

Welcome Marisa Sanchez, PhD to the Connector Blog. Marisa and I "met" at the recent Maryland Nonprofit conference. As a change management consultant, Marisa brings her expertise to outline some next steps once you have committed or recommitted to "Grow Your Organization's Knowledge Sharing Culture."

## **How do we start to build a knowledge sharing culture?**

The first step is to connect to your organization's mission and strategy because everyone in the organization needs to be clear about WHY knowledge sharing is important. How will a knowledge sharing culture facilitate achievement of your mission and your strategic goals?

Second, connect to your organization's values. How does knowledge sharing align with the organization's existing values? Or how might knowledge sharing help the organization adopt new values that are important to its future success?

## **What are some practices organizations need to adopt to build a knowledge sharing culture?**

Culture can colloquially be described as "the way we do things around here." So organizations need to build knowledge sharing into their everyday practices, such as how the organization communicates and shares information, solves problems, and makes decisions. Unless you intentionally design these practices to incorporate knowledge sharing mindsets and processes, you'll just be bolting on knowledge sharing rather than embedding it into the way the organization does its work.

You also need to examine the structural boundaries in your organization and understand how those boundaries might be obstacles to knowledge sharing. To facilitate critical knowledge sharing between different parts of the organization, it may be necessary to restructure those parts of the organization to eliminate boundaries. Or you might introduce other structures, such as communities of practice, that support knowledge sharing. Collaboration tools, such as Slack and MS Teams, are also structures that can be introduced to support knowledge sharing across organization boundaries.

## **How do you maintain a culture of knowledge sharing over time?**

Peter Drucker said "what gets measured gets done." Part of the work to transform to a knowledge sharing culture is to measure that the organization is progressing in sharing knowledge. You also want to reinforce knowledge sharing in performance management processes, including knowledge sharing in performance expectations and rewards.

A great way to promote a new culture is to highlight those individuals or groups within the organization who exemplify that culture. Tell stories about how people in the organization are sharing knowledge and how the organization is benefitting from that sharing. Include these stories in your organization's town halls, intranet site, or other broad communication vehicles so all employees are inspired from these examples of new ways of working.

### **Any last recommendations on building a knowledge-sharing culture?**

We know from applied psychology and social sciences that people are more likely to adopt change when those people are a part of designing that change. Engage a diverse group of people across the organization in this process of connecting knowledge sharing to mission and values, designing communications and problem solving and decision-making practices to promote knowledge sharing, selecting and piloting knowledge sharing tools, and modifying the performance management processes to reinforce a knowledge sharing culture.

When large parts of the organization are engaged in defining and creating a knowledge sharing culture, the organization will more readily incorporate knowledge sharing as a normal part of the way it does its work.

*Marisa Sanchez, PhD brings over 25 years of experience in organization development and change management. Her consulting approach uniquely focuses on achieving results by integrating deep knowledge and expertise in organization development, project management, and business strategy. Dr. Sanchez consults to executives and senior managers, project managers, and information technologists who appreciate her results-focused approach. Areas of focus include strategic planning and execution, change leadership, culture transformation, organization design, leadership team coaching, and facilitation. She served as Chair of the Board of Trustees for the Organization Development Network, and has presented at the Organization Development Network, Society for Human Resource Management, SEI Architecture User Network Conference, Socio-Economic Approach to Management International Conference, and Maryland Nonprofit Conference.*

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