



Good leadership. Good management. There's a difference.

No campus endeavor better dramatizes higher education's need for good leaders and good managers than an ERP implementation project. These mission-critical campus projects can take years and consume multiple millions of dollars and resources.

Yet ERP failures are in steady supply in higher education. At the Institute for Data Research of Virginia Commonwealth University, Peter Aiken claims that "ERP implementations are more likely to fail, be delayed, cost more than forecast, or fail to deliver functionality than they are to succeed." So how can they be accomplished successfully, on time and on budget?

Vive la difference!

John Kotter, an author and leadership expert at Harvard, can point out the difference between a manager and a leader. A *manager* plans, organizes, budgets, staffs, controls and solves problems.

A *leader* fills a different role. A leader defines what the future looks like, aligns people with that vision, and inspires them to make it happen despite obstacles.

Warren Bennis, professor of business administration at the University of

Southern California, says a manager administers, focuses on systems and structures, relies on control, imitates best practices, has his or her eye on the bottom line, and *does things right*.

Bennis continues. Instead of administering, a leader innovates. Instead of systems and structures, a leader's focus is on people. A leader inspires trust, rather than relying on control. A leader originates, rather than follows, best practices. A leader's eye is on the horizon, and a leader *does the right things*.

In short, higher education needs managers to keep a complicated set of people and technology running smoothly. And we need leaders to create direction and to lead change. Strong leadership and good management are both critical to a large scale ERP implementation project where millions of dollars can be lost. The two roles are often separated for good reasons.

ERP leadership; ERP management

The institution leader must communicate the vision of the ERP, inspire others to rally around, and then guide the institution through the dramatic changes that will likely result.

Interestingly, a technology project may need both functional leaders and technical leaders—both with a vision. A functional leader engages departmental stakeholders to achieve consensus and decisions on business practices and policies. A technical leader inspires the technology personnel to marshal their resources to execute the functional vision. The persons chosen as leaders must represent the institution's best and most respected leadership talent.

Managing an ERP implementation is a staggering undertaking. Strong project management skills are a must. During the life of the project hundreds of tasks must be staffed, tracked and controlled. Managers will build and execute communication plans, carry out risk analyses, maintain issues logs, produce reports, and conduct efficient meetings. A good project manager is organized, disciplined, and uses schedule and budget metrics.

Dave Swartz, who is CIO at George Washington University, and Ken Orgill, former CIO at West Virginia University,

have argued from a lessons-learned standpoint that the selection of the project manager is "without question one of the most important decisions on an ERP project."

Success at Georgia State University

Georgia State University enrolls 27,000 students in Atlanta. In spring 2000, GSU began a two-year implementation of a Student and Financial Aid ERP solution. As the project leader, Associate Provost Bill Fritz had a vision and a set of values to drive the project. Bill wanted nothing less than the best ERP implementation ever, during which departmental silos would be left behind; leaders would be developed; morale and pride would be raised throughout the institution.

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Fritz's vision of a transformed university transcended writing code and populating data tables. His vision went well beyond the actual scope of work and provided an ambitious goal for the university. He carried this message to all project teams and stakeholders.

As he did so, Fritz communicated and modeled a set of values that helped align the project teams and facilitated easy decision making. Decisions made during the project would be concerned with students first, then faculty, and then staff. Further, any pro-

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instructional and organizational development activities.

The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C) is devoted “to helping learning organizations continually improve quality, scale, and breadth of their online programs, according to their own distinctive missions, so that education will become a part of everyday life, accessible and affordable for anyone, anywhere, at any time, in a wide variety of disciplines.”

Sloan-C maintains a catalog of degree and certificate offerings from a wide range of member institutions and organizations. Sloan-C provides speakers and consultants to help institutions learn about online methodologies. The consortium hosts a listserv and wiki, as well as conferences and workshops. Sloan-C also offers an awards program and an effective practices database for members to share the lessons they have learned.

While Sloan-C is centered on online learning, Burks Oakley, associate vice president of academic affairs at the University of Illinois says, “It’s the same faculty. They are now re-thinking what they do in the classroom, bringing constructivist styles from the online program to the classroom.”

Pressure from the top

Modern teaching techniques and adult learning theory have been slow to find their way into practice for other reasons. For example, merit pay increases and tenure have historically rewarded research and publishing—not teaching. But that is changing.

“Assessment is huge and growing,” says Hoag Holmgren, POD’s new executive director. “Terms like ‘evidence of teaching effectiveness’ have found their way into faculty job descriptions. Many applicants are now expected to show teaching portfolios.”

Pierce Howard, an expert in organization development and a professor at Pfeiffer University, is critical of accrediting bodies that call for grades to be distributed in a bell curve. “That can make me a good teacher for attaining mediocrity. We should be teaching to

mastery—where all students get A’s.”

On another hand, Ralph Wolff, president of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges, notes that in 1998 Congress shifted the emphasis to outcomes. He says that the emphasis on faculty credentials and research are important, but do not necessarily result in successful learning. “You can’t judge a restaurant by its great menu. You have to eat the food.”

Compared to records of courses taken and passed, outcomes can be difficult to measure in instruction. Wolff envisions that outcomes will eventually be presented competitively with cross-institutional data, normed and referenced. Meantime, universities can provide incentives such as recognition, release time and merit pay for faculty members who adopt new techniques and focus on outcomes, however they are measured.

Marketplace pressure

The strongest force for change may be the marketplace itself, despite its seeming docility and willingness to accept mediocrity dished out at high prices. The Spellings Commission may have plenty to say about fixing an antiquated system that is overpriced and underperforming. The early reports, although toned-down most recently, seems to describe a customer-driven commercial marketplace.

Increased student participation in instructor evaluations is likely in the offing. According to Pierce Howard, today’s evaluations usually stop at the first of Fitzpatrick’s four levels of evaluation—“was this a satisfying experience?” That question awards “smiley points” for popularity. However, the untouched next three levels are lessons learned, changes in behavior and ultimate difference on the bottom line.

Howard believes academic freedom should not be an excuse for laissez-faire oversight or a shield from accountability. “If instructors can be fired for ineptitude—for not knowing their math or their biology—why shouldn’t we hold their feet to the fire regarding ineptitude as a teacher?”

Acrimony is not the solution. Partnership between instructors, education policy committees and students, will forge a stronger relationship with which to progress.

Burks Oakley draws this analogy. “General Motors used to look down the nose at small, poorly built imports. But GM’s market share has dropped from over 50 percent to less than 25 percent, and it is virtually bankrupt. Toyota and Lexus are now the gold standard.”

As we watch the scene, colleges who put students and teaching success first might well overtake schools who are overly dependent on their venerable reputations. ■

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posal that did not result in student-friendly, faculty-friendly or staff-friendly outcomes would be dropped. Fritz filled the leader role admirably. He painted a vision, aligned resources behind that vision, and communicated constantly with stakeholders throughout the university.

Project management was performed by Cherise Peters, who today is GSU’s registrar and assistant vice president for enrollment management. Peters oversaw the myriad of day-to-day management jobs. She had the assistance of hired talent from the outside who brought schedule and control tools to the table.

The GSU story has a happy ending. The project finished on time, on budget, and with very few quality problems. The division of leader/manager responsibilities was a significant success factor. “It took a combination of great leadership and great management for us to succeed as we did,” says GSU Provost Ron Henry.

The resources consumed in an ERP project are enormous. The skill sets utilized and expanded are vast. World-class communications are needed. Be prepared to apply the right kinds and amounts of leadership and management talent. ■