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This paper focuses on a multi-year effort to change the organizational culture of a very traditional IS Unit into one that is “learning organization” and “client service” oriented. It describes the steps taken in the first two years within the context of John Kotter’s “Eight-Stage Process of Creating Major Change.” The paper sets forth the intent of each phase and the practical steps that have been taken to bring about the desired change. It approaches the process from the perspective of the CIO (the initiator of the process) with a practical appraisal of its success to date from the viewpoint of a long time university staff member.
Infusing a Culture of Client Service into an IT Organization

Introduction
In July 1995 The University of Memphis created a new organizational unit, Information Systems (IS), and employed a new chief information officer (CIO) to lead it. The unit and the CIO position were constructed to play key roles in helping the institution move ahead aggressively in employing information technology (IT) more productively in both academic and administrative areas.

It was immediately evident that the new organization made up of units from different parts of the campus would need to establish a common organizational culture. Given the major projects that were to be implemented it was also evident that the new culture had to be one that looked to the future more than it remained seated in the past. The CIO set forth a goal of moving toward a “Learning Organization (LO)” over the next 4 -5 years.

Experts such as Peter Senge, Ed Schein, and David Garvin define organizational learning as essentially an organization’s ability to adapt to change. DiBella and Nevis add to that definition the idea that organizational learning also involves how individuals within the organization process the experience of adaptation. They point out that there is an important relationship between learning and culture, and that LO consultants tend to approach their work based upon one of three perspectives. The first is a normative LO approach which says that learning occurs when organizations have the right culture. The second is a developmental view which believes that as organizations evolve so too does their culture and from that their learning style. The third is the capability LO perspective which holds that organizations are cultures where knowledge about behaviors and values is continually being shared. How such knowledge is shared creates pathways that lead to continuous learning. A normative perspective leads managers to diagnose barriers to learning and attempt to lessen or eliminate them. The capabilities viewpoint assumes that learning is embedded in culture and attempts to identify the existing processes and to utilize them. In the developmental approach the focus is not on learning as much as on the organization’s stage of development and the process of transition.

Assuming that each perspective provides some element of reality, an integrated strategy for building learning capability was chosen to be employed at The U of M. The paradigm selected for implementation was “The Eight-Stage Process of Creating Major Change” by John Kotter. The stages are: (1) establishing a sense of urgency; (2) creating the guiding coalition; (3) developing a vision and strategy; (4) communicating the change vision; (5) empowering broad-based action; (6) generating short term wins; (7) consolidating gains and producing more change; and (8) anchoring new approaches in the culture. Each stage is addressed in the following sections of this paper.

The Need to Change (Establishing a Sense of Urgency)
The IS organization of July 1995 consisted of disparate units that had functioned as a divisional group for several months led by an outside consultant. Many had not engaged in any substantial professional development for some time. Most were not adequately equipped with desktop computing capabilities. Many individuals were long time staff members of the university with little or no experience elsewhere. Almost without exception they did not know what to expect from a new CIO or what was expected of them from the institution. The client community in some cases liked the individuals but had little respect for their technical capabilities. In cases where staff members were recognized as having competence they received calls directly on all sorts of issues, often outside their realm of responsibility. There was near unanimous agreement that change was needed; what change was the question.

1995 also saw the publication of The Strategic Plan for The University of Memphis: Defining Excellence (1995-2000) that called for major advances in IT in both academic and administrative areas. Additionally, the CIO was instructed by the President to develop an institutional planning process and a participative governance structure for IT. The obvious need for a structural overhaul coupled with an expectation for developing future excellence called for a process of organizational alignment.

Alignment takes place when a group of individuals works as one with a deeply shared sense of vision and purpose. Alignment of individuals can be powerful, but it is not enough. The organizational processes, systems, and structure must also be aligned. When there is reasonable alignment in an organization, learning – individual learning, team learning, and organizational learning – results; it is a powerful energy source.
The alignment process has the potential to address all of the needs outlined above. Creating that alignment is a two-stage operation. The first part is identifying and correcting misalignments, and the second is creating new alignments. The vision for any organization has three basic elements: (1) the fundamental reason for existence – its mission; (2) its set of core values, which seldom change; and (3) its ambitious but achievable aspirations for the future. It is with this vision that other elements of the organization need to be aligned.

The six stage strategic planning and management model selected for use was made to order for the alignment process. The second stage focuses on defining and/or clarifying institutional strategy. In effect this is a process of aligning individual and organizational core values and then defining the organizational vision. The third stage involves providing alignment between the organizational influence systems and the vision. There are five influence systems within every organization which are relatively stable, influence everyone’s performance, and can be consciously (or unconsciously) designed. They are: culture, structure, the internal economy, methods and tools, and metrics and rewards. In an IT unit a sixth influence system meets the stated criteria and thus must be included in the alignment process – the systems architecture. In the fourth stage individuals create needed competencies and behaviors, a process of adaptive behavior – individual alignment – with the organizational vision. Therefore, the strategic planning and management process is being used as the vehicle to bring organizational alignment and to transition the culture and climate toward that of a learning organization with a strong client service orientation.

Practical Appraisal:
There was an element of initial surprise and skepticism by some both within and outside the IS unit that planning was even taking place and that the adapted model was dependent upon broad-based involvement. However, a very positive response to individual involvement has been witnessed and indeed a large percentage of the IS staff have acted on their desire to participate in the new direction being set forth.

A great deal of alignment has occurred in a relatively short period of time through the strategic planning and management model selected for use. The IT plans of a large campus community have been coordinated and are incorporated into the IT plan for the university. This effort had not heretofore been made and has had highly beneficial results. The university is far more synchronized in its IT approach with the effort given to aligning college and unit IT goals and objectives with institutional priorities and presidential emphasis. This creation of alignment is what allows organizations with a vision statement to become truly visionary organizations.

The CIO recognized that with a change to a learning organization culture The U of M's IS organization could more easily adapt to the rapid change with which it was about to struggle. Because culture is the sum of individual opinions, shared mindsets, values, and norms within the organization, the process of creating major change has been a highly effective strategy in providing the tools and support structure necessary to build an organization that challenges its members to be future and client-service oriented.

Additionally, a very holistic strategic planning methodology that emphasizes the 'whole' organization as one where all parties (central IS staff, distributed IS staff, faculty, students, administrative users, and vendors) are interdependent has been instituted. Recognizing reliance and collaboration as the means to providing quality services and meaningful work has begun to be assimilated at meaningful levels within the IS organization.

Creating Change Agents (Creating the Guiding Coalition)
The governance structure for IT at The U of M is the guiding coalition. It consists of an IT Policy and Planning Council, two IT Advisory Committees (Academic and Administrative), and the management team for IS. There are four characteristics essential to a coalition that must guide a major organizational change effort. They are position power, expertise, credibility, and leadership. Position power has to do with there being enough senior administrators in the coalition so that those left out cannot block progress. Expertise is required for intelligent decisions to result and various viewpoints need to be represented. Credibility is also needed to build trust; thus, the coalition must have enough people with good reputations. Leadership requires proven leaders capable of driving the change process.

The stated criteria are met for each group in the governance structure. As an example, the IT Policy and Planning Council consists of the provost; vice presidents; deans; faculty, student and staff representatives; chairs of the advisory committees; and the major operational administrators (associate vice presidents and vice provosts).
No matter how well selected the guiding coalition may be, real change will not come unless front-line staff engages in adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior occurs in situations where habits and patterns of a lifetime need to change to ensure a successful future. Mobilizing an organization to adapt its behavior in order to thrive in the new environment of a 21st century university is such a circumstance. Providing leadership to encourage adaptive behavior is quite different from traditional leadership. Leaders provide direction by identifying the adaptive challenges and framing the key questions and issues. Leaders protect people by managing the rate of change. They orient individuals to new roles and responsibilities by clarifying administrative realities and key values. Leaders help to expose conflict by viewing it as a vehicle of creativity and learning. Finally, leaders help the organization to maintain norms that must endure and challenge those that need to change. Solutions to adaptive challenges reside not in the executive suites but in the collective intelligence and commitment of employees at all organizational levels.  

Middle managers are perhaps even more important in encouraging adaptive change by staff than are senior administrators. Indeed it has been said that the middle manager of today needs to emerge as a real change leader for tomorrow. The emerging real change leader (RCL) has a basic mindset of “do it, fix it, try it, change it – and then do it all over again; no one person knows best.” Their basic end-game assumptions are to find ways to satisfy the clients and their own staff. The leadership philosophy of the RCL is to do real work themselves, to spend time on things that matter, and to help the staff to do the best possible. They regard people as the critical resource for innovation, look to provide professional development, and stress process analysis. Their attitude toward accountability is to focus on a few key measures in critical areas and to promote the belief that “we hold ourselves accountable.” The RCL expects, learns from, and builds on failures; they take risks and try what seems promising. Clearly to become a RCL, middle managers must undergo adaptive behavior themselves. To do so is one of the very best ways to provide encouragement to other staff members.

**Practical Appraisal:**
The introduction of an overlapping IT governance structure has allowed a much needed outside perspective from clients to be infused into the campus’ IT strategic planning process. This has produced multiple benefits by allowing critical stakeholders to be involved in driving strategy while giving central IS staff far more insight into the needs of their client base.  

While progress has been significant, perceived differences between senior administrators have tended to slow the pace of the planned change. The power and influences of those reluctant to embrace the change has posed challenges at various levels in the organization. The collaboration necessary at the operational level was often tested and illustrates the need for a consistent approach. However, front-line IS staff have made positive strides in adapting their behavior to that which is results-oriented and client-focused.  

The IS management team has begun working together in a far more collaborative manner. But their technical adeptness is not yet paralleled by the ability to motivate, manage change, reward new behaviors, and hold staff accountable.

**Developing Vision and Strategy**
As noted earlier, the IT strategic planning and management model stressed the necessity of a shared vision for the IS staff. The first alignment process, therefore, was to assess individual core values and then to derive a value statement for the new organization for which there was a consensus commitment. A number of exercises from *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* including “Personal Mastery” and “Shared Vision” were used. This resulted in a list of thirteen values for the IS organization which are now posted in each unit office. A broad-based mission statement including the fundamental purpose and a futures scenario were also derived for the new division. The final outcome of this planning stage was the development of six institutional strategies designed to provide guidelines for moving to the envisioned future. Each of these “pieces” were initially developed by the IS staff in draft form then discussed, modified and approved by the governance structure. The resultant values statements and futures scenario, follow:

**Values statements for the Information Systems division**
- Our first priority is support of the University’s mission.
- Our clients are our partners in success.
- We believe that competent teamwork is a key to success in all IT endeavors.
- We accept responsibility for our work.
- We will attempt to secure trust through openness and integrity.
Every day, we will try to listen with an open mind, speak from a sincere heart, and educate in the spirit of cooperation.

We strive to respect people, their ideas, and their accomplishments.

We endeavor to learn from both successes and mistakes.

Our organization and each of its individuals are reflections of one another.

Our aim is to provide a working environment that fosters professional development.

We will strive to recognize and reward self-improvement, innovation, and individual achievement.

We are committed to understanding and adjusting to the changing needs of the University.

We are dedicated to working with the University community to provide a progressive information technology environment.

IT Futures Scenario for The University of Memphis

The greatest beneficial impacts of a new technology usually materialize about two-thirds through the initial transition. For the United States, that will occur in the next ten years. To prepare students to function successfully in such a world, and indeed to survive as a viable institution of higher education, The University of Memphis must develop an IT infrastructure and support services designed for the 21st century. Thus the ultimate goal is to establish an environment that will place the knowledge worker – student, faculty member or staff member – at the center of his or her information resources universe with appropriate training to use the infrastructure effectively. A high capability workstation linked electronically will provide individual computing power and access to data, images, reference materials, and summary information – that which is needed to enable the individual to perform the specified academic or administrative functions for which the use of information technology was initially sought.

Practical Appraisal:

The IS division devoted a great deal of time in developing organizational values and a shared vision. The mutually developed mission statement and futures scenario provides the anchor which allows the organization to focus on appropriate directions for the future (expressed in six key strategies within the strategic plan). An important step in this process was allowing discussion which provided a clear understanding of IS’ role. The supportive roles of the CIO and AVP in explaining and clarifying to the campus community those services which should be expected from central IS and those services that must be distributed, was instrumental in illustrating executive support to the IS staff. It indeed appeared to offer relief to an IS staff that either had not been allowed, or did not have the skills, to ever say "No".

Organizational identity is a complex construct and in some ways as permanent as glue or as fragile as glass. Placing the framed values and mission statement in all IS offices on campus illuminates their importance and recognizes that organizational culture is revealed and communicated most clearly through its symbols.

Communicating the Vision

The concept of a “Learning Organization” is based on five programs of study and practice. Thus a supporting organizational culture should focus on the following items. (1) Personal Mastery. Encourage individuals to expand their personal capacity to create results that move them toward goals and purposes they choose. (2) Mental Model. Foster reflecting upon, clarifying, and improving one’s mental models of how the world is seen, and better understanding how the models shape actions. (3) Shared Vision. Promote building commitment by developing shared images of the future that we are mutually seeking to create. (4) Team Learning. Actively nurture team-based learning and collective thinking skills toward the development of intelligence and ability greater than the sum of the individual members’. (5) Systems Thinking. Build capabilities in as many staff members as possible to understand and describe, the interrelationships that influence systems behavior.

Specific steps are being taken to address each of the five learning disciplines. Personal mastery is addressed through the values exercises described above, developmental objectives in the annual IT strategic plan, IS unit plans, and individual work plans, and incorporation of developmental activities into the annual personnel evaluation system. The initial strategic planning training included sessions that focused on recognizing mental models and ongoing small group activities provide opportunities for further understanding. The development of an IS values statement, the IS mission statement, annual IT objectives, and a variety of operational guidelines and suggested practices are shared efforts by staff who wish to
participate – more than 65% do. A number of team-based learning exercises are conducted each year, including the development of each unit plan. This year the exercises will focus on determining if the division is ready to move to a team-based organizational structure. The nature of organizational responsibilities requires significant and ongoing systems thinking projects. Purposely selected cross-functional teams are being used in such activities to broaden the number of individuals involved.

A broad variety of new communication channels for both internal and external audiences have been put into place. These are described in detail in a paper written for CAUSE’96. They include web pages containing minutes of meetings and formal presentations, the creation of ongoing focus groups, “brown bag” lunches with the CIO and the associate vice president, a new staff newsletter, initiation of regular staff meetings, the creation of two ombudsperson positions, and periodic division-wide meetings.

One of the best communication methods is through action reflecting the vision. Thus, the IT strategic planning and management model has been modified in the fourth and fifth stages to reflect the fact that the processes associated with these stages depend upon individual staff members more than upon management. In stage four, “create needed competencies and behaviors,” managers provide encouragement, training, developmental opportunities, and support; however, change can only occur when the individual affected makes it so. “Develop and implement operational action plans,” stage five, is driven by staff who have primary responsibility in defining the specifics of the plans.

Practical Appraisal:
The new IS organization immediately began cementing its vision through various means of improving communication. Internally, staff was encouraged to participate in tailored focus groups assigned to target certain practices for improvement. The ombudspersons were selected by their peers to serve as sounding boards when normal lines of communication fail. They receive training from Human Resources, Affirmative Action, and the CIO’s offices to assist them in this role. Their availability and purpose is publicized numerous times throughout the year.

Newly appointed IS staff are given a thorough division orientation upon their appointment to introduce them to the organizational culture – what their role is and what the new culture means to them. These orientations are conducted by the Vice President's office and have been appreciatively received. The other communication mechanisms noted above have also served very important and distinctive roles within the organization and across campus. The Technology newsletter, issued each semester, was revamped and is available in hard copy and electronic versions. Methods to improve the distribution process and to reach targeted audiences have been highly successfully. Very positive feedback is being received campus-wide concerning its helpfulness and meaningfulness. A more folksy, internal newsletter, IT’s NEWS, highlights in a more personal way the accomplishments of the IS staff, family news, events of interest, side bar "tidbits” and excerpts from letters of commendation. A formal end of year Annual Report is published as a divisional “report card” and has wide distribution.

Division-wide meetings, brown-bag lunches with the VP/AVP, small and confidential group meetings with the VP have all served to cement the value of communication in a learning organization. IS management recognizes that an organization needs various mechanisms for feedback loops where openness is encouraged and where people learn from one another. A daylong management team retreat was held with leaders from the IT governance structure. This activity served to strengthen professional relationships and mutual understanding of IT goals and objectives for the university. Staff meetings are regularly held at every level within the IS organization. Minutes of staff meetings as well as the proceedings from all governance meetings are made available to the entire campus community. Vice Presidential staff meetings are supplemented throughout the year with line IS staff and special guests from other campus units/schools.

Noting that actions speak louder than words, staff are expected and rewarded for communicating and articulating the vision and commitment of the IS unit. Leadership is needed from every staff member and is recognized and rewarded in various ways.

Empowerment
Empowerment is one of the buzzwords of the 1990’s, nevertheless it is a critical aspect of implementing any major change. If it is to be real, staff members need help in removing bureaucratic barriers that exist in almost all organizations. Empowering acts by senior administrators include the following. (1) Ensure that
the vision being communicated is sensible to staff members. The surest way to do this is to develop it with them. (2) Make the unit structures compatible with the vision. This is another alignment issue. Unaligned structures significantly hinder or block needed actions. (3) Provide the training staff members need to make the required changes. Without the right skills and attitudes, individuals feel disempowered, and they most likely are. (4) Align information and personnel systems to the vision. Unaligned systems as well as structures hinder or block needed actions. (5) Confront supervisors who undercut needed change. Nothing disempowers staff the way a poor manager can. This may be the largest single barrier to overcome in academic institutions.

Empowerment, however, is a two-way process. After working a lifetime in a bureaucratic environment, it is not easy for many to accept the responsibilities that come with greater workplace freedoms. Self-esteem is defined as being the attribute imperative for adaptiveness to an increasingly complex, challenging, and competitive work environment. The six practices most essential to building self-esteem are: living consciously, self-acceptance, self-responsibility, self-assertiveness, living purposely, and personal integrity. Leaders and managers who wish to encourage such practices should heed the following suggestions.

To encourage consciousness provide easy access to information needed for the specific job, but also to permit understanding as to how individuals fit in the big picture. Offer opportunities for continuous learning and upgrading skills. If someone does exceptional work or if they do very poor work, explore how and why it happened. Avoid micromanaging! Provide budgets for development and innovation. Stretch the capabilities of the staff and keep handing responsibilities down.

To encourage self-acceptance listen actively, make eye contact, offer feedback, and let the speaker know they are being heard. Maintain and show respect to whomever you speak. Never permit encounters to deteriorate into conflicts of personality, focus on reality. Describe undesirable behavior without blaming. Let others see that you speak honestly about your feelings; provide a lesson in the strength of self-acceptance.

To encourage self-responsibility let people know that it is expected and provide opportunities for it. Set clear performance standards that are discussed prior to assignments. Elicit from staff their understandings of what has been communicated so agreement is precise. Publicize and celebrate unusual instances of self-responsibility.

To encourage self-assertiveness teach that mistakes and errors are opportunities for learning. Let staff know that it is OK to say “I don’t know, but I will find out.” Show that it is permissible to disagree with you: convey respect for differences of opinion. Where it is possible, match tasks and interests with individual dispositions. Change the system if old bureaucratic procedures undercut self-esteem.

To encourage purposefulness ask the staff what they need to be more in control of their work, and if possible give it to them. Provide the resources, information, and authority to do the work assigned. Help the staff recognize that what they do relates to the mission of the institution. Encourage everyone to measure results against stated goals and objectives, and disseminate the information widely.

To encourage integrity tell the truth and exemplify what you would like to see in others. Demonstrate congruence between what you say and what you do with everyone. Honor your commitments and keep your promises. If you make a mistake or are unfair with someone, admit it and apologize. Invite feedback on the type of administrator you are and set an example of nondefensiveness. Convey in every way possible that the organization is to operate with integrity and honesty.

Practical Appraisal:
The issue of empowerment is being made a reality with the new IS organization. A substantial portion of the operating budget is earmarked for professional development and training. Employees as well as managers are expected to identify and seek out the training they require. Two of the most significant concerns expressed to the CIO upon his appointment was the lack of training that had been made available to the IS staff and much outdated equipment. Their concerns were soon answered.

The existing IS administrative staff typically approached their management responsibilities from a traditional and hierarchical frame. Learning to be a contemporary, learning organization, client-focused manager is a growing experience for the administrative team. The act of serving as mentor and counselor
to staff, instead of "boss" is something that must be nurtured and enforced with the managers through
example and continuous discussion. Initially empowerment can often take a great deal more effort from a
manager because it entails coaching and counseling. Understanding this about their management role has
mandated that certain personnel related activities, such as performance planning, evaluation, and
constructive feedback take on added importance.

Likewise, the position of being an empowered employee has received both positive and negative reactions.
For those that wish to be highly involved, it has been embraced, and new talents and abilities have been
identified. For those employees who found comfort in independent work unaligned with stated goals, the
involvement and accountability have been difficult. Finding their “niche” has sometimes required
intervention. Eliminating those that do not work comfortably in an empowered environment has been an
important process in building and forming an organization that works cohesively and has the majority of its
members equally and fully engaged. This has been a "walk the talk" action that appears to have had
significant and positive impact.

**Generating short-term “wins”**

There are at least three characteristics of a good short-term win. It is visible; people can see the result. It is
unambiguous; there can be little argument that it has occurred. It is clearly related to the change effort that
is underway. Short-term wins reinforce the change effort in several ways. They demonstrate that the effort
is paying off. They provide opportunities to celebrate and reward those working for change. Such wins
help the guiding coalition test the vision against real conditions and make adjustments. Performance
improvements undermine the efforts of resisters and cynics. Visible results help retain the essential support
of senior administrators. Finally, short-term wins build necessary momentum.

The IS organization has produced visible, unambiguous results related to the vision of moving toward a
learning organization with a strong service orientation during the past year. Communication has improved
in several ways, especially with Local Support Providers (LSPs) in the client community. Internal and
external teamwork has improved. Response and resolution to client problems have improved through the
establishment of a technology driven help desk. A rewards program for staff that exhibits exemplary
service has been initiated in response to a focus group recommendation. A monthly client service
evaluation process for all IS service units has begun. The goal of completing at least 85% of stated
objectives in fiscal year (FY) 1997 was met with more than 90% being completed.

Several other organizational change oriented actions have been initiated. All position descriptions are
being reviewed and more than one third of them have been rewritten to reflect a greater service orientation.
The Systems Development Unit was outsourced to acquire additional technological and project
management skills. All staff members are being trained in the new technologies that are being introduced
into the environment. Cross-functional administrative project teams have been appointed and empowered
to design and implement the various subsystems in the new RDBMS based web-centric administrative
system.

**Practical Appraisal:**

Substantial progress has been made in the first 24 months of this administration to increase the technology
awareness on campus – especially in the academic community. Student labs have been expanded and
upgraded, buildings are being wired for data connections, voice services are being expanded and upgraded,
and academic service offerings are being augmented and enhanced through IT grants to faculty.

Such improvement should be exhibited in the visible celebration of those "wins". Thus once something is
accomplished, the achievement needs to be celebrated to generate the burst of creative energy required for
the next project. Staff need to be individually, collectively, and publicly appreciated for their contributions.
The recent introduction of a reward and recognition program for the IS division has, in part, answered that
need. Expressing appreciation for staff members' accomplishments on a daily and on-going basis, by their
managers, continues to need nurturing.

The positions that make up the IS organization are continually assessed to assure that they are meeting the
needs of the university. Positions have been redesigned to focus on maximizing service offerings to the
academic community as well as providing excellent service to administrative users. Retention of key IS
staff is given great importance. Perceived bureaucratic roadblocks to this end are challenged and, to date,
have been successfully supported by Human Resources. These "wins" quickly become known. However,
much more progress is needed to adequately address the growing concerns in the recruitment, retention, and appropriate compensation for IT personnel.

**Producing more change**

Despite any progress to date, conditions that create impediments to organizational change and learning exist at every hierarchical level. At the individual level, employee turnover, perceived institutional direction or lack of direction, and the “not invented here” syndrome may cause continued resistance. At the departmental level, traditional concepts of performance measurement may impede the commitment to find the time to learn new methods and participate in change projects. Divisional resistance may result from an entrenched “silo” mentality and fear of loss of control. Executive officers must show their ongoing support for the change process, or the institutional impetus may be hindered or lost completely. It is critical, then, to produce more change in projects that impact the institution in the current fiscal year.

The *IT Policy Council*, the keystone of the IT governance structure, has been renamed as the *IT Policy and Planning Council* to better reflect its intended role. It has also been expanded to include the executive officers and all of the deans to ensure that policy decisions are put into practice across the university. During this fiscal year the first subsystems of the new administrative system are scheduled to become operational. The nature of these subsystems in the RDBMS environment will dramatically impact cross-functional decision-making. By the end of the fiscal year, the design stage of the campus-wide data-networking project will end and installation to complete the connection of all faculty offices, a proportion of classrooms, and dormitories will be underway.

Communication processes, already enhanced, will continue to be examined and improved. The project management teams will make their updated plans available on a web page. The monthly IS unit service evaluations will be available on the web. The CIO will continue to meet with groups across the campus and within the IS division to discuss the ongoing institutional changes in IT and in the IS units. The Associate Vice President for IS has convened a new group of technical representatives of the schools, colleges, and administrative divisions to participate in deriving recommendations for infrastructure decisions that will impact the entire university. The automated database for the help desk is being web enabled and shared with LSPs across the campus. The IT strategic planning and management process will continue to be modified and refined to better serve the institution.

Within the IS units, emphasis will be placed on finding ways to increase innovation and to encourage improvised implementation of unit plans. Recent research suggests that an individualized management strategy may be employed to enhance creative performance. To do so, first, identify staff with creativity-relevant personality characteristics through the use of personality assessment instruments. Second, match the identified individuals with complex and challenging jobs and supervisors who encourage creative achievements. Finally, see that the creative staff is managed in a trusting and nonlimiting fashion. The same research shows that those individuals with few creativity-relevant characteristics placed in similar work environments to that just described will, however, enhance overall work performance, lower the potential of their leaving the job, but may be less creative than in traditional work environments.

**Practical Appraisal:**

The “not invented here” syndrome has served as a reminder of the pride many individuals and units have had in their unique procedures. Likewise, there is a tendency to hold onto those unique processes regardless of the potential the new product and its resultant processes might have. Lacking that recognition the new CIO did not appropriately acknowledge the efforts and long hours that had been devoted to the existing processes. More sensitive and effective strategies are now being employed to appreciate the past while building on the future. Unfortunately, some initial resentment and loss of trust developed that must be mended, especially with certain key administrative clients. Ownership in the existing systems was deeply rooted and, in retrospect, required a great deal more conversation and education to receive the necessary buy-in from those critical clients.

Whether it is the person or the job that makes creativity happen, little is known about what promotes employee creativity. However due to the general atmosphere of encouraging risk taking and rewarding innovation in a formal way, there has been an increase in seeking alternate solutions. IS employees are more aware of how they are evaluated which has sparked the need for staff to examine their work processes to assure continuous improvement. Increased innovation and improvised implementation of plans are very likely closely linked to the organization’s increased focus on professional training and development. Also,
allowing and encouraging experimentation (and the right to fail), along with lively debate, has allowed individuals and teams to begin thinking "outside the box".

**Anchoring changes in a new culture**

Culture is not something that can easily be changed. Significant lasting changes in organizational norms and shared values will come at the end of the process, not at an early stage. Actions and behaviors may be altered earlier, but they will likely revert unless the process is completed. New approaches become part of the culture only after they are shown to work and to be superior to the old ways. Without continued talk and support by senior and middle managers it will be difficult for people to admit and proclaim the validity of new methods. It may well be necessary for there to be turnover of certain key individuals before the transition can be completed. It is crucial to incorporate promotion processes that are compatible with the new practices into the fabric of the organization or the old culture will reassert itself.23

It will be critical, therefore, to maintain a focus on performance, behaviors, and adaptive change now and for the indefinite future in the IS division. People who adapt well, are creative, and perform with distinction under the new guidelines, must be recognized and advanced. Managers and supervisors who are not supportive must be addressed, and if they choose not to change they must be replaced. Everyone in the organization needs to understand how their assignment relates to the mission of the unit, the division, and the university. Great effort and some success must be forthcoming in developing leaders for the advocated change at all levels of the organization.

**Practical Appraisal:**

With respect to client-centered service, it is noted that IT expertise alone does not inspire trust and creditability. Successful IT staff must work on their trustworthiness and build good relationships with clients at the same time.24 Staff responsibility for changing client perceptions must continue to be infused into the IT culture at The U of M. Conversing in acronyms, assuming levels of understanding that may or may not exist, and blaming the client community instead of assuming personal responsibility and accountability continues to require attention.

It is widely accepted that culture is not an "add-on" to organizations. Culture is what an organization is rather than what it has.25 It is all about how people learn, how people make decisions, and how people work as a subsystem within a larger system.

**Concluding observations**

Two years of a multi-year change effort to infuse a culture of client service into what was a very traditional IS organization shows meaningful progress. Communication processes have been enhanced, expectations for both individuals and the organization have been clarified, productivity has been substantially increased, responsiveness to difficult situations has improved, and managers appear to be supportive of the designed change methodology.

Many challenges, however, remain to be overcome. The senior administration needs to continually demonstrate that the major projects are institutional and not IS based. Some managers have not internalized the change methodology to the point that it is seen as theirs rather than the CIO’s. The staff, although non-resistant, have individuals that are not yet trusting of the new environment. The outsourcing decision caused concern and unanticipated delay in a major project that remains to be overcome. A difficult budget year with institutional layoffs has caused staff unrest. Enough leaders have not yet been identified throughout the different levels of the organization. Innovation and creative adaptation are still, too often, viewed as risks rather than the expected action.

In conclusion, this quotation from James Champy is worthy of careful consideration for any organization that is undergoing a major purposeful change and provides a good rationale for moving toward a learning organization.

> Most organizational changes today are made in the name of improved ... performance. This should continue to be the objective. But while you are driving toward this result, also be thinking about creating a[n] [organization] that is agile, that can sustain multiple changes, and that is a good place in which to work. You don’t want to put in place an organization that, five years from now, can’t respond quickly to the next wave of … change. Keep asking whether you are just replacing one form of organization with
another that is equally rigid. Nimbleness and agility should be your principal design criteria.

Endnotes

2 DiBella and Nevis, p. 16.
8 Collins, p. 19
9 Kotter, p. 57.
13 *Information Technology Strategic Plan for The University of Memphis*, IS Division, Memphis, TN, June 1997, pp. 5-6.
16 Kotter, p. 115.
18 Kotter, pp. 122-124.
21 Grant & Gnyawali, p. 30