An Analogy . . . About Improvement

Implementing Quality within an educational institution is similar in many ways to the tending of a garden. It takes knowledge, attention, cultivation and time. Often people become frustrated with the time element.

A great analogy to the relationship between Quality and time is the Chinese bamboo story. The bamboo seed is actually a nut, with a very tough outer shell. In order for it to grow, it must be watered and fertilized according to a planned period of time and on a regular basis. The people who tend the bamboo plant it, water it, and fertilize it regularly.

During the first year nothing happens, but the bamboo nut is still tended to every day. The second and third years pass and still nothing happens, but the bamboo nut is still nurtured and cared for by its attendants. Attention to the planned watering and fertilization of the bamboo nut continues on through the third and fourth years, yet the bamboo does not sprout. It is not until the fifth year that the efforts of the bamboo attendants are finally realized and becomes fruitful.

The bamboo stalk explodes through the ground, reaching upward and outward with growth, and grows to a height of 90 feet within a 6-week time period.

How is this similar to Quality and time? Quality initiatives are something you thoughtfully plan, implement and attend to for a very long time before you actually see the benefits or results of your efforts. It takes time for quality leadership, planned process improvement, customer-driven service and teamwork to permeate the institution and create a true change within the culture.

--Provided by Janice Dossey-Terrell, Director, Quality Initiatives, University of Central Florida

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Employees Encouraged To Return Satisfaction Survey

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Simkins went on to explain that the Employee Satisfaction Survey is the first of several measurement systems that will be set up in the division. "These measurement systems will help us determine if we're meeting the needs of our customers, both internal and external, and tell us how our processes are performing," continued Simkins.

The Employee Satisfaction Survey needs to be returned by March 31 to mail code 1006. Steve Kerr of Institutional Research is collecting and analyzing the surveys. For misplaced surveys, contact Steve at extension 7587.

IRS Recognizes WSU as Quality Supplier

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has again recognized Weber State University as a Quality Supplier. Quality Suppliers are organizations that file information returns magnetically/electronically with the IRS in a timely manner, without any formatting errors, for two consecutive tax years. This award covers the 1994 and 1995 years. The university also received this award for the 1990, 1991, and 1992 years. According to Accounting Services management, only 30% of the 55,000 electronic transmitters receive this quality designation.

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New Time and Attendance System Allows Every-Other-Week Pay for Hourly Employees

For years, hourly employees expressed the need to be paid more frequently than once a month. In August 1995, a Process Improvement Team comprised of process owners and key customers was established to pursue a more frequent pay schedule for hourly employees.

The first order of business for the team was to select the frequency of the hourly payroll. After considering various options, the group decided on an every-other-week pay schedule. "After agreeing to an every-other-week schedule, we thought we could simply increase the frequency of timesheets," stated Ben Read, Manager of the Payroll Office. However, as the team more closely examined the hourly payroll process, it became evident that increasing the frequency presented a nearly impossible burden to many departments.

A research effort was undertaken to determine how other universities, as well as the private sector, meet this challenge. After many vendor demonstrations, site visits and phone calls, the team recommended that an automated time and attendance system be implemented. In evaluating the cost of purchasing such a system, the team found private vendors to be very expensive.

Fortunately, Ron Finch reminded the team of the unique expertise that exists on campus regarding telephone technology for student registration. To tap this expertise, Mark Green joined the team.

With the financial support of Administrative Services, the team initiated a plan to develop an in-house time and attendance system that used the telephone technology already on campus. The team devoted a full year to the design and implementation of this new system.

The new system uses the telephone as a time clock that communicates to the mainframe of the computer. Each department has access to computer screens showing who is at work, when they clocked in, and how many hours they worked for the pay period.

"The team's dedication to hourly employees has been the driving force in developing the new system," stated Steve Nabor, Director of Accounting Services. "The new system was implemented March 1st and is working very well."

In the long run, the team anticipates no increased workload in the departments or in the Payroll Office because of the change. In addition, the team hopes to see a decrease in hourly employee turnover because these employees are paid more often.

After an 18-month project, the Hourly Payroll Team implemented a new system that pays hourly employees every other week. Team members include Kathleen Miller, Steve Nabor, Mark Green, Ron Finch, Ben Read, Tammy Agee, Jolene Frazier, and Pam Fritch. Additional contributors (not pictured) include Sonia Day, Lisa Allen-Hogensen, and Andrea Gibson.

More details coming soon!