

## *The Importance of Strategic Communication during Change Management at Palm College of Hospitality and Event Management*<sup>2</sup>

### Summary

This case study aims to demonstrate the importance of strategic communication during the change management process at Palm College of Hospitality and Event Management. The change management process is explored by means of the framework of the entrepreneurial organization theory (EOT), from which strategic communication and its four components are derived (aligning, energizing, visioning and constituting). The college is experiencing a change in administration, with a dean of almost ten years retiring and introducing a new dean. A lack of strategic communication related to the vision, future direction, and staffing of the college is causing a lack of trust, declining morale, and conflicting emotions among organizational members. The multi-campus nature of the college makes strategic communication, information dissemination, and strong leadership crucial. Strategic, effective, employee communication is the foundation for change management, as it enhances the sense of belonging and community to the college. Without effective strategic communication, the faculty and staff will continue to decline in morale as well as struggle to uphold the vision of the administration. Potential solutions include increased communication with a focus on pertinent and correct strategic communication, stability in executive level positions, and a shared vision and direction of the college.

### Target Audience

This case study requires prerequisite knowledge of strategic communication, change management, and organizational situational analysis. Students will be required to critically think about strategy implementation and the individual effect each may have on the internal and external environment of the organization. Therefore, the case study is directed at senior undergraduate level students who are taking organizational behavior, strategic management, or leadership courses. The case study can also be used in a graduate level change and strategic management course, if the overall assignment is to create and evaluate strategic communication within an organization during the change management process.

### Explanation of Teaching Objectives

Instructors will have the opportunity to introduce change management and strategic communication during managing change to their students. It is expected of the students to read the five articles

listed under the additional reading section before coming to class. Students need to think critically how one can use strategic communication in the organization in order to communicate the change that is taking place in the College. Due to the comprehensive approach of the case study, students will have to reflect on many subjects, and by the end should be able to:

- Identify and describe the internal stakeholders within Palm College.
- Conduct a SWOT and PEST analysis for Palm College.
- Differentiate among the four aspects – aligning, energizing, visioning, and constituting – of strategic communication.
- Applied the four aspects of strategic communication successfully to the change that is taking place at Palm College.

### Teaching Approach

Each learning objective should be subdivided into a separate topic of discussion, one building upon the other. It should take around thirty minutes to discuss the first topic and about thirty minutes for each additional topic, totaling three teaching hours. This timeframe should allow for an instructor-led introduction of the topic, outline of the example, full class discussion, and assessment.

#### *Phase One: Introduction (10-15 minutes)*

When introducing the case study, the instructor will have the students read it, on their own time. After reading, the student should annotate their thoughts on what the purpose of the case study is, how this case study is relevant to many other organizations, and how change management can effect these organizations. Change management is the theme of the case study; the focus will therefore be on effective strategic communication during change management. Each student will be required to read the articles indicated on the additional readings list and to bring their annotations to class together with discussion points and any questions, concerns, or comments they have.

#### *Phase Two: Outline (50 minutes)*

Due to the prerequisite knowledge required for the basic understanding of the case study, the instructor should review the topics of strategic communication, change management, and organizational situation analysis briefly (SWOT and PEST). After this, the instructor should open the class for discussion on the questions assigned for homework. Each question should have around five minutes of input. Once the initial discussion is over, the instructor will open a presentation detailing what strategic communication is, showing the importance of strategic communication during change management, and noting how to implement it by conducting an organizational situ-

<sup>2</sup> This is hypothetical scenario based case study that was written for the purposes of classroom discussions. It was not intended to show effective or ineffective handling of decisions or to interrogate a managerial situation. Published materials and academic sources were used when preparing this case study.

ation analysis (SWOT and PEST). After describing the basic principles, the instructor will then outline the main point of the case study and the learning objectives for the students.

### ***Phase Three: Implementation (20-30 minutes)***

Once the students understand the objectives, the instructor will lead the class in further discussions regarding the four main questions that the case study aims to answer. The instructor will ask each question and allow five minutes for feedback and discussion.

### ***Phase Four: Evaluation of Understanding (30 minutes)***

After briefly discussing the overall case study questions, students should break up into groups of five or less and prepare answers to the following questions:

- What do you think is the employees' perspective of the changes currently taking place at Palm College of Hospitality and Event management?
- In your opinion, did the new dean set the stage for change within the College properly?
- How can the new dean develop a new vision for the College that will have the buy in of the current staff and faculty as well as all stakeholders?
- What would you suggest the new dean should not change in the College?
- What will be the barriers and implications to a successful implementation of this change?

Once all answers have been discussed, another full class discussion should be held, in which each group provides input on the question. Instructors should pay close attention to answers and help steer students in the correct direction when the answer is ambiguous or misinformed.

### **Additional Readings**

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- Vaccarezza, A. & Rizzi, G. (2014). Change Management Dashboard: An adaptive approach to lead a change program. *People & Strategy*, 37(1), 48-50.
- Wilson, J. (2014). Managing Change Successfully. *Journal of Accountancy*, 217(4), 38.