Action Project

Title: Everyone Commits to Communicate
Version: 2

Institution: East Central College | **Status:** Active
Submitted: 2014-12-09 | **Category:** 5-Leading and Communicating

Timeline

Planned project kickoff date: 2013-12-09
Target completion date: 2014-12-09
Actual completion date:

Project Detail

PROJECT SUMMARY
Briefly describe the project in less than 100 words. Be sure to identify the key organizational areas (departments, programs, divisions, units, etc.) and key organizational processes that this action project will affect, change, and/or improve.

The college will develop comprehensive communication processes to ensure transparency, accountability, accuracy, involvement, and effectiveness for stakeholders.

PROJECT RATIONALE
Describe your institution�s reasons for initiating this action project now and for how long it should take to complete it. Why are this project and its goals high among your institution�s current priorities? Also, explain how this project relates to any strategic initiatives or challenges described in the institution�s recent or soon-to-be submitted systems portfolio.

Based on the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and employee surveys, the college recognized an opportunity to improve campus communication. Employee survey results indicated declining effectiveness on categories related to leading and communicating, and the feedback report identified this as a strategic issue for the institution. A project to improve campus communication was the college's priority when it attended the Strategy Forum, and the initial work on the project took place during that event.

PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES
List the project goals, milestones, and deliverables along with corresponding metrics, due dates, and other measures for assessing the progress for each goal. Be sure to include formal evaluations when the project progress will be reviewed.

All organizational areas of the college are affected. The project team will be led by the College President, include all four administrators, and include representatives from faculty, professional staff, and support staff.

INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT
Describe how various members of the learning community will participate in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and

groups over the project�s duration.

The scope of the project includes the development of process maps, templates, checklists, and other tools to ensure effective internal communication. These tools will be used by decision makers to ensure stakeholders are involved and/or informed as decisions are made. As the college makes a habit of using these tools to ensure effective communication, the process of involving and informing key stakeholders will improve.

PROJECT CONTROL
Describe how the institution will monitor project progress/success during, and at the completion of this project. Be sure to specifically state the measures that will be evaluated and when.

The team that attended the Strategy Forum discussed the activities and deliverables associated with the project, and determined that developing these tools can likely be done within the scope of one year. The intent is to have tools developed in time for the start of the next academic year, and to begin utilizing those tools immediately.

ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS
Describe the challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project�s goals.

The project has been informally discussed with groups since the Strategy Forum, and will be more broadly unveiled during the spring in-service week. This will ensure campus-wide understanding of the project and its purpose. The Action Planning Template developed at the Strategy Forum includes milestones that will allow the team to effectively monitor the project's progress. Work resulting from the project will be shared with the campus at appropriate times, including in-service activities and quality improvement events held during the year. These quality events typically include updates regarding all of the institution's action projects.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
Provide any additional information that the institution wishes for reviewers to understand regarding this action project.

The college already engages in two separate employee surveys. The Chronicle's "Great Colleges to Work For" survey is specific to higher education and includes comparisons to similar institutions. The Workplace Dynamics study compares the institution to other area employers in the St. Louis region. The surveys are conducted in alternate years. Changes in longitudinal data on key indicators will provide evidence of the project's effectiveness. Beyond these surveys, the action project team will identify other measures or indicators to determine the success of the project.

Annual Update

CURRENT PROJECT STATUS SUMMARY
(Please answer the following questions in the text box below)
General Project Status: _____ Completed _____ In-progress _____ Suspended _____ Reopened
Original Project Start Date: ____ / ____ / ____
Originally Projected End Date: ____ /____ / ____
Anticipated Completion Date If Not Completed: ____ / ____ / ____

Briefly describe the current status of the project.

General Project Status: _____ Completed ___x__ In-progress _____ Suspended _____ Reopened
Original Project Start Date: _12___ / _9___ / __13__
Originally Projected End Date: __12__ /_9___ / _14___
Anticipated Completion Date If Not Completed: ____ / ____ / ____

This action project is intended to improve the process and quality of campus-based communication. Based on the Systems Appraisal Feedback Report and employee surveys, the college recognized an opportunity for improvement. Employee survey results indicated declining effectiveness on categories related to leading and communicating, and the feedback report identified this as a strategic issue for the institution. A project to improve campus communication was the college's priority when it attended the Strategy Forum, and the initial work on the project took place during that event. The project committee began meeting in the spring and continued through the summer. The initial areas of focus were emergency communications and policy/procedure communications. The committee developed process maps for each, as well as checklists that can be utilized by those involved to ensure information is communicated accurately, effectively, on a timely basis, and to the appropriate stakeholders. The next phase of the project is focused on the appropriate and effective use of the campus e-mail system, particularly "ECC Announce," which is used for a wide range of campus announcements and staff communication. The goal is to develop guidelines for the effective use of ECC Announce.

ORIGINAL PROJECT GOALS AND DELIVERABLES
List the project goals as stated in the original project declaration along with the metrics/measures for assessing the progress for each goal

The goal of the action project is to develop comprehensive communication processes to ensure transparency, accountability, accuracy, involvement, and effectiveness for stakeholders. The college already engages in two separate employee surveys. The Chronicle's "Great Colleges to Work For" survey is specific to higher education and includes comparisons to similar institutions. The Workplace Dynamics study compares the institution to other area employers in the St. Louis region. The surveys are conducted in alternate years. Changes in longitudinal data on key indicators will provide evidence of the project's effectiveness.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OVER THE PAST YEAR
Describe what has been accomplished with this project over the past year, specifically referring to quantifiable results that show progress. You may need to include a discussion clarifying how the original goals and anticipated outcomes may have shifted during the year

The committee developed a survey to better assess concerns associated with college communications. The survey was distributed during in-service week and required respondents to be as specific as possible about concerns associated with campus

communication and how it can be improved. The survey was used to identify campus e-mail as the next area of focus.

As previously described, the committee has developed process maps and checklists for two types of communication: emergency communications/notifications, and communication regarding college policies and/or procedures. The process maps helped the committee understand how these types of communications currently take place, and identify areas of improvement. The checklists are intended to provide a tool with which employees can ensure that deliberate attention is given to factors such as timeliness, intended audience(s), best mode(s) of communication, content, and assessing whether the message has reached its intended audience. As an example, this checklist was developed for emergency communications:

Emergency Communication – Checklist

1. Do emergency authorities need to be notified?

q Yes

q No

1. If yes, have they been notified?

q Yes

q No

1. Has campus administration been notified?

q Yes

q No

1. Is campus-wide notification necessary/appropriate?

q Yes

q No

1. If yes, is emergency (immediate) notification required?

q Yes

q No

1. If not emergency (immediate) notification, has "timely notification" been determined?

q Yes: (When: _____)

q No

1. Has the following been determined?

q What has occurred?_____

q Who is affected? _____

q What action is necessary or required?_____

q When is action necessary or required?_____

   1. Who needs to receive this information?

q Students

q Employees

q Community/general public

q Media

q Family (emergency contacts)

q Others_____

   1. Which mode(s) will be utilized?

q Text

q E-mail

q Web site

q Phone

q Social media

q News media

q Mail

q Other_____

   1. Has the communication/notification been distributed (check modes being used, then yes/no)?

q Text

q   Yes

q   No

q E-Mail

q   Yes

q   No

q Web Site

q   Yes

q   No

q Phone

q   Yes

q   No

q Social Media

q   Yes

q   No

q News Media

q   Yes

q   No

q Mail

q   Yes

q   No

q Other

q   Yes

q   No

   1. If (10) is yes, has receipt been verified?

q Yes

q No

   1. If (10) is no, are further attempts being made?

q Yes

q No (Reason:_____)

   1. Follow-up communication needed?

q Yes (Begin new checklist)

q No

   1. Notifications, reporting, or other documentation appropriate/required?

q Yes

q No

1. If yes, has this been completed?

q Yes

q No

INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT
Describe how various members of the learning community have participated in this action project. Show the breadth of involvement by individuals and groups over the project�s duration, particularly during the past year

All organizational areas of the college are involved with the project. The team is led by the College President, and includes all four administrators (vice presidents), and representatives from faculty, professional staff, and support staff.

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES
Describe the effect that this project has had on the institution, students, and others in the learning community. What has the institution learned that can be identified as a good practice to use in other aspects of its quality work or from which other institutions might benefit?

The challenge of a topic as broad as "improving communication" is that the goal, while laudable, can be difficult to systematically improve. Some individuals are naturally better at communicating on various levels, while others are not. The checklists are intended to be tools used by decision makers to ensure stakeholders are involved and/or informed as decisions are made. The process of working through such a checklist ensures that communications are timely and effective. They can also be useful for issues related to compliance. For example, the emergency communications checklist requires consideration regarding emergency or timely notification with regard to the Clery Act. As the college makes a habit of using these tools to ensure effective communication, the process of involving and informing key stakeholders will improve.

ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES TO PROJECT SUCCESS
Describe the anticipated challenges that may be encountered in successfully completing the project or for institutionalizing the learning from the project�s goals

The obvious challenge will be ensuring that the tools developed by the committee will actually be used. Process maps, checklists, etc., have no value if they are not used in practice. As the committee turns its attention to use of campus e-mail, an anticipated challenge is the tension between acceptable use and free speech.

PLANNED NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE
In light of the project goals, current circumstances, institutional learning from this project, and anticipated barriers to success, list the next steps to be taken over the course of the next 12 – 24 months in order to complete or institutionalize the results of this action project. Provide a timeline for completing each next step

The project was intended as a one-year project. Over the course of the fall semester, guidelines related to campus email will be developed. As the one-year milestone approaches, the committee will assess whether the project needs to extend beyond its original timeframe.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

Action Project Details

No additional information at this time.