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Quality management/change management: two sides of the same coin?

Felicity McGregor
University of Wollongong, felicity@uow.edu.au

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Quality management/change management: two sides of the same coin?

Abstract
Change management strategies, as discussed in the literature, commonly share similar approaches and processes. Quality management or business excellence frameworks include many of the elements seen to be essential to effective change management. By adopting a management framework, a holistic approach to organisational change, development and innovation can be achieved. Instead of managing change as a series of events, a system wide approach is adopted. The disparate elements of effective management practice: human resources, industrial relations, customer relationship management, leadership strategies and planning processes are all integrated in a model underpinned by a systems approach and informed by systematic data collection, information and knowledge management. Through constant review of all activities and analysis of data, as recommended by quality frameworks, staff are more aware of the need for improvement, innovation or other change events and more likely to be involved in effective management of the constant change which characterises the library and information environment. The University of Wollongong Library (UWL) adopted the Australian Business Excellence Framework in 1994 as a means of managing the changes affecting almost every facet of our traditional library "business". Subsequently, UWL applied for recognition in the Australian Business Excellence Awards and was recognised in 2000. The most challenging aspect of the 'quality journey' was the development of measures and indicators to enable assessment of progress against goals and strategies. Measuring performance against a recognised business excellence or quality framework can deliver a range of benefits for libraries. These include recognition both within and outside the university and library sectors and the reinforcement of a culture of assessment. The involvement of staff in all stages of addressing the requirements of the Australian Business Excellence Framework and of preparation for the Award audit, delivered all of the benefits of change management theory and more. Staff benefited from the training and development associated with quality management, they were empowered by their access to data and information for decision making and rewarded by the recognition the Library received as an Australian Business Excellence Award winner.

Keywords
business excellence, change management, performance measurement, total quality management

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Quality Management/Change Management: Two Sides of the Same Coin?

Felicity McGregor

University of Wollongong Library

Abstract

Change management strategies, as discussed in the literature, commonly share similar approaches and processes. Quality management or business excellence frameworks include many of the elements seen to be essential to effective change management. By adopting a management framework, a holistic approach to organisational change, development and innovation can be achieved.

Instead of managing change as a series of events, a system wide approach is adopted. The disparate elements of effective management practice: human resources, industrial relations, customer relationship management, leadership strategies and planning processes are all integrated in a model underpinned by a systems approach and informed by systematic data collection, information and knowledge management.

Through constant review of all activities and analysis of data, as recommended by quality frameworks, staff are more aware of the need for improvement, innovation or other change events and more likely to be involved in effective management of the constant change which characterises the library and information environment.

The University of Wollongong Library (UWL) adopted the Australian Business Excellence Framework in 1994 as a means of managing the changes affecting almost every facet of our traditional library "business". Subsequently, UWL applied for recognition in the Australian Business Excellence Awards and was recognised in 2000. The most challenging aspect of the 'quality journey' was the development of measures and indicators to enable assessment of progress against goals and strategies. Measuring performance against a recognised business excellence or quality framework can deliver a range of benefits for libraries. These include recognition both within and outside the university and library sectors and the reinforcement of a culture of assessment.

The involvement of staff in all stages of addressing the requirements of the Australian Business Excellence Framework and of preparation for the Award audit, delivered all of the benefits of change management theory and more. Staff benefited from the training and development associated with quality management, they were empowered by their access to data and information for decision making and rewarded by the recognition the Library received as an Australian Business Excellence Award winner.

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1. Change Management

Change management strategies, as discussed in the literature, commonly share similar approaches. Texts and articles recommending various theories and models abound. Change management in this paper refers to organisation-wide change, that is, change which affects all systems, structures and processes, as well as organisational culture. This holistic approach

involves learning throughout the organisation and is commonly described as organisational development. Change which is driven by technological innovation, for example, or a single administrative improvement usually involves a similar series of stages or steps. Although the scale and impact of changes may differ, recommended processes tend to share common themes.

Weiss [1] has summarised the steps in planning and implementing successful change projects as:

- Define the current state
- Define the future state
- Determine key sponsors and implementers
- Adjust environment, feedback, and rewards to support desired change
- Review progress against metrics

To expand a little on the above five steps:

1.1 Defining the current state provides a baseline for comparison with future performance. This stage may include identifying the drivers of change and establishing the gaps between current organisational performance and the envisioned achievable level of performance. Understanding the reasons for change helps people accept that change is necessary. It may be helpful also to create a sense of urgency which may be accomplished through SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). Perceived competition is a commonly identified threat.

1.2 Defining the future state, or creating a vision should ideally be a consultative activity with the aim of reaching a shared vision, which key stakeholders see as achievable but sufficiently challenging and which reflects the aspirations of the organisation. Generating several different scenarios is a way of helping people envision possible future states and to decide the key elements of the preferred vision.

1.3 Determining key sponsors involves identifying those stakeholders who have responsibility for the organisation's performance or who have a strong interest or 'stake' in its success. Involvement of key stakeholders helps maintain support for planned change. Implementers within the organisation are often referred to as change agents or gatekeepers; those staff members who are in favour of the change and who are influential with their colleagues. They are often vital to the success or failure of change efforts and need to be consulted and nurtured throughout the process.

1.4 Adjusting the environment will usually include system-wide training and information sessions. Visible evidence of progress, such as the results of surveys or other measures being displayed on noticeboards, signals a changed environment. The physical environment may also be reorganised as structures and service points change. Feedback and rewards are vital to sustaining the change effort. In the library environment, financial rewards are not usually available, however, recognition, empowerment to make decisions and working in preferred areas are strategies which are rewarding for many.

1.5 In reviewing progress, it is vital that all participants are given the skills to measure and analyse data which are relevant to their individual or team performance. Although client and staff perceptions can and should be measured, statistical and other quantitative and qualitative data should form part of the overall evaluation framework. Measures and performance indicators should be identified in the planning phase.

Communication is not listed as a step but it is the *sine qua non* of successful change management. Both continuity of communication and variety of messages are important, as is recognition of the differing preferences of staff for receiving and understanding information.

External events or pressures often mandate organisational change. Probably the most common example is the imperative of technological change that often drives the need for organisations to adapt or perish. Some organisational change is driven by a desire to be more competitive or more profitable; some is driven by customer demand and there are many other possible drivers. In some cases, organisational change is driven simply by the desire of one or more organisational members to improve the performance and the reputation of the organisation.

It was this desire for improved performance, improved productivity and improved recognition, which drove organisational change at the University of Wollongong Library (UWL) and led to the adoption of a business excellence framework in 1994. Prior to this time, experimentation with various change management theories had achieved improvements in some of the Library's systems, for example, the introduction of a comprehensive staff development program and the introduction of performance appraisal. These improvements could be regarded as management initiatives introduced in response to a perceived need for improvement in one of the library's sub systems but were not introduced in the context of overall organisational development.

Technological change was an inevitable driver for many initiatives such as the automation of processes, the implementation of integrated library management systems and, more recently the integration of online resources and services into the Library's core business processes.

Rather than continuing to manage change as either adaptation to external forces or as a series of projects or initiatives, UWL sought a management framework which would enable continuous and sustainable organisational development, improvement and innovation. It was envisaged that change capability would become an individual and organisational competency.

2. Quality Management

Quality and change are similar concepts because they both imply movement and are not finite states. Organisations who adopt quality programs generally speak of a 'quality journey' to indicate that they will continue to adapt and improve in response to change, particularly to the changing requirements of customers. 'Quality' has many definitions and proponents of quality systems use different terminology such as 'quality assurance', 'total quality control' and 'continuous improvement'. The preferred terminology in the context of this paper is 'total quality management' or TQM.

In their discussion of quality management systems, Magd and Curry[2] cite Ho's definition of TQM: "TQM provides the overall concept that fosters continuous improvement in an organisation. The TQM philosophy stresses a systematic, integrated, consistent, organisation-wide perspective involving everyone and everything. It focuses primarily on total satisfaction for both the internal and external customers within a management environment that seeks continuous improvement of all systems and processes." The TQM philosophy is customer oriented and is as applicable to libraries as it is to other organisations. Excellent service, according to TQM theory, is regarded as the responsibility of all employees. That sense of responsibility can be achieved through the involvement of all members of the organisation in planning, implementing, monitoring and improving.

3. The Australian Business Excellence Framework (ABEF)

TQM is the philosophy underpinning the ABEF. The Framework is also premised on twelve principles of business excellence which are relevant to service organisations as well as businesses or corporations. The philosophy of the ABEF, particularly its focus on customer

service was, therefore, consistent with UWL's goal of improving its services in order to differentiate the Library from other information service providers. Unable to rely on the size of its collection or the extensiveness of its facilities for competitive advantage, the goals of UWL's 'quality journey' were encapsulated in the slogan adopted at the commencement of the journey: *quality service excellence*.

Implementing the Australian Business Excellence Framework was, therefore, an organisation-wide change project which, if successful, would be the vehicle for managing change in all aspects of the organisation. Many change theories focus on the importance of people management when implementing change projects and the need to pay attention to learning and development. Although particularly important during change, human resource management is perhaps the most important element of all good management systems. The ABEF recognises this and links the 'people factor' with all other categories outlined in the Framework document. For a description of the Framework see McGregor[3] and the Australian Business Excellence Framework [4].

The ABEF, therefore, integrates the disparate elements of effective management practice: human resources, industrial relations, customer relationship management, leadership strategies and planning processes in a model underpinned by a systems approach and which emphasises systematic data collection and information management to guide all activities.

4. Managing the Change at UWL

Implementing the Australian Business Excellence Framework at the University of Wollongong Library was a change management project which aimed to improve overall organisational performance and to position the Library for future success. The project can be described using the change management steps discussed above.

4.1 Defining the Current State

Enabling staff to see the big picture was a key strategy throughout the project and continues to be critical in ongoing strategic planning and communication processes. Meetings, guest speakers, conference attendance, in-house seminars, participation in SWOT analysis and strategic planning and dissemination of information through multi-layered communication mechanisms all helped build a robust appreciation of the various drivers of change. Relating general trends to the likely impact on specific library tasks, as well as emphasising the importance of every team's functions and performance to the achievement of overall goals, was illuminating for many staff. Of primary importance was the development of mechanisms, such as a staff intranet or fileserver, to encourage the sharing of knowledge, information and experiences.

Raising awareness of environmental influences was vital at the time of introduction of the ABEF and continues to be essential in managing ongoing change and improvement. In Australia, as in many other countries, higher education is increasingly regarded as a market place in which institutions must compete for students and funding. University libraries are, like their parent institutions, aware of this need to compete for students and the fees they pay to fill the gaps left by reductions in government funding to universities. Today's students are more market conscious than any previous generation, they pay fees and they expect value for money. They want to complete degrees, which enhance their employment prospects, in the shortest possible time. This means they want access to information quickly, not at the end of a long and tedious process involving searching catalogues or printed indexes. They also want access to information resources at a time and location convenient to them and not restricted to library opening hours.

These expectations, fuelled by the information technology and communications revolution, have meant a fundamental change in the way academic libraries 'do business'. The products they deliver, information and knowledge *packets*, have profoundly altered in both their form and mode of delivery. Librarians have had to rethink every aspect of their core business, from redesigning individual processes to restructuring the entire organisation.

4.2 Defining the Future State

Environmental awareness, then, was critical in informing the vision of the future library which would differ significantly from libraries of the past whose form and functions have remained remarkably similar for centuries. A consideration of shared organisational values was a component of this phase. It was important to retain those values agreed over time by all libraries, such as freedom of information and open access to resources, while identifying new values to underpin the vision, mission and organisational culture. Workshops to draft values and vision involved all staff at UWL, followed by discussion of proposed changes until comprehensive agreement on both values and vision was reached.

4.3 Determining Key Sponsors and Implementers

Although it was relatively easy to identify the Library's stakeholders, it was necessary to determine their expectations of library services. This was done through surveys, focus groups and discussions. The Library's broad long term goals are derived from stakeholder expectations, from predictions about how expectations may change in future, analysis of opportunities in the professional and higher education environments, and from the Library's own values and aspirations. Key implementers of the quality program were drawn from the Library staff. All staff participated in TQM awareness workshops and all were offered the opportunity to engage in further training as group facilitators.

4.4 Adjusting Environment, Feedback, and Rewards to Support Desired Change

Training and development, rewards and recognition, new policies and revised processes all contributed to a different climate and to an organisational culture which, over time, became noticeably more participative, flexible and focused on improvement. Strategies to reward and recognise high performing staff helped engender a more competitive spirit. Sharing and discussing the results of benchmarking and evaluation was salutary for many who had believed that processes were already as efficient as possible. Learning and skills development associated with TQM was interesting and rewarding for many. The importance of increasing knowledge and learning is incorporated in the Library's values, vision, mission and goals. It underpins human resource management strategies through the identification of core competencies and is the key component of performance management processes. In these ways, a culture in which evaluation and learning go hand in hand has been developed and staff have acquired attributes and competencies which are conducive to the management of future change.

4.5 Reviewing Progress Against Metrics

The most challenging aspect of UWL's 'quality journey' was the development of measures and indicators to assess progress against goals and strategies. In 1994 when the Australian Business Excellence Framework was adopted, the measures in place were predominantly statistical and included collection size, study space, budget quantum and number of enquiries at the Information Desk.

None of these measures shed light on whether services met client expectations. Although staff had long been service oriented, there was no systematic process in place to capture and record clients' needs and expectations, nor to gain feedback on library performance, two elements essential for the effective management of client relationships.

Expectations and priorities of key stakeholders and client groups were determined initially through facilitated focus groups covering the main client segments. The information collected in this way was used to establish goals and critical success factors and to develop performance indicators and associated measures. This process was accompanied by training in measurement and analysis for all staff and the establishment of a data and information management architecture. Analysis of initial evaluation efforts led to the review and revision of performance indicators to incorporate results, feedback and changing needs. Currently, all indicators are designed to contribute to the evaluation of organisational performance through a single Key Performance Indicator: *Client and Stakeholder Satisfaction.*

Performance indicators should be regularly reviewed, developed and refined as new sources of data emerge, collection and analysis methodologies improve and the processes or performance levels to be evaluated change. Moreover, client and stakeholder expectations of library services are constantly evolving in a dynamic environment and perceptions of value should be regularly surveyed to maintain alignment with internal operations and service priorities.

From statistics to performance indicators was a huge shift for library staff who are not normally trained in measurement or statistical analysis. This particular component of the change project encompassed much more than on-the-job training. The aim was to drive a cultural change which would achieve a sense of overall responsibility for organisational performance, previously considered to be mainly within the province of the executive team. A climate of evaluation, which includes continuous review of all policies, plans and processes, is a vital component of organisational change management capability.

4.6 Celebrating Success

Integral to the planned adoption of the Australian Business Excellence Framework was the intention to apply for one of the awards associated with the Framework. Awards are offered at various levels, depending on the organisation's readiness for evaluation by external auditors. UWL was successful at two lower levels before finally achieving an Australian Business Excellence Award in 2000. Winning the award provided an excellent opportunity for recognising and celebrating success, as all staff were involved in both implementation of the ABEF and the evaluation process. Celebrating success should ideally be included as an additional step in the change management process outlined above and not be associated solely with external recognition.

5. Conclusion

Success in the Awards process required the involvement and participation of all staff members, regardless of level and employment status. Part-time and casual staff, as well as all permanent staff, were included in the evaluation process. All staff received extensive in-house training in quality tools and techniques and participated in self-assessment exercises and numerous surveys. Most importantly, all staff contributed to the development and review of vision, mission, goals, values, performance indicators and measures. Each team was, and continues to be, responsible for administering and reporting its own measures. Although this was challenging in many instances, an outcome of the change project was the achievement of a culture of commitment and assessment. It became the norm for staff to measure, question and aspire to best practice.

More importantly, the recognition accorded by a prestigious award and the numerous accolades from clients, many endorsing the success of the quality management approach, was motivating, rewarding and energising for staff.

The involvement of staff in all stages of addressing the requirements of the Australian Business Excellence Framework and of preparation for the Award audit, delivered all of the benefits of

change management theory and more. Staff benefited from the training and development associated with quality management, they were empowered by their access to data and information for decision making and rewarded by the recognition the Library received as an Australian Business Excellence Award winner.

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