


Organizational Change: The Story of the CRI Project

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What is the Context?

- ❑ Medium security correctional facility; 1200 offenders; 175 member boot camp in Minnesota
- ❑ Approximately 350 staff including administration, security and administrative support staff
- ❑ History of change and evolution in the facility (e.g. 4 wardens in 12 years)
- ❑ History of low morale and need for more positive response to workplace conflict (e.g. rapid expansions, leadership turnover, unresolved “stories” and conflicts)



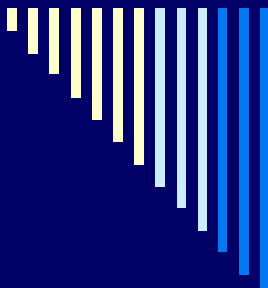
What are the organizational characteristics of the prison?

- Bureaucracy
- Powerful external constituencies to respond to
- Must maintain and are accountable for internal security/safety of staff and clients/residents
- Privilege importance of “training”—in education, it is about learning



Characteristics (con't)

- Historically organized hierarchically, command/control, clear categories of authority and responsibility, division of labor
- Clear mission: protect society (and perhaps rehabilitation a bit)
- Definitive organizational culture that is long-term and well entrenched



What is the Conflict Response Initiative (CRI)?

- ❑ Custom designed and voluntary workplace dispute resolution program
- ❑ Specific to the workplace setting of corrections
- ❑ Included internal design agents
- ❑ Incorporated into the workplace via regulation (instruction) but embracing empowerment/recognition ideas
- ❑ Aimed at impacting on organizational culture of the institution



Why was I Attracted to the Project?

- ❑ First project applying transformative principles in a prison setting
- ❑ Aimed at repairing workplace relationships with staff
- ❑ If could do it in a command/control prison, could do it anywhere!
- ❑ Organic: started with a restorative justice training with Dr. Gary Keveles; turned into a workplace design project with internal change agents; serendipitous development



What parts of organizational culture were relevant?

- ❑ Impact “the way business gets done”
- ❑ Stated and unstated values
- ❑ Overt and implicit expectations for member behavior
- ❑ Customs and rituals
- ❑ Stories and myths about the history of the group
- ❑ Shop talk—typical language used in and about the group
- ❑ Metaphors and symbols—may be unconscious but can be found embodied in other cultural elements



Why focus on organizational culture?

- ❑ Human side of organization
- ❑ Opportunity to create appropriate systems of shared meaning to help people work together toward desired outcomes
- ❑ Requires members—leaders—to acknowledge the impact of their behavior on the culture
- ❑ Relationship between organization and its environment is affected by organization's basic assumptions



How does organizational culture relate to “transformation”?

- When new processes based on clear values/ideas (i.e. transformative practices and principles) are introduced into an organization, the ideas **inherently** challenge the status quo of culture. Processes are **not neutral** regarding their implications. Processes (like transformative mediation) **challenge the existing set of ideas** and generate a new conflict of their own. In planning, it is important to recognize this reality.



How do transformative ideas change culture? Ideas > Change

- ❑ Asserts that moral development and experiential learning can change individuals and society for the better
- ❑ Asserts that “empowerment” and “recognition” are powerful change agents; if true, then they are vehicles of challenging existing culture practices at their core
- ❑ Asserts that humans are both individuals and connected: that the synergy between these things is essential to human living



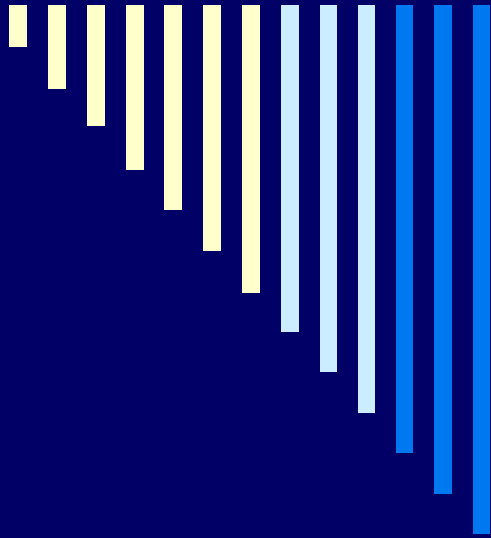
How do transformative principles change culture?

- Defends relational worldview: dialogic, generative and group learning; social constructivist view of knowledge; circular and integrative thinking, growth-in-connection
- Imports set of values/beliefs along with processes—“principles drive practice”



What flips the switch?

- If values/beliefs run counter to existing organizational culture (which I think it does in many instances), employee experiences in processes will inevitably lead to questioning of culture
- If values/beliefs are owned up front as part of process implementation, then cultural discussions are provoked simply by making the decision to pursue transformative practices like mediation in workplace
- Thus, it is **key to know** culture within which you are working and have a sense of potential implications of introducing alternative paradigms and ideas



Twelve Steps Toward Transformative Culture Change

**A Step by Step Guide to
Implementing CRI**



STEP ONE: Find Community Learners and Leaders

- ❑ Need internal change agents
- ❑ NOT top down administrative edict
- ❑ NOT imported from an outsider trainer
- ❑ Interest by the internal change agents in “learning about” change
- ❑ Research into ADR, workplace dispute resolution and transformative approach (e.g. REDRESS program in US Postal Service)
- ❑ Operate under the radar when possible in the beginning



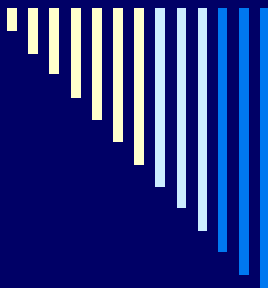
STEP TWO: Understand the Culture, History and Language of the Workplace

- “Hanging out” time
- Para-military, command/control, top down structure of corrections
- History of the facility and the people in it
- Lingo/language
- Legacies/myths



STEP THREE: Present Information and Mini-Training on Choices/Options

- Transactional and transformative approaches: mini-training
- Assessment of political and cultural realities of each approach
- Full disclosure of choices = key
- Voluntary decision by insiders = key



STEP FOUR: Choose Scope of Project

- Institutional culture change vs. providing more alternatives for workplace dispute resolution
- Assessment of political realities and fears of “taking on too much”
- Reaction to cultural change within facility and by Administrative Team
- Decision to focus on providing positive processes and change culture via back door



STEP FIVE: Develop the Policy

- Needed an “instruction” to exist
- Process involved key questions:
 - Questioning of “discipline” approach
 - All staff inclusion introduced democratic ideas
 - Specifying the details of “how to access process”
 - Ground-rules: voluntariness, confidentiality and privilege



STEP SIX: Generate Permissions

- Permission: Persuasion of authority figures to consent and support project
- Core permissions used in all trainings:
 - Test ideas against reality
 - Disagree
 - Opt in or opt out
 - Experimentation ok
 - Silence ok
 - Asking questions is ok
- Anticipate Resistance (IMPORTANT SO WILL SPEND A LITTLE TIME ON THIS)



Step 6a: Subset: Organizational Resistance

- Organization Resistance
 - Overdetermination
 - Narrow focus of change
 - Group inertia
 - Threatened expertise
 - Threatened power
 - Resource allocation



Step 6b: Subset: Individual Resistance

□ Individual Sources of Resistance

- Habit
- Security
- Economic factors
- Fear of the unknown
- Lack of Awareness
- Social factors



Step 6c: Subset: Honoring Resistance

- DON'T LET RESISTANCE FREAK YOU OUT! Anticipate it----if you don't see it, you are not truly changing anything

- Honoring resistance:
 - sometimes signals need to pause, wait and reconsider
 - can signal a deep value that needs discussion/attention
 - can indicate need to use power appropriately to break down and/or break through—opportunity for leadership;
 - signals chance for clarity and perhaps need for recognition



Step 6d: Subset: Transforming Resistance

- Transforming resistance (tools):
 - endurance
 - education
 - participation/experiences
 - facilitation and support
 - negotiation/agreement
 - good and ongoing talk



STEP SEVEN: Take Pulse of Organization for Assessment

- CRI All Staff Survey
- Annual Repeating of survey to track change



STEP EIGHT: Develop Training Regimen for Core Group

- Nine days of CRI Foundation Training for core group (18 volunteers)
- Topics:
 - Conflict and its dynamics
 - Self assessment of mediator styles/skills
 - Empowerment and recognition
 - Transformative practice
 - Role Play Opportunities



STEP NINE: Distill and Create All-Staff Training

- Purpose: shared language, knowledge and access to program
- Trainers = internal (saved resources and ensured internal buy-in)
- Eight hours of mandatory all staff training in two hour blocks
- Core group selected portions of Foundations training that were most central



STEP TEN: Provide Process Training

- Three methods in instruction
 - Transformative facilitation
 - Circles
 - Workplace conferencing
- 3 Day Trainings on each method
- Continuous training for CRI facilitators
- These people provided internal process options: little use of outside facilitators



STEP ELEVEN: Train Supervisors

- ❑ Role of supervisors
- ❑ Covered same ground as All-Staff Training but allowed more time for feedback
- ❑ Eight hour supervisor training: 2 rotations
- ❑ Training supervisor is a KEY investment and more could have been done at this level



STEP TWELVE: Practice Empowerment and Recognition in Administrative Decisions

- Importance of administrators modeling the principles: “walking the talk”
- Examples of efforts to do this:
 - Annual strategic plan: inclusive strategy
 - Streamlining process and bureaucracy
 - Inclusive decision-making



Lessons Learned

- Organizational culture change is a lot harder than introducing some principles/practices into organization
- Tremendous responsibilities for “what you start”—need to be prepared to be there as it works out
- Impact can be amazing—anecdotal now in prison and school but expect results to be demonstrate in upcoming evaluation studies



Lessons Learned (con't)

- ❑ Expect some casualties along the way---loaded stuff
- ❑ Expect to do the hardest work of your professional life---to experience some of the best moments imaginable and some of the toughest disappointments dreaded
- ❑ Opportunity to partner with some other approaches/practices to strength all concerned
- ❑ Opportunity to grow our field into new dimensions and arenas



FINAL THOUGHTS

- One of the most exciting and enjoyable experiences I've had
- Became the model for a state-wide initiative in Department of Corrections
- Perfect example of theory > practice
- If it can be done in corrections, it can be done anywhere!