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Creating and Developing New Value Drivers for the Organizational Dynamics Graduate Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania

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Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics in the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania.

Advisor: Eric van Merkensteijn

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Abstract

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Disciplines

Organizational Behavior and Theory

Comments

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CREATING AND DEVELOPING NEW VALUE DRIVERS FOR THE
ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

by

Brian L. Sexton

Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics
in the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics at the
University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2006

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ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS GRADUATE STUDIES PROGRAM
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Approved by:

Larry M. Starr, Program Director

Eric van Merkensteijn, Advisor

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents a comprehensive plan for the University of Pennsylvania Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics (MSOD) program to increase the number of participants who enroll and register into the program. The plan includes strategies to (1) expand opportunities for alumni and current students to help market the program; (2) implement program-specific marketing efforts; (3) create an option of more focused curriculum tracks; (4) develop new educational partnerships with peer institutions abroad; (5) make the program more accessible through financial flexibility; (6) nurture reciprocal learning relationships; and (7) estimate empirically the value of the proposed plan. The thesis will also offer a strategic perspective that will meet the program's organizational mission and objectives, and will optimize its strength as a premier academic enterprise.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Established in 1977, the University of Pennsylvania Organizational Dynamics Graduate Studies program, in 2006, had an enrollment of 425 active students. With a mission to “enhance the competencies of mid-career adults through applied scholarship from the arts and humanities, social sciences, and professional organizational disciplines,”ⁱ program participants and alumni represent a wide array of industries.

As the old adage goes, “Things just aren’t what they used to be.” This is evident in every sector of the world, where companies compete and thrive on a global scale; civic directors on all levels are pressured to lead in a more proactive manner; and not-for-profit organizations play a more lucrative role in communities worldwide. Survival is not enough. Superior management of organizational dynamics is a competency companies and governments should not simply hope to develop, but one they should aggressively hone. The Organizational Dynamics graduate studies program serves that purpose by enhancing the organizational competencies of participants.

The program targets a growing number of highly qualified adults seeking to return to university for graduate level education. According to the 2002 School of Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan: Priorities for the Twenty-First Century, “students seek self-contained master’s degrees or other credentials that signify advanced learning and support both personal achievement and professional advancement.”ⁱⁱ

Please note that this was written by a previous dean and was abandoned mid-

2006. In late 2006 a new plan was released:

<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/home/about/strategic/StrategicPlan06.pdf>

With the benefits of highly respected faculty at a renowned university in a location that is geographically attractive to many East Coast professionals, the program at the University of Pennsylvania should be top-of-mind for executives and their employers seeking to enhance the benefits their employees receive from participating in organizational dynamics programs.

Table 1 shows the number of seats filled for the fall semester of each of the past 12 years. The data indicate two significant drops: between 1997 and 1998, and after 2003; there has been a decline in the number of registrations. The effects after 2003 occurred after a significant change in the program curriculum, and perhaps because of changes in the economy. In a slow or no growth economy, many workers will go back to school for education to try to help them get a better or different job. After September 11th 2001 for example, the U.S. economy almost went into a recession. The lag time of the between September 2001 and September 2003 may have contributed to part of the reason for the increase between 2002 and 2003. As well, internal and external program evaluations had suggested to many that the program might be closed. When the new director was hired and the decisions to keep it open and to develop it formally were made, the number of applicants increased which created an increase in seats filled in the fall of 2003.

Table 1. Available Seats for Organizational Dynamics Program

Year of Enrollment	Number of Seats Filled for Fall Semester
1995	477
1996	492
1997	494
1998	386
1999	346
2000	314
2001	316
2002	343
2003	389
2004	338
2005	311
2006	267

It is also worth noting that education assistance programs under section 127 of the Internal Revenue Code allow an employer to offer up to \$5,250 annually of tax-free education to help any employee who is currently employed, on leave, retired, disabled, or laid off, as long as the benefits are provided by reason of their employment relationship. For the tax years beginning after January 1, 2002, Congress made permanent the \$5,250 benefit not only to fund undergraduate studies but also to cover graduate education. Beginning in 2002, employees pursuing advanced or professional degrees could use tax-free funds to support the cost of their education.

The graduation numbers from the Organizational Dynamics program indicate that more could be done to recruit students who will move through the program to completion. Table 2 indicates that the number of graduates from the program in 2005 was about where it was in 1995. The distribution of graduates has several explanations. First is the number of admitted students; second concerns

the admission standards. In 1995, the program admitted many, but a large percent dropped out or were unable academically to complete their studies. As well, an “open-door” policy existed: Anyone who could pay the tuition via sponsor or personal resources was admitted without restriction (several had never completed college). In 2003, the policy was eliminated and the program began for the first time to issue admission standards equivalent to the rest of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Prior to 2002, as many as 15 percent of admitted students did not graduate. Since 2003, more than 99 percent have graduated.

Table 2. Organizational Dynamics Program Graduation Totals

Year of Enrollment	Number of Graduates
1995	75
1996	68
1997	121
1998	127
1999	101
2000	90
2001	57
2002	57
2003	58
2004	77
2005	71

Eduventures Inc., an educational consulting firm, surveyed more than 500 U.S. companies, ranging in size from fewer than 1,000 to more than 50,000 employees and representing a wide range of industries, and found that 86 percent offer an employer-provided education benefit up to the tax-exempt limit annually per employee.ⁱⁱⁱ “Employers still agree that continuous learning and professional development are strategic tools for recruiting and retaining good employees,”^{iv} according to Rebecca Hastings, information center manager for the Society for

Human Resource Management. “Education benefits are critical for organizations that wish to maintain an environment of continuous learning.”^v

Many companies are stressing the importance of education by hosting employee seminars and workshops such as “Lunch and Learn” sessions. In these sessions, employees are briefed on ways of getting tuition reimbursement and strategies for improving their careers and standing out in the application process for new positions.

Dena Wilson, talent manager at the insurance company Aflac, explains why companies are spending thousands of dollars in tuition reimbursement programs that are not required. “Right now, we all know we’re in a war for talent, so we want to attract and retain quality.”^{vi}

Purpose of Thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to present a plan that can allow the Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics program to increase the number of students as well as decrease the time to graduation for students each year. The information presented addresses various aspects of marketing and university life. This plan looks at the total university structure from marketing to alumni to departmental organization. By following the guidelines and suggestions outlined, the program can ensure its viability and strength for years to come. Even more, the program can truly become a model which other similar programs at the University of Pennsylvania as well as throughout the nation can follow.

CHAPTER 2

EXPAND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALUMNI AND CURRENT STUDENTS TO HELP MARKET THE PROGRAM

There are two components of this plan that incorporate shifts in marketing dynamics. One way to increase the number of applicants is to expand opportunities for alumni and current students to help market the Organizational Dynamics program.

The program now supports that alumni and current students informally and voluntarily promote it through positive word of mouth. There are no directed channels to engage them actively in efforts that may boost awareness or interest among potential applicants.

One way to remedy this is to develop stronger ties with existing professional and social organizations affiliated with the University, such as Pi Delta Epsilon professional business fraternity and other professional organizations and clubs. The goal would be for these groups to promote Organizational Dynamics graduate studies to their members, or at least be open to sharing information on behalf of the program. The Wharton Program for Working Professionals (WPWP) gives Pi Delta Epsilon a current list of participants' e-mail addresses to the program. Pi Delta Epsilon would like to expand its membership base and has expressed interest in forming a relationship with the Organizational Dynamics program. Since the members of Pi Delta Epsilon are all working, mid-career executives and most have completed the WPWP program, which is a post-baccalaureate program, a possible next step for these members is the Organizational Dynamics graduate master's program.

In 2006, I met with eight-members of the fraternity and conducted a small informal survey, asking how many of them were aware of the Organizational Dynamics graduate program. None had. I gave a brief overview of the program and asked how many would be interested in learning more about the program. All eight members of Pi Delta Epsilon were interested in learning more, suggesting a new untapped market of potential candidates for the Organizational Dynamics program.

Another opportunity to engage alumni and students is to launch a more user-friendly Organizational Dynamics program Web site featuring an online professional networking atmosphere similar to the social business online network LinkedIn.com. The ability to network virtually and keep current on relevant Organizational Dynamics program activities can build loyalty among members of the program community and increased enthusiasm about the benefits thereby bestowed, making them more active potential resources for promotion. This could even be elevated to feature online peer mentor pairings and a virtual advisor from the Organizational Dynamics staff. To keep design costs low, the department could entice a student Web designer in the program to build the site.

A highlighted goal from the 2002 strategic plan for the University of Pennsylvania, *Building on Excellence: The Next Agenda*, states, "Penn should provide a continuum of educational opportunities that engages learners throughout their lives and in various stages of their careers."^{vii}

Penn should strive to shift its model for intellectual contact between the university and its students from a model of brief, episodic contact to one of

continuous and ongoing interaction throughout their careers and their lives. The university should enter into a lifelong learning commitment with all participants in its education programs. Increased focus on, and involvement with, our alumni must form a central part of this effort. We should identify basic standards and best practices for all programs across the twelve schools that provide education along the continuum of learning. We should also identify new markets of learners and provide services and facilities that meet their needs.^{viii}

It is important to note that trading partnerships with such organizations as Pi Delta Epsilon are not just intended to recruit new students from outside the university community. Working with professional organizations and clubs also makes the program apparent to students currently within the university community, or those who may seek to return for additional education. Here lies yet another benefit of working with such groups on campus. It is not just that the program is getting word-of-mouth advertising from organizations that are respected and that have a far-reaching effect on their members. Instead, the program is actually creating awareness and highlighting educational opportunity to people who might otherwise not have heard of the program or who might have never thought that a Master of Science degree in Organizational Dynamics could actually benefit them personally and professionally.

A recent Eduventures survey of over 5,000 individuals across the U.S. asked those who anticipated continuing their education in the next three years in which field or area they intended to study. The results are divided into study areas

and into regions of the country. The results of the survey showed that 20 percent of those in the New England region who intended to continue their education anticipated studying business, management, and administration. This was the largest single academic topic for this region. The survey suggests that there are prospective adult learner students who are planning to study some discipline in the business arena. This also indicates that students who are going to enter into some type of business discipline are out there. They simply need to know that the Organizational Dynamics program at the University of Pennsylvania would be a very beneficial choice. The key is getting the word out about the program and what it can offer. Table 3 shows the results of the survey.

Table 3. Anticipated Study Areas for Returning Students

Subject Matter Area	Overall	New England	Mid Atlantic	East North Central	West North Central	South Atlantic	East South Central	West South Central	Mountain	Pacific
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	7.1%	6.1%	11.3%	9.3%	5.3%	4.5%	0.0%	3.8%	5.7%	7.8%
Architecture & Construction	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%	0.5%	2.2%	2.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	2.4%
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	0.8%	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%	2.2%	0.0%	7.1%	1.3%	0.6%	1.0%
Business, Management & Administration	19.7%	20.3%	14.5%	12.0%	12.4%	26.1%	33.3%	27.8%	29.6%	26.3%
Education & Training	10.4%	3.2%	7.0%	13.6%	19.6%	6.4%	4.8%	6.3%	14.6%	6.8%
Finance	6.8%	10.0%	5.2%	5.5%	2.7%	7.0%	2.4%	6.3%	10.1%	5.9%
Government & Public Admin	1.3%	0.6%	2.1%	1.6%	1.7%	1.5%	2.4%	1.3%	0.4%	1.0%
Health Science	7.7%	6.8%	8.3%	8.8%	13.8%	4.8%	11.9%	7.6%	3.7%	6.3%
Human Services	1.6%	0.6%	3.3%	1.9%	2.7%	0.3%	0.0%	2.5%	0.6%	1.5%
Hospitality & Tourism	0.6%	0.8%	1.0%	0.6%	0.5%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%
Information Technology	9.0%	13.0%	6.7%	5.8%	4.4%	11.5%	9.5%	12.7%	11.9%	7.3%
Law, Public Safety, & Security	3.5%	3.5%	5.7%	3.5%	1.4%	5.8%	4.8%	3.8%	1.3%	5.9%
Manufacturing	0.1%	0.0%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	0.3%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Marketing, Sales & Service	2.2%	2.8%	2.5%	1.4%	0.9%	0.6%	0.0%	2.5%	2.8%	5.9%
Science, Technology, Engineering &	15.4%	18.0%	16.3%	16.6%	20.1%	14.5%	7.1%	17.7%	7.9%	13.7%
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	0.7%	0.5%	0.5%	0.9%	0.5%	2.4%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%
Other/Unsure	11.9%	11.9%	13.2%	17.4%	9.4%	10.6%	9.5%	6.3%	10.4%	7.8%
N Current	4037	790	612	633	587	330	42	79	705	205

Even more importantly, the survey predicts that anticipated enrollment in business disciplines will increase by over two percent in the next three years in New England. Again, there is clearly a market that can be tapped to increase

enrollment for the Organizational Dynamics program. Table 4 shows the anticipated changes in subject areas across the United States.

Table 4. Anticipated Gains and Losses in Subject Areas
(highlighted areas are gains)

Subject Matter Area	Overall	New England	Mid Atlantic	East North Central	West North Central	South Atlantic	East South Central	West South Central	Mountain	Pacific
Arts, A/V Technology & Communications	0.9%	1.0%	2.4%	1.5%	1.0%	-0.8%	1.1%	2.0%	0.1%	-0.1%
Architecture & Construction	0.9%	0.7%	1.1%	1.4%	-0.5%	1.5%	2.2%	0.7%	0.4%	0.1%
Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	0.1%	-1.3%	0.6%	-5.0%	-1.3%	0.0%	0.3%
Business, Management & Administration	-0.9%	2.6%	0.0%	2.4%	-0.8%	-2.3%	-12.9%	-4.8%	-3.7%	-6.4%
Education & Training	-2.2%	0.0%	1.3%	-3.1%	-5.2%	0.0%	-1.5%	-1.3%	-5.2%	-1.1%
Finance	-1.2%	-1.2%	-0.8%	-1.5%	0.6%	-2.1%	5.1%	0.1%	-2.2%	-0.7%
Government & Public Admin	1.0%	0.8%	-0.1%	0.0%	1.0%	1.7%	-1.3%	0.9%	2.8%	1.1%
Health Science	1.0%	2.2%	-0.8%	1.0%	1.2%	1.1%	-4.4%	0.3%	1.5%	-0.1%
Human Services	0.0%	0.1%	-0.7%	-0.7%	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%	-1.8%	0.6%	0.3%
Hospitality & Tourism	-0.2%	-0.2%	-0.4%	-0.4%	-0.3%	-0.3%	1.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%
Information Technology	-0.6%	-1.9%	1.3%	0.2%	1.0%	0.3%	-3.1%	-1.9%	-4.0%	-0.3%
Law, Public Safety, & Security	1.4%	2.5%	0.0%	-0.7%	2.0%	0.1%	16.7%	4.1%	1.7%	-1.2%
Manufacturing	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%	-2.4%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%
Marketing, Sales & Service	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%	1.8%	0.6%	1.4%	0.0%	1.1%	0.9%	-4.6%
Science, Technology, Engineering &	-1.3%	-6.5%	-4.3%	-3.2%	-1.8%	1.3%	4.7%	-1.9%	5.2%	3.9%
Transportation, Distribution & Logistics	0.2%	0.3%	-0.1%	0.0%	0.2%	-0.5%	3.8%	0.7%	0.3%	0.3%
Other/Unsure	0.3%	-1.0%	-1.0%	0.9%	1.8%	-2.4%	-4.1%	3.0%	1.5%	8.0%
Total Anticipated	5772	1050	920	842	853	661	93	139	745	387
Total Current	4037	790	612	653	587	330	42	79	705	205

Universities such as Pennsylvania State already have similar types of programs in place on a more general scale, including business administration and management. The results of this type of marketing effort have been very successful for Penn State. Every year, the university notes that tens of thousands of students or potential students are contacted by on-campus organizations. From the standpoint of the campus organizations, this is a way to be better involved with the leadership of the university and to become more valuable to the university as a whole. Even more, the organizations and the individuals who take part in the marketing efforts now commit a specific number of hours as part of their overall community service efforts.^{ix}

The entire effort of getting alumni and other students involved in marketing and the Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics program is really about finding marketing opportunities in every place they may exist. This is actually a very important idea as more and more colleges and universities find themselves having to compete for students and their tuition dollars on a larger scale. As Kelsey and Kelsey (2004) explain:

Marketing is a constant balance of opportunities and challenges. It is important to understand that marketing opportunities exist everywhere; it is simply a matter of seeking them out and realizing that ideas come from anywhere. Letting everything be an opportunity implies that need for ingenuity—in imagining what can be accomplished and learning how to get projects completed. Some things work magnificently the first time and fail the second time. It is important to have patience and remain optimistic.^x

As with any shift in marketing efforts, there are some challenges to consider in implementing these plans. Extra effort will need to be put into establishing relationships and then educating organizations at the University on the practices and benefits of the Organizational Dynamics program. Also, resources of time and money will be required to revamp the program Web site and build the professional networking tool. As already suggested, the department could keep costs down by offering a scholarship to a student Web designer in the program who undertakes this task. With proper planning and execution, both of these changes could feasibly be implemented by the end of 2007 and a significant impact on the number of applications could be noticed by the end of 2008.

However, it is not enough simply to go out and find alumni, students, or campus organizations that are willing to help the Organizational Dynamics program. This type of marketing effort, while it may be unconventional and certainly somewhat difficult for some to place in context of other marketing efforts, is not free or without costs. The program and the university in general must be willing to use its resources to make this work. Otherwise, this type of marketing effort is doomed to fail and doomed to be criticized as simply another passing fad in the world of higher education.

CHAPTER 3

IMPLEMENT PROGRAM-SPECIFIC MARKETING EFFORTS

The other component of this plan that suggests a shift in marketing practices to increase the number of applicants to the Organizational Dynamics program is to implement program-specific marketing efforts.

The University of Pennsylvania does not provide any direct marketing support through any department or with any other program for Organizational Dynamics. If marketing is to be done, it must be completed, budgeted, and controlled within the program administration office.

According to Eduventures, “Web sites and catalogs are the information resources adult learners are most likely to turn to when exploring enrollment options; schools must do both Web and catalog marketing well rather than choose between them.”^{xi}

The Organizational Dynamics department is missing opportunities to position itself as a unique, first-tier educational experience for professionals in positions of leadership “searching for enhanced organizational competencies and intellectual challenges.”^{xii}

Since the new program director took over in 2002, the Organizational Dynamics department has been working annually to secure incremental funding to advertise its own program each semester. From 2005 to 2006, more than \$175K was allocated as part of a marketing strategy. Most of it was used to build the new Projects, Portfolios, and Programs concentration. Included was the use of targeted e-mail through professional associations and through other professional

service agencies. We learned after spending nearly \$60K that most targeted e-mail does not work for us. Specialized areas did, however, and the result was that we admitted 33 new students into this new track. Suggested opportunities are (1) purchasing premier rankings on Internet search engines; (2) advertising in trade publications and business journals frequently read by human resource professionals and organization executives; (3) having a presence of some level at professional membership association conferences attended by public sector, private sector, and non-profit organization executives, such as the American Society for Association Executives, Society for Human Resource Management, and the American Management Association; (4) advertising to minority and women professionals through event and program sponsorships; and (5) advertising on National Public Radio in major markets within a 100-mile radius of the University of Pennsylvania. The targets are potential applicants and their employers.

The importance of targeted marketing, specifically for the Organizational Dynamics program, cannot be reiterated enough. In our current era of rapidly changing needs for businesses and employees, the Organizational Dynamics program at the University of Pennsylvania can benefit greatly from initiating, carrying out, evaluating, and constantly re-evaluating its own specific marketing plan. This type of targeted marketing must be aggressive to reach employees and companies and to let them know what the program has to offer and how it can add value not only to the lives of the employees in terms of future growth and income potential, but also to the companies that hire the students. As Vince and Fulmer (1998) state very clearly:

Aggressive targeted marketing to reach individual customers is critical not only to fill program seats, but to keep prices down in this relatively price-sensitive focused program segment. Implicit in this finding is the reality that business schools have to be very good at managing their program portfolio, and at carefully tracking each program, eliminating those that do not meet performance targets.^{xiii}

Even more, the comments by the authors point to another good reason for specific and targeted marketing for the Organizational Dynamics program. The need for new businesses is changing rapidly in the current business climate. Having a specific marketing plan that is unique to the Organizational Dynamics program will allow it to adjust and change more rapidly to seek out those in the business community, or those who may want to enter the business community, with the skills that are derived by being a part of the Master of Science program in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania.

The program has created several marketing plans over the past two years, and has been operating from them. A comprehensive plan submitted to the School of Arts and Sciences was approved and is being regularly monitored with the Regional Business Management Office during its implementation. The program needs to continue to implement many of these strategies, such as developing the program brand. Simply being a part of the academic institution does not mean that sound business principles and marketing strategies are not important.

The steps proposed in this thesis will move the program toward a competitive position with other respected graduate programs that appeal to mid-career adults.

The fact that a specific and targeted marketing program would appeal to many career adults is something that should not be forgotten. We currently live in an age, especially among business students, when people do not get all of their education at once. The demands of a career, a family, and life in general often mean that most business professionals put off getting additional education until later in life. The Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics program stands to attract more prospects to the program by seeking out these adult students and letting them know that this program is not simply a way to add a line on their résumé. Instead, it is truly a way to expand their knowledge and their futures.

Two tactics are suggested to develop marketing campaigns specific to the Organizational Dynamics program:

1. Attain a 10 percent increase in program-specific marketing budget to attract established professionals (at least five years of workforce experience) by fiscal year 2008. Pending satisfactory results of increased numbers of applicants to the Organizational Dynamics program, boost this budget by 10 percent every year thereafter until marketing dollars are evenly split between existing unified marketing messages with other courses of study and program-specific efforts.
2. Foster and nurture significant relationships with three human resource professionals associations or corporate leadership development programs by 2008.

Potential challenges to implementation are (a) the budget may be inflexible, (b) other graduate studies program directors could resist supporting enhanced program-specific marketing endeavors outside of the existing unified practices, and (c) staff time to nurture relationships with associations and leadership development programs outside of the University community may be limited.

Some in the Wharton School of Business, or in the Organizational Dynamics program in the School of Arts and Sciences specifically, may worry about what others in the University community, and certainly within other graduate programs, may think about this program going out on its own to attract students and their tuition dollars. In this regard, it is important for the Organizational Dynamics program to maintain marketing relationships with other graduate programs. However, the leadership of the School of Arts and Science and those within the Organizational Dynamics program must show others in the University community that these efforts are not about taking away students from business programs. Instead, these efforts are about making the graduate programs of the University in general, and certainly the Organizational Dynamics program, more accessible to students who otherwise might not consider this type of program worthwhile or who might not consider going back to school for a graduate degree important at all.

Now, with all this being said, it is certainly true that the fear that some will have that other programs or departments may see the efforts of the Organizational Dynamics program as simply being a way of trying to take attention away from other adult education programs offered by other departments is probably valid.

However, the criticism that is bound to come from others who will not like the fact that this program is going against the status quo and against what some may feel is the norm within the University for graduate programs to work together to obtain students can at least be handled, if not completely prevented.

The way to prevent this criticism is for the program to actually become a mentor to other graduate programs about targeted marketing and how to attract students. A great deal of academia—at least in theory—is about developing new ideas and sharing those within a community of learners. The Organizational Dynamics program certainly has the potential not only to use targeted marketing to increase its enrollments and its tuition dollars but also to help other graduate programs expand their enrollments. Some might wonder why a study on increasing enrollments in one specific program would even make mention about potential criticisms.

The fact is that this paper is not only about suggesting the steps and procedures for the program to increase its numbers, it is also about suggesting steps and procedures that can actually be implemented and can be successful. In this regard, talking about how to deal with criticism and even a backlash from other programs is not only necessary but vital.

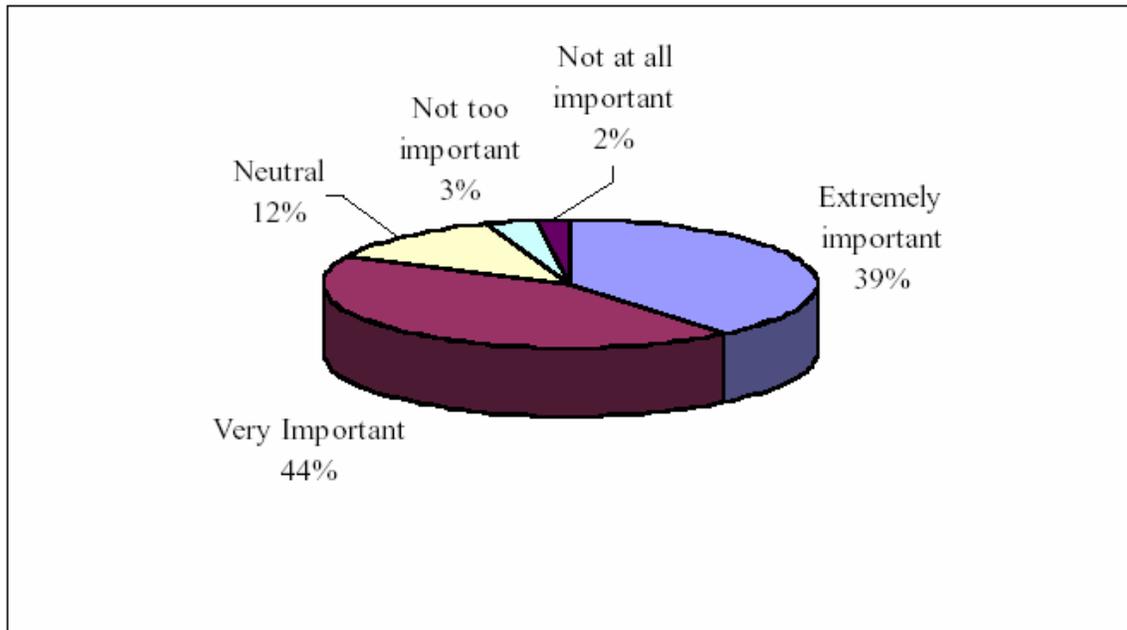
CHAPTER 4

CREATE AN OPTION OF MORE FOCUSED CURRICULUM TASKS

One aspect that is very important to most students, especially adult graduate students, is finding a program that is suited for their needs and future goals. Students are constantly advised to examine several programs when applying to colleges and universities to find a program that is right for them. If students or potential students feel that they are limited in course offerings to a direction that is not suited for their future goals and for what they want to learn, then it is very likely that they will either look to other programs for their educational needs, or will drop out of the current program simply out of dissatisfaction.^{xiv}

Once again, a national Eduventures survey shows the importance of tailoring educational tracks to student needs. The survey indicates that 44 percent of students consider continuing education to be very important to their career goals. Another 39 percent consider continuing education to be extremely important to future career goals. This shows that students value education as a way to improve career opportunities. Figure 1 shows the results of the study.

Figure 1. Importance of Continuing Education to Career Plans



In this regard, there are several steps that should be taken by the Organizational Dynamics program to create curriculum tracks that can meet the needs of the largest number of students or potential students and still allow for a quality education to be administered by the program. These recommendations are as follows:

By August 2007, have promotional materials prepared to communicate new and more specific program modules, such as Managerial Challenges in Health Care, to potential candidates and their employers.

By January 1, 2008, update the Web site so a virtual advisor can make recommendations to current and potential students who may be well suited for the new degree tracks, which will be organized into more specific directions, such as "Entrepreneurial Topics and Healthcare Management".

By the 2008–2009 school year, implement additional curriculum modules that offer more focused degrees within current courses of study.

The purpose is to ensure that students who know exactly how they plan to utilize their master's degrees make course selections that will be most beneficial to them. I believe that having focused degree tracks will also be more appealing to employers looking for assurance on their ROI while making the decision of whether or not to subsidize the cost of the program. This should not have an impact on current curriculum offerings; it is simply a more user-friendly package for some professionals.

This is another area where the issue of the status quo is certain to arise. Research by Frost and Taylor (1996) has shown that faculty in universities are somewhat resistant to change the way that they have performed their jobs in the past. This is specifically true of senior-level faculty. The reason for this has to do with the fact that in the past, most academic programs had one set curriculum. The Organizational Dynamics program currently offers four curriculum tracks. Expanding to ten or twelve would give students more specific options. To propose that multiple curriculums should exist will certainly cause some to disapprove of these recommendations.

Frost and Taylor (1996) explain their own problems and the surrounding issues in trying to get faculty at one business school to change how certain skills were taught:

Faculty members, like all other critters, resist changes and their routines. And the longer the routines had been practiced, the greater the resistance to change. Early on, we noticed that most of those who were excited about

teaching behavioral skills were junior faculty. This meant that they were personally more pliable, but institutionally more vulnerable.^{xv}

The point being made by the authors is that younger faculty may be more willing to adapt to the changes being proposed in this study. However, because many of them lack tenure and do not want to jeopardize their futures with the University, they may not be as willing to "rock the boat" even if they understand the importance of the changes being recommended. To successfully implement the curriculum changes, the leadership of the program and the leadership of the School of Arts and Science will need to educate faculty and staff on the reasons for the changes.

In many ways, it is important to note that the faculty is not the only group who will need to be provided with information about the reasons for the curriculum changes. Having several tracks for the master's program in Organizational Dynamics will mean that support staff members will have to make the transition from managing records and information about students who were previously all on the same graduate track in the past to managing records for students who may be in three or four different curriculum tracks for graduation, as well as coordinating records with student financial services, database systems, and the graduate dean. It certainly goes without saying that there will be a period of transition for everyone. However, if program leaders are willing to take the time and consider the resources for this transition, then the overall effect will be a program that can attract more students by targeting their education toward their individual career goals.

In the end, having focused curriculum tracks for students is by itself a marketing tool. Other business programs at major universities are able to advertise themselves as allowing the students to choose a curriculum that is suited for their needs. These goals and programs are able to let students know that, in essence, the undergraduate and graduate programs were designed with the actual students in mind, rather than simply being based on a curriculum design that may be decades old. A latitude of curriculum offerings that appeal to the majority should be offered. Once again, the benefit of this is that students view the program as being on the cutting edge and are aware of the changes that are taking place not only socially, but also in the world of business and leadership.^{xvi}

Additionally, from the standpoint of the students, the advantage of a program with the specific and focused curriculum tracks is the ability to work with faculty who are well-trained and committed to specific aspects of the program. In this case, students would be able to work with faculty who are committed to specific aspects of Organizational Dynamics in the business world. Students who seek more of an applied education—meaning being educated in a real-world sense—and students who desire to pursue a doctorate and perhaps ensure academia, would also be comfortable in the same program at the same University because of the specific curriculum tracks to fit their individual needs.^{xvii}

Finally, another reason for different curriculum tracks: the amount of time required to complete the master's program. In the past, it was sometimes thought that so-called fast-track programs were only for lower-tier universities and colleges. However, more and more universities are moving to curriculum programs that

allow working professionals to obtain their master's degrees in less time than normal. These programs offer the same learning opportunities but, because they are geared toward a specific curriculum, the amount of time required to complete the program can actually be lessened. The overall result is that students who may only obtain a master's degree because of advancement in a job or career are willing to join the program and, perhaps more importantly, actually graduate from that program.^{xviii}

Again, it cannot be reiterated enough that some might view this as the negative aspects of specific curriculum tracks for the program. To those who are accustomed to the traditional program requiring at least two years of study, and often more for those who must go to school part time while working, the idea of a variety of fast-track programs may be considered an abomination to academia. In the end, however, fast-track programs do not have to mean a lower-level curriculum. Instead, it simply means a specific curriculum targeting working professionals with a specific goal in mind. The actual knowledge can be the same and the result is a more educated professional.

CHAPTER 5

DEVELOP NEW EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS WITH PEER INSTITUTIONS ABROAD

Revising curriculum options is another method to attract mid-career adults to pursue graduate degrees. The Organizational Dynamics program should consider developing new educational partnerships with peer institutions abroad as a step to increase the number of qualified program applicants.

The MSOD program currently offers 7- to 14-day International Courses Abroad (ICA Seminars) to numerous countries, including China, Czech Republic, United Kingdom, Sweden, France, Belgium, Greece, and others.^{xix} The opportunity to learn firsthand about global issues and practices is an essential component of many organizational leaders. South America is not presently represented among the ICA Seminars available to MSOD students. Preliminary discussions with South American university administrators indicate two schools would be interested in establishing partnerships with the University of Pennsylvania's Organizational Dynamics program.

The real benefit of study abroad programs and international partnerships with various educational institutions is more than just the classroom experience. Creating partnerships with colleges and universities around the world provides an opportunity for those studying business and leadership to truly experience business not only from the perspective of the United States looking outward, but in the international playground. Students can go to foreign countries and experience firsthand what they have learned in the classroom.^{xx}

Certainly, these types of internships and study abroad programs would not be for everyone. However, expanding this type of learning experience goes hand-in-hand with creating specialized curriculum tracks for different types of students. Those students who have the time or the desire to commit to do a few weeks or a few months abroad as a way of advancing their educational, career and lifelong goals can take advantage of these opportunities. Individuals like Lieutenant Commander Owen Gibbons, who took two years off from the Coast Guard to complete a fast-track program, might appreciate the opportunity to study abroad.^{xxi} Though most of these students work full time, these study abroad opportunities could attract a wider range of students such as new retirees looking for new adventures and segments of the workforce on flex schedules that allow for long periods of downtime.

Even more, expanding partnerships with colleges and universities around the world is not only a benefit for students. The Organizational Dynamics program and its faculty can also benefit by taking advantage of exchange programs for faculty to visit universities to exchange teaching information, conduct research, and simply have the opportunity to truly affect knowledge around the world. In the end, expanding international partnerships with the master's program is something that can affect and influence everyone in the School of Arts and Sciences and even the University of Pennsylvania.^{xxii} (Rosenberg 263).

By the 2008–2009 school year, the University's Organizational Dynamics program should establish learning exchange programs with UniAndes School of

Management in Bogota, Colombia and Universidad de los Andes in Santiago, Chile that are exclusive to students enrolled in the MSOD program. Curriculum should be similar to other ICA Seminars but also offer opportunities for semester-long periods of learning abroad and true exchange relationships for Colombian and Chilean students to study in the University of Pennsylvania's MSOD program. This could broaden the appeal of the program to those students who do not work full time and could afford it. The semester-long program would be most suited for professionals who already work in or with businesses in this part of the world.

Foreseeable challenges to implementing two new ICA Seminars are that existing University of Pennsylvania scholar exchange programs may be resistant to supporting international opportunities exclusive to Organizational Dynamics students; restrictions and inconveniences to get necessary travel documents and arrangements confirmed may detract some students from going to South America and from bringing South American students to Philadelphia; and time and money will be required to launch the new ICA Seminars.

By offering ICA Seminars in Colombia and Chile exclusive to MSOD students, the program should expect to generate new interest from professionals doing business in South America or those with aspirations to expand there.

Even with the challenges and resources that will be required to enhance and expand international partnerships, the advantages to the institutions and the program are many. McIntyre and Alon (2004) explain the reasoning behind Eastern Michigan University creating international partnerships and programs:

Eastern Michigan University's strategic plan includes a commitment to globalization and a commitment to serve southeastern Michigan. For the college of business, these objectives are complementary. Business and Michigan is international. To serve the region, the college of business must have strong international programs and those programs must first relate to the region of the world where Michigan does business. Among these regions is India. Southeastern Michigan has won the largest nonresident Indian population in North America, and business ties to Michigan in India are very strong. Both a university partnership that links a public Michigan University and a public Indian University with a similar mission have strong support from the business community.^{xxiii}

The specific goals and objectives of the master's program in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania may be slightly different than those at Eastern Michigan University. However, it is clear that having a strong international program that is constantly developing partnerships around the world can put the program on an international standing with similar type programs around the world. The program can increase its appeal to students by treating them as customers and offering them a wider range of valuable programs.

The result will be that students from around the world will get to see and experience the quality of teaching and research that the University of Pennsylvania and its Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics has to offer. A well-run and well-managed partnership program by itself has the possibility of being the best marketing and recruitment tool possible. The recognition and reputation that can

come from such a program alone could mean a higher annual enrollment for the program and a higher annual graduation rate.

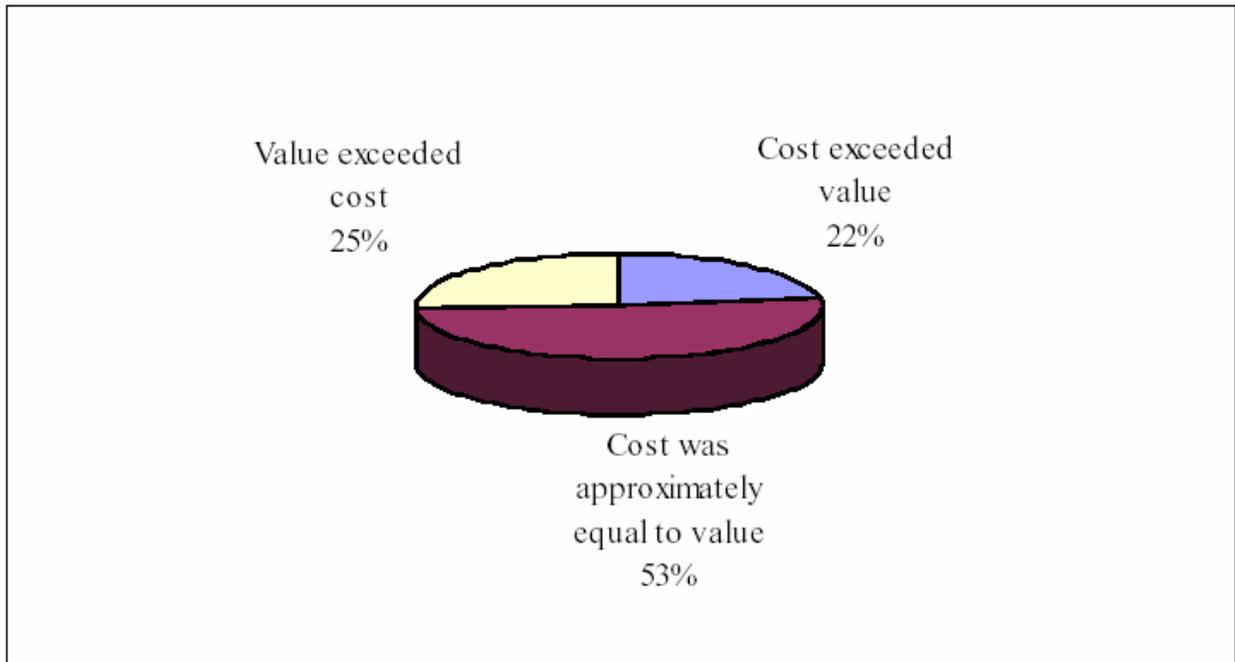
CHAPTER 6

MAKE THE PROGRAM MORE ACCESSIBLE THROUGH FINANCIAL FLEXIBILITY

One of the biggest hurdles for any graduate program that seeks out adult students is finding a way for the students to pay the tuition. Many working adults have several options for financing continuing education. Especially for those students who may be seeking graduate degrees but do not have a specific degree in mind, many companies reimburse students to some extent for going back to school and continuing their education. However, many students either don't recognize that these programs exist where they work or simply fail to take advantage of them.

What makes this even more important is that students recognize the value of continuing their educations. A national survey shows that a total of 78% of individuals surveyed stated that the value of their continuing education was either equal to or greater than the costs (Eduventures, 2004). The real meaning in this is that students do agree that the value of an education is high but they simply need access to programs to help pay for the education. Figure 2 shows the survey results.

Figure 2. Perception of Value for Continuing Education



Even with these types of reimbursement programs, however, having the money to pay for a semester's worth of coursework and wait for a check to reimburse those funds can be very difficult. During the 2003–2004 academic year, the cost of attending a public university rose by 14.1 percent over 2002-2003. In the end, the burden is sometimes too great and students who would benefit from the program are unable to attend. The result is that the Organizational Dynamics program loses out on qualified and able students who could be added to its enrollment.^{xxiv} (Fenton, Jr., 1).

With this in mind, changes must be put into place to allow for a more flexible payment schedule. This is certainly something that is not done in most institutions of higher learning. However, this is yet something else that can set the Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics at University of Pennsylvania apart from other similar programs. The program could attract students simply by its willingness to

work with their financial needs so they can return to school and not have to worry as much about paying for it.

To this end, recommendations are made for implementing a flexible payment schedule for students. By the 2008–2009 school year, the Student Financial Services office should begin offering a financing plan for approved students to make incremental payments on their Organizational Dynamics master's education. It shall be at the discretion of the program administrators to determine who qualifies for the incremental payment plan with the recommendation that such students complete the degree within a three-year period to better control financial constraints. This is not a deferred payment plan; it is an installment plan, which alleviates the burden of the cost of tuition that the student carries and makes the expense more manageable.

Even for those students who might not qualify for the flexible payment option, the program could also implement financial workshops and help sessions to assist students in finding ways to pay for additional education. In truth, there are many resources for information about financing a graduate education. In reality, however, when many working adults are faced with the challenge of juggling personal responsibilities and paying for college, the task can be too daunting to handle alone. The fact that the Organizational Dynamics program would appear willing to find ways for students to finance their education would immediately add value to the program even before potential students are enrolled.

Some may argue that allowing flexible payment plans to take effect, and not requiring payment for a semester's coursework at the beginning of the semester,

may cause budgetary constraints on the program. Tuition dollars are certainly required to keep programs operating and to allow those programs to have the resources and tools necessary. These arguments are quite valid, but only for the first couple of years. After three or four years of increased enrollments, the overall tuition dollars coming into the program will be higher than they would have been without a flexible payment plan. The result is that the program has more money and, more importantly, higher student enrollments.

CHAPTER 7

INCREASE NUMBER OF APPLICANTS BY NURTURING RECIPROCAL LEARNING RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS PROGRAM ADMINISTRATORS, ALUMNI, AND STUDENTS' EMPLOYERS

Consideration should be given to utilizing the services of the consulting firm Eduventures, which helps universities and colleges identify new revenue and growth opportunities, improve organizational and operational performance, and stay abreast of leading management practices in continuing education. Current members include both large and small schools, market leaders, and new entrants, with programs focused on continuing and professional education.

I talked with Peggy Kelleher, membership director of Eduventures, who will be in the Philadelphia area during the middle of December. It might take a lot of pressure off the administration staff to have an outside organization such as Eduventures design a program for the department to follow, thereby introducing a neutral third party that would be able to address all the primary issues right from the start. This would also expedite the time period for implementation.

Many who work in the academic community are reluctant at best to bring in outside consultants. One of the reasons for this is that bringing in outside consultants is viewed as an inexpensive way to get information that will never be used. In addition, some are reluctant to enlist the services of others when the very point of an entire division of the University is to have on-staff experts in a particular field. However, there can be advantages to bringing in outside consultants to provide information.

Peter McCaffery explains in *Higher Education Managers Handbook (2004)*, when bringing in consultants can be helpful:

Often misused and occasionally misaligned, consultants can, nevertheless, in the right circumstances, still give you considerable added value. They come in all shapes and sizes and willingly perform a number of roles, most notably as doctor, detective, salesperson, or travel agent. And herein lies the dilemma. For, on the one hand, you can use them in almost any circumstance, yet, on the other, you need to avoid using them in the wrong circumstances. The key cardinal principle to remember is that consultants are there as outsiders to help you do what you can't do alone. As such, you should only use them as and when these instances arise —and only then.^{xxv}

The 2002 strategic plan for the University of Pennsylvania, *Building on Excellence: The Next Agenda*, presents one such goal: “Encourage the reconnection of our alumni to Penn and one another.”^{xxvi}

Penn enters into a commitment with that student to provide education and enrichment over the course of his or her life. Potentially, our alumni could regard Penn as their enduring “intellectual home.” When this happens, alumni become a critical competitive advantage as they communicate the strengths of the university while advocating our need for resources and support. To achieve this intellectual bond, our relationship with our alumni must go well beyond the traditional focus on volunteer activities and fundraising. Penn must set the standard among peer institutions for

facilitating our commitment to a lifetime of education and enrichment for every alumnus. Our Alumni Relations program must be developed to assure that Penn is a special learning community for alumni while also engendering their pride in Penn.^{xxvii}

In the same vein as the flexible payment plan, creating a reciprocal learning environment is really about opening up the program to potential students who might otherwise not realize the value of the Organizational Dynamics program. The program must go out and make itself available to prospective students to increase enrollment, by reaching out to community events where students may be found, such as bookstore lectures. It is not enough merely to say that the University of Pennsylvania has a graduate program in Organizational Dynamics. Instead, the faculty and staff who run the program must tell prospective students and employers about the benefits of studying Organizational Dynamics at a graduate level.

In addition, attracting students is about creating relationships. It is no longer enough for universities and their respective programs simply to say that students need them. The reality is that we live in a changing world where colleges and universities must compete for students. This is even the case at a top-rated university and in a top-rated program such as the Organizational Dynamics program at the University of Pennsylvania. For some in the academic community, this may seem like a very big blow to the ego. However, they should see this as an opportunity not only to improve their own standings in the business world but also in the academic community.

The Organizational Dynamics Department must offer students significant value for their investment. An example of the department missing an opportunity to offer value—and to promote the program—occurred this summer, when I enrolled in an independent study with Eric van Merkensteijn to write a book about strategic consulting. There were nine participants in total that signed up and paid the \$4,425 for the course. We worked very hard to complete the book, which we did this past summer. Unfortunately, the Organizational Dynamics department did not see fit to spend a small fraction of the \$39,825 in total tuition payments to have the print copy of the book professionally bound. If the book had been professionally bound, I would have passed it around the office to show off my achievements in the program, as well as prominently displayed it on my bookshelf. The Organizational Dynamics program is a different segmentation market than the rest of the graduate programs. Because of the age and experience of the participants, the program must keep in mind that their customers are sophisticated, working adults who can recognize good value when they see it and are comparing it to other programs.

So much of teaching various principles of business today is about teaching students to adjust to changes in business dynamics. In this regard, those who teach in the Organizational Dynamics program must view themselves as part of that larger business dynamic that is changing the way that higher education must operate. If the program and its members can do that, then they can actually gain more respect from potential students. Students entering the program will not view bringing in consultants, asking for help in terms of marketing from alumni and businesses, and implementing new ways to allow students to pay for their

education as some desperate attempt to attract students. Instead, they will simply see these steps as necessary and a sign that this program is functioning in the same business environments about which it is teaching.

CHAPTER 8

THE VALUE OF THE PROPOSED PLAN

I chose this topic for the Capstone Course because I believe in the success of the Organizational Dynamics degree. The goal of the course is to allow students to demonstrate competencies gained from the courses completed in the Organizational Dynamics program. Moving forward, one success measurement for the Organizational Dynamics program should be increasing participants' enrollments and registration numbers. If this paper can contribute to the program success, then it has been a success by itself.

Empirically speaking, the real value of the plan proposed here is more than just increased enrollments. Of course, the main goal of this plan is indeed to increase enrollment in the program. However, the greater value in this plan is to make the Organizational Dynamics program more valuable and more respected among the business community, and even the international community. The program has an opportunity in the next three to four years to make itself truly indispensable at the University of Pennsylvania as well as in the larger academic setting of the United States.

Some might argue that this is a very lofty ideal, but this ideal is not completely far-fetched. The program is comprised of faculty and staff who are committed to training students in Organizational Dynamics. The problem, very simply, is that not enough people have access to the program or know about the success it can bring. Implementing the strategies outlined in this paper will bring awareness of the program to students who desire a quality education and qualified instructors to go along with it.

From a more concrete financial standpoint, it must be understood that changes will not be seen immediately. In terms of actual enrollment, it is not too much to assume that changes could be seen within the next two years. However, an actual increase in graduation rates for the program will take three to four years. It will take time to see significant increases in the number of students enrolled in the program to matriculate through the program and graduate successfully.

Notes:

Choosing & Using Consultants & Advisors by Harold Lewis
Chapter 1 (pp. 1-3)

Why would I want to use consultants?**This is What Clients Say**

When business managers are asked why they use consultants, their replies typically point to three factors:

- The expertise that consultants offer;
- Their independent viewpoint;
- The resources they provide

Expertise

‘We’re able to tap into skills and knowledge outside the competence of our own staff.’

‘Because they are specialists in their fields, they focus directly on the work. That means they get results more efficiently than we could ourselves.’

‘In restructuring the firm, we had tried to sort things out for ourselves, but seemed to get nowhere. They saw we had been asking the wrong questions, and helped us get to the root of the problem. In the end we did find our own solution, but it was with their help.’

‘We knew the business had to change, and we saw where we wanted to go; but we didn’t know the best way to get there.’

‘We had become set in our ways and needed a new vision to get us moving. The consultants played a key role in facilitating changes in our thinking and motivating our team.’

‘We were impressed by the range of market research data the consultants had available. We would otherwise not have had access to that information.’

Independent viewpoint

‘Sometimes we’re too close to a problem to see it in its true perspective, and we miss points that are obvious to everyone else.’

‘Consultants can help us think situations through and challenge the way we go about things. Looking in from outside, they can identify what we need to do to improve our business performance and service delivery.’

‘There is a valuable role that consultants can play in acting as a bridge between different and perhaps conflicting interests, a line of communication that doesn’t wear the label of one side or the other. People will speak more openly to them than they would to us.’

Resources

'Because of recent cuts, the pressures on our remaining staff have become particularly intense. We are so fully stretched on day-to-day work, we really cannot respond to sudden demands or unexpected problems. That is where consultants come in: they keep our workload afloat.'

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