this vision reflect? Students might talk about a university's values for innovation or leadership, or closer connections among the university community of faculty, students, and staff.

3. In the change process described, how does a "felt need for change" come about on the part of faculty? Would this process be successful outside of a university? How could such issues be dealt with in non-university settings?

4. How is opposition to the change dealt with? What reasons do you think people had for resisting the introduction of the network? How did Dr. Cyert address these reasons through his strategy to overcome resistance?

5. To be successful, a change process should prepare people to actually implement the new program or activities themselves. Practical first steps are actions that build support and capacity for implementing the change. What evidence is there in the video of ways in which faculty and staff were prepared to participate in the new system? Dr. Cyert mentions the use of meetings across all departments, where issues were discussed and problems worked out. What effects might we expect from this approach to preparation? Are there circumstances that make this use of meetings difficult or less effective? Are there additional actions that might be taken to make a change successful?

6. What factors make it easier for some organizations to learn to change? What factors make learning to change difficult? Contrast the experience of Carnegie Mellon with that of IBM as a result of the implementation of the Andrew network. What significance did the "mainframe culture" have in the consequences of the change for IBM?

7. How generalizable is Dr. Cyert's approach? Where is it likely to work? Where is it not?