Angelo State University
Residence Life Housing Director Project

Lessons Learned

Use the questions below to assist you in constructing your narrative regarding lessons learned under each area. Please complete form on line by March 12, 2008.

Department Specific:

1. How successful was the overall project approach in your area?
2. Were you able to implement "Best Practices" as planned? What were the challenges?
3. What were the enablers and/or obstacles encountered by your area during the project?
4. How well was your area prepared?
5. How well was the project accepted by your area?
6. How effective was the decision making and problem solving strategy in your area? Please explain.
7. How involved were the employees in your area and was your strategy effective?

Comments:

(CF) Overall, I would say the project was a success. It has made an immediate change in our processes… for the better. We were so heavily manual before that the degree of automation we have been able to gain is really remarkable. We are already seeing areas where the time needed to complete a task has been hugely reduced. By being able to eliminate a number of dual entry points, shadow systems and unproductive redundancy, I believe we will see fewer "human error" issues because we don't have quite so many steps to get through now. On the other hand, the "simplification" comes from a pretty complex system. To understand and maximize use of that system requires a much higher skill set than before.

(CF) I believe the staff in this area was ready to make this kind of change, because we were so dissatisfied with and frustrated by the manual processes. The change was not entirely painless… because it is hard to learn new processes and let go of habits. We tried to involve at least the central office staff as much as possible. Since we didn't really have "backfill" for this like we did with Banner, we couldn't bring everyone to every meeting etc. We rotated attendance and made a concerted effort to bounce ideas around. We were not always 100% successful, and there were times when different individuals would feel left out—

but I don't know that we could have done it better given everything else that we were dealing with.
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(CF) The changes have been pretty dramatic and they came in pretty rapid succession. I think it will take yet a few months for us to get back into a rhythm and get comfortable with the new processes.

(KC) Several members on the IT area contributed to the success of this project. IT had the knowledge and skills to complete this project, despite several hurdles due to challenges with this software.

Project (Your department and others involved in the project)
1. How well did people work together on the project?
    (TA) It was great working with this group of people.
2. How well did the project team function as a team?
    (TA) If it hadn't been for great teamwork, there is no way this project could have worked from an IT standpoint.
3. How effective was communication with your stakeholders throughout the project?
    (TA) Lots of emails and phone calls back and forth. They were always very quick to answer and give feedback.
4. How could the project have been improved?
    (TA) Testing always seemed a little tight.
5. What actions should be taken to help ensure successful implementation of projects in the future?
6. If you could go back and change one thing during your implementation, what would it be?

Comments:

(CF) I think that we worked together as well as could be expected given the circumstances. Personalities still play a role—both good and bad. I think I have a very good team in my department. They have good ideas and have demonstrated a LOT of flexibility—from Banner implementation right on through housing software implementation. When I stop and think about it, we have had major processes changes in our department continuously for a long period of time. That can be exhausting so it's understandable when the fatigue shows. Could we have communicated better at times—yes. But were we able to work through it and get things going in the same direction when needed, yes.

(CF) Since coming to ASU, it has been my experience that our IT department is exceptionally good. They really came through for us on this project. I know it was not as smooth for them as for us—but the end result for us has been so good, that I am doubly appreciative of their efforts. We are much more dependent of IT support than before. (The advantage to being "manual' is that you aren't that dependent on IT) We are going to

have to work on building the long term relationships so that we can grow the new system together.

(CF) If I could change anything about the implementation, it would have been to spend more time up-front with IT, explaining our processes and what we were trying to do. Maybe have someone from the Project office or IT spend more time observing our processes. I think that would have made it easier for them to anticipate issues and helping us troubleshoot potential technical problems and find solutions during the planning phase.

(KC) Future projects need to consider the size of a vendor's organization in choosing a vendor to provide a solution for the university, or should at least consider this in planning a projects timeline. Availability of all involved parties should also be considered, especially in the summer months, Christmas, vacation, and spring break.

(KC) Understanding of how a vendor's solution integrates with Banner, not just the knowledge that a product "works" with Banner, is vital in selecting and planning a project. Gathering information from universities that have implemented a project that ASU is considering, in a similar environment (Oracle database, Solaris OS), would allow project management to select the best solution for ASU and provide date (best practices, lessons learned, etc…) for creating a "doable" project timeline.

Project Management provided by the Project Office.
As the Project Office and its management team evolves; feedback concerning the approach to the implementation of the project as well as project manager involvement is crucial. Would you please answer the questions below and help us improve our process?

1. Before the start of your project, what were your thoughts concerning the need for a Project Manager to help you?
2. As we proceeded through the implementation process, did you understand where each step in the process was taking us, or did you often feel lost or unaware of the next step?
3. Throughout the Planning and Implementation process, did you ever feel that any of the required steps where unnecessary? (If yes, please explain).
4. How effectively did your Project Manager communicate with you and other stakeholders throughout the implementation? Are there ways that the communication process could be improved?
5. How effective was the training and marketing support you received from the Project Management Team?
6. Do you feel like you have the necessary tools to sustain awareness of your project in the future?
7. If you could go back and have your Project Manager change one thing during the implementation, what would it be?

8. Now that your project has been completed, do you feel that this could have been done on time, within scope and within budget without the help of a project manager?

Comments:

(CF) I knew that we would need a Project Manager to provide the necessary structure (and sometimes prodding) to keep things moving. I think the Project manager job frequently also involves being the sounding board and "vent to" person. Not necessarily because they need to "fix" anything– Change, even when you want it, is stressful, particularly if there are other things going on that may be affecting the team players involved. We had a lot of "outside of the project" drama in our office this year, so we had some of that taking place.

(CF) I don't think we required as much help with the training and marketing for our implementation as we did with say, Banner. We were able to handle that ourselves. But I believe that if we did need it, it would have been available to us.

(CF) Some of the direction seemed a little too "basic" for me… stuff that just seemed obvious, but then again, may be more about familiarity with the team you are working with. I also think that sometimes we were saying the same things, but in slightly different ways. Again, maybe just familiarity.

(CF) I don't think the implementation would have been successful without a Project Manager, because, frankly, it's nice to have someone else keep an eye on the budget, coordinate with the vendor, etc. Having that responsibility would have really slowed us down. It was nice to be free to just work on the implementation.

(KC) This project would not have been completed without a project manager. The project management office was vital in providing resources to manage a project that required more IT involvement than was initially expected. A flexible project schedule was created by the project manager to divide the project into smaller, manageable pieces assigned to teams or individuals to create accountability in meeting goal-oriented guidelines. This schedule allowed each team member to track their own assignments and see the progress of the team at each weekly progress meeting. Personally, I would like to see the project office use a project tracking tool, similar to, but not necessarily, Microsoft Project. Using Excel to track this project was sufficient due to the small size of the project..