

ENHANCING NYANA USING A TEAM-BASED CHANGE STRATEGY

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To enable NYANA to respond quickly to changes in the size of its client base or type of services required, it is implementing team-based organization. Using this strategy, the agency is moving from a hierarchical structure to a workforce that provides resettlement services through self-directed work teams. This article describes the management of resistance to this new initiative, TBO infrastructure and training, and support systems in this pilot TBO project.

NYANA is the largest local agency providing resettlement and immigrant services in the United States. The organization's lay and professional leadership strives to provide value-added services that satisfy the needs of its clients (refugees and immigrants), fulfill the funders' requirements, empower the staff, and support inter-organizational partnerships.

NYANA is an agency that must have a flexible staff able to quickly deliver customized services that meet the needs of the current refugees and immigrants. The number of refugees and immigrants served by the agency is dependent upon external factors, such as governmental policies and international geopolitical issues. The governmental and non-governmental organizations that fund NYANA's services also change their funding criteria in response to the shifting priorities of legislators or donors. In recent years, the agency has increased its services to immigrant communities in locations and at times that are convenient for specific immigrant communities.

To enable the agency to have the data needed to respond quickly and wisely to external changes—changes in the size of the client base or the type of desired services—NYANA has worked to implement a sophisticated knowledge management strategy. This process gives executive, middle management, and administrative staff computerized access to and input into the activities that oversee

service delivery and provides the data needed to effectively flatten and downsize the organization as needed (Handelman, 1997).

In addition to the knowledge management strategy, NYANA is implementing two additional strategies: Integrated Workplace Strategy (IWS) and Team-Based Organization (TBO). The goal of IWS is to design workspaces that can (1) provide a user-friendly and welcoming environment to the clients, (2) accommodate changes in the service delivery formats, (3) facilitate cross-functional teamwork, and (4) reduce costs associated with space. The short-range goal of the TBO is to develop a team-based approach that would improve the teamwork and collaboration of the agency managers so they can quickly design and implement responses to emerging challenges. The implementation of these three complementary strategies can therefore provide NYANA with a decision-making infrastructure that would both facilitate the collaborative production of rapid, innovative, and high-quality responses to the agency's key challenges and opportunities and flatten its hierarchy.

At the time of this writing, the knowledge management strategy has been expanded, the integrated workplace strategy (IWS) is still in the design stage, and the first pilot of the TBO strategy is being implemented. This last strategy is the focus of this article, which describes the change strategies used to motivate staff to support NYANA's TBO pilot,

the characteristics of the agency's TBO pilot, and the training and support systems that were selected to sustain the pilot.

DESIGNING NYANA'S TEAM-BASED ORGANIZATION (TBO) PILOT PROJECT

In 1997 the NYANA Executive Team formed an IWS project team and asked them to develop recommendations that answered the following two questions:

1. What type of team management approach should be initiated at NYANA?
2. What type of organizational support do the management teams need?

The IWS team met once a week for several months and also worked together at a two-day retreat. They examined the TBO theory and practices used by public and private sector organizations and assessed the interfaces between NYANA's three organizational change initiatives (knowledge management, IWS, and TBO). It should be noted that the change initiatives were only being initiated with the executive, administrative, and middle management staff.

Early in 1998 the IWS project team hired me to provide organizational consulting services to help them design a TBO pilot that would address the following issues:

1. Management of Resistance: What are the conflicts created in the process of implementing TBO teams and maintaining the current organizational structure in relation to power, authority, and hierarchical structures?
2. TBO Infrastructure and Processes: What does it mean to participate in a management team versus belonging to an ad hoc project team? What team infrastructure should we use during the NYANA pilot?
3. TBO Training and Support Systems: What training and support systems do members of the pilot TBO teams need to function at optimal levels?

Managing Resistance to the TBO Project

What are the conflicts created in the process of both implementing TBO teams and maintaining the current organizational structure in relation to power, authority and hierarchical structures?

I began my work with the IWS team by engaging them in a consideration of resistance. I did not just present the major approaches that can be used to increase support for a change effort and manage resistance to it, but rather worked with the IWS team as they examined the following change concepts and decided how the theories applied to NYANA's TBO initiative.

The team began its work by examining the congruence model of organizational effectiveness (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). While discussing this model, the team realized that NYANA could be viewed as an open organizational system that transforms needs and resources into services and products for its clients. External stakeholders—clients, funders, and other key parties—judge NYANA on how well it delivers its services. Since NYANA is a value-driven agency, the agency's work (services to clients and joint endeavors) must be congruent with its mission and values. Therefore, TBO and the other change initiatives must enhance NYANA's capacity to deliver innovative and value-added services to its clients and partners while supporting staff morale.

In organizational change efforts, resistance is manifested as issues of power, anxiety, and control (Nadler & Nadler, 1998). Power issues are triggered whenever there is a realignment of the political dynamics of an organization. The formal system (hierarchical leadership patterns and existing work units) and the informal system (networks, friendships, cliques, or coalitions) can use their power either to support or oppose a proposed change. Successful efforts to influence formal and informal systems occur when the initiative can be supported by the minds, hearts, and spirit of the staff and other key stakeholders, such as the Board of Directors, funders, or partners.

Each IWS team member was individually aware of his or her own individual and collective resistance to the proposed TBO initiative. Each cognitively understood that the TBO approach could help managers be more effective when they worked on teams that collaboratively created solutions to the agency's challenges and opportunities. Each knew that he or she needed to be pro-active leaders advocating the change effort.

At the same time at some level, most of them wanted to continue to manage their own work units within the comfort zone of NYANA's existing organizational structure and hierarchical chain-of-command. They had concerns regarding the implementation of a major change (the TBO pilot) without knowing whether or not it would produce beneficial impacts on the organization's productivity and morale. They were also aware that the TBO pilot would be launched during a period in which staff would be downsized, which naturally increased their anxiety level. They discussed these concerns and decided to continue to design the TBO pilot and work to increase staff support and minimize resistance to it.

To motivate staff to embrace these changes, the NYANA Executive Vice-President and the IWS team used management meetings to communicate why TBO was needed and how it could benefit NYANA. In many different ways they described how TBO could enable NYANA to create quicker high-quality responses to client needs, enhance the agency's funding, and increase staff empowerment and support. The Executive Vice-President, members of the IWS team, and I also made a presentation on the proposed TBO initiative to the Board of Directors. One tool to managing resistance was not used; the change leaders did not actively advocate for TBO in one-on-one meetings with the small number of influential staff members who were actively opposing the TBO initiative.

As a result of the communication efforts, most managers seemed willing to proactively support the TBO initiative. However, they were anxious. Middle managers now knew

that downsizing would occur. Many of them did not know if they would continue to have a job. NYANA's funding was being adjusted to reflect the current number of clients and the funding priorities of the funding entities. The agency was reducing the number of staff and entire programs.

In spite of the downsizing, the TBO pilot was launched. The TBO pilot was supported by the change leaders who knew that the proposed TBO management teams were likely to develop innovative and pragmatic options to expand the client base and secure funding. During its launching the TBO pilot was supported by most managers. The support was extraordinary in spite of the fact that TBO team members had to maintain the delivery of services by their functional work units (in units that had been downsized) and at the same time collaboratively create effective TBO management teams.

TBO Infrastructure

What does it mean to participate in a management team versus belonging to an ad hoc project team? What team infrastructure should we use during the NYANA pilot?

To create the infrastructure to be used during the TBO pilot, the IWS team explored the different ways that experts on teams define the terms "group" and "team." *Group* is the term usually used when members mainly need to share information and report their progress on independently executed tasks. Groups are excellent formats to use when there is a need to share information and best practices. *Team* is the term used when members do not work independently, but have to collaborate actively to accomplish the team's mission. In other words, real teams are composed of members who have to work interdependently to achieve a common goal and are equally accountable for the completion of the team task. In most organizations, ad hoc project teams function more like a group than a team.

Teams are often classified according to these key variables: mission, authority, relationship to the organization's formal struc-

ture, and duration. The IWS team studied these other types of teams as well:

- *In a management team* managers of various units meet on a regular basis to make decisions, coordinate efforts, and allocate resources.
- *Cross-functional teams and project teams* are those in which staff from different disciplines work together to analyze, recommend alternatives, and solve complex challenges. After the recommendations of these teams are approved by upper management, the teams are usually empowered to implement them.
- *A real team* is a team in which the leadership functions—facilitator, recorder, and coordinator—are rotated among the team members.
- *In a self-directed work team* members are authorized to make day-to-day decisions about how to implement their assignments. They also often have a lot of control over the team's infrastructure and support variables, such as human resources, budgets, client interfaces, and internal work processes. These teams are a permanent part of the functional operations of the organization. They usually have an assigned leader who primarily functions as a process leader expert in the technical work of the team and whose primary responsibilities include motivating team members; facilitating continuous team improvement, team problem-solving, and decision-making; and representing the team to other levels of the organization.
- *A single-leader work group* (Katzenbach, 1998) has an assigned leader who establishes the group tasks, assigns work, and assesses the adequacy of individual and group performance.

After an assessment of the various team formats, the IWS team decided that the TBO team infrastructure should be that of a cross-functional team whose members are drawn from the agency's executives and managers. Since the pilot did not involve any of the non-managerial staff, the teams were named man-

agement teams. The TBO teams would also incorporate the "real team" leadership processes. Therefore the pilot's team leadership roles—facilitator, recorder, and coordinator—would be rotated among the team members. It was also decided that the pilot teams would share their progress with the IWS team and the Executive Vice-President using a variety of formats: Lotus Notes, face-to-face meetings, and written reports.

This TBO infrastructure was selected because the TBO teams had to design and implement collaborative work products based on cross-functional perspectives. The IWS team members had been trained in the team leadership functions of facilitators, recorders, and coordinators and had rotated them for the last five months. They wanted this done on the TBO management teams as well so all of the team members could experience these functions. They also decided to provide training in team leadership for the TBO management team members.

The IWS wrote operating principles for the TBO teams and decided to provide ongoing support for the teams, assess the effectiveness of the pilot, and identify changes that would be needed for the future wide-scale incorporation of TBO throughout the agency. At that point, the IWS team decided to change its name to the "Change Management Team."

The proposed TBO infrastructure consisted of four teams—the Change Management Team and three cross-functional management teams—that would implement the following assignments:

1. **Resource Development & Planning Team:** Explore, identify, and pursue opportunities to generate revenues for NYANA through grants, special events, fee-for-service, and other methods.
2. **Service Delivery Team:** Ensure coordination within the service delivery system and address implementation of programs and services.
3. **Infrastructure Team:** Create mechanisms (e.g., integrating management information systems, space utilization, and personnel issues) to respond to the current

and emerging needs of clients and customers.

4. Change Management Team: Continue to develop the foundation to reconfigure the total agency according to team-based organization principles, monitor the work of the pilot TBO teams, and provide the support to the executive staff and middle managers needed for the agency-wide changeover to TBO.

A TBO kick-off meeting was held in May 1988 in which the Executive Vice-President, members of the Change Management Team, and I met with the agency's executives and managers. We reviewed why the TBO pilot was being implemented; described the pilot teams' mission, membership, and format; depicted the support structures for the teams; and provided an overview of the team training processes. After the TBO pilot was launched, each of the TBO management teams met with me to begin their teamwork and acquire the skills needed to participate on management teams.

TBO Team Processes, Training, and Support Systems

What training and support systems do members of the pilot TBO teams need to function at optimal levels?

The Change Management Team and I developed a training plan that covered the process skills that team members would need to become supportive team members who created exemplary teamwork. The initial management team training, which was conducted in June 1998, focused on team roles and responsibilities, meeting policies, joint problem-solving tools, and collaborative decision-making processes. The members of each team selected their initial facilitator, recorder, and coordinator and reviewed the flow chart that guides the task work of the team.

The leadership roles are those of facilitator, recorder, and coordinator. The facilitator handles such tasks as creating the meeting agenda (after input from team members),

facilitating the group, making sure team assignments are understood, and scheduling the next meeting. The recorder's work includes writing on easel paper during the meeting, entering the team notes on Lotus notes, and recording attendance. The coordinator communicates with the team sponsor, makes room reservations, and tracks team progress according to its milestones. Team members' responsibilities include actively participating during meetings and implementing between-meeting assignments.

The work of the TBO teams is based on collaboration and empowerment of team members. The TBO decision-making protocols were designed to (1) ensure that no vested interests could block the creation of needed decisions, (2) support the creation of consensus decisions, and (3) ensure that all decisions are based on sound premises. NYANA's TBO decision-making protocols consist of the following steps:

1. Identify the issue or problem.
2. Ask clarifying questions.
3. Share concerns, needs, and values.
4. Make the first call for consensus.
5. If no consensus is obtained, engage in a complete joint problem-solving process that analyzes the situation, sets outcome objectives, develops options, identifies positive and negative impacts for each option, and selects an option.
6. Make the second call for consensus.
7. If consensus is not obtained, list individual objections.
8. Explore the objections by the total team.
9. Adjust the option or reaffirm the original option.
10. Call for consensus on the original or adjusted option.
11. If no consensus is obtained, the total team engages in one or more of the following options: the objectors stand aside, the team provides more time to consider the option (at the current meeting or at a future date), the option is withdrawn, the proposal is sent to a subgroup or a supermajority vote is conducted.

The Change Team also created a process by which a TBO team can be created, supported, and monitored. The process includes the following steps:

1. The Executive Vice-President or Change Management Team identifies a problem, need, or potential project.
2. The Change Management Team assigns the project to an appropriate TBO team with deadlines for completion of the task.
3. The TBO team determines the areas of expertise needed to do the task and creates a subgroup to develop milestones and timelines for the task.
4. The TBO team submits the milestones and timeline to the Change Management Team who submits them to the Executive Vice-President for approval.
5. The TBO team supports the subgroup's completion of the milestones and timeline.
6. The Change Management Team provides the TBO team with interfaces (when needed) with the current work units, supports their efforts, and monitors the implementation of their projects.
7. The Change Management team reports to the Executive Vice-President through agreed-upon reporting mechanisms.

During the second training session, the Executive Vice-President met with each of the teams. Each TBO management team developed milestones for its assigned tasks and explored its needs to interact with the rest of the agency and with the Executive Vice-President. The milestones were transmitted to the Change Management Team.

In addition to the applied training given to the TBO teams, I provided two training sessions on the roles of facilitator, recorder, and coordinator. Since these roles are rotated among team members, the training was open to any team member who wished to attend. The sessions provided opportunities for team members to develop skills in these areas:

- Implementing the TBO team leadership functions: format a meeting agenda, cre-

ate a facilitator agenda, record on easel paper, write useful minutes, and interface with the Change Management Team

- Using the consensus decision-making steps and collaborative problem-solving tools
- Enhancing participatory communication and conflict management skills

The Change Management Team created several mechanisms to encourage communication among the TBO teams, with the Executive Vice-President, and with the rest of the executive and managerial staff. A Lotus project file was established that contains progress reports from the four TBO teams. The file is accessible to all team members and to the executive office. The Change Management Team also conducts periodic oral briefings with the Executive Vice-President, who attends some of the management team meetings. A monthly inter-team meeting is held where each team makes a presentation. At a recent inter-team meeting, the management teams reported on how they were progressing with their assigned tasks. Although each team had made significant progress in achieving its assignments, each was also experiencing scheduling difficulties and was concerned with how to move work forward when key members were not able to attend the meetings.

The Change Management Team recently assessed the progress of the TBO pilot and concluded that the TBO pilot is moving forward based on the following findings:

- Each team has assigned its roles, adopted norms, created mission statements, meets on a regular basis, uses sub-groups between meetings, and uses technology for communication via Lotus Notes.
- Each team is getting real-time training.
- The TBO problem-solving and decision-making tools are being used in functional areas.
- All teams have submitted milestones to the Change Management Team and are beginning to implement them.
- All teams are communicating with each

other, the Change Management Team, and the Executive Vice-President.

FUTURE CHALLENGES FOR NYANA'S TBO STRATEGY

If NYANA is to reap the full benefits of using TBO strategies, the agency's executive and administrative leadership needs to fully support a transition from the current traditional hierarchical structure to a workforce that provides resettlement services by participating in one or more TBO teams. Project teams (using the infrastructure of the TBO pilot teams) could continue to develop options to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities. Self-directed work teams could be created to implement most of the service delivery work of the agency.

If TBO were to continue at NYANA, the agency needs the following systems (Mohrman et al., 1996) that support TBO initiatives:

- An organizational measurement strategy that identifies both the benefits (of the total TBO effort and of each team) and the areas that need improvement
- Performance and compensation systems that are both individual and team based
- Training programs for managers of self-directed teams that enable them to lead by "coaching and facilitating" by giving them the skills to make consensus decisions, encourage cooperation, manage conflicts

between and within teams, and become more results driven than activity driven

Change efforts that create major shifts in an organization's culture and work processes need the support of the chief executive, which has been key to the initial success of the TBO initiative. Its continued success initiative is dependent on the actions of all agency's executives and professionals. They must be willing to continue to take risks and maintain a personal passion regarding the change initiative.

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