Welcoming Kotter and SCARF:
Two Frameworks for Influencing and Building Strong Relationships Across the University

SCARF

Reduce the Threat and/or Increase the Reward.

Status – the relative importance to others. To make this a “reward” state and minimize the threat, we want to minimize status and become equal partners. Equalize the status.

Certainty – the ability to predict the future. Without certainty, we feel threatened. Certainty is about communication. If your team doesn’t have it, they’ll turn to the water cooler and gossip. Rumors start. The more certain you are, the better chance your team will turn to you and trust you instead of turning to more negative sources. Be the source of certainty and comfort.

Autonomy – the sense of control over events. We have a high need to control our world. Micromanagement always destroys morale. It’s all about how you frame the change and/or what’s happening. You want people to feel they have as much control as possible; frame your effort in a way that gives your team the most control, that gives them autonomy.

Relatedness – the sense of safety with others. We have a need to feel safe and to have relationships, to be with others. If we feel lonely or isolated, that creates a “threat” state. We want to feel a bond or identity that creates a high level of engagement, that we’re a member of the team/organization and a part of the project/effort. Invite people into the team; give people a community to join in making the change.

Fairness – the perception of fair exchanges. As human beings, we are wired that things should be fair. We have a high need to believe this. People need to feel the situation is fair; otherwise, it will appear to be a threat.

Kotter

1. Create Urgency. This can come from external deadlines or internal pressure to change. Develop scenarios showing what could happen if you don’t change.

2. Build a Coalition. Identify key stakeholders and influential people on campus. Focus your efforts on them first, earning their support. If they aren’t convinced, nobody else will be.

3. Form a Vision. Craft the story of why you are changing and what the future holds. Distill these to a few key points - something that leaders and colleagues can express in their own words.

4. Enlist a Volunteer Army. Identify and invite helpers to join an exclusive group to help make the change. Be creative and design this group with its own special events, communications and items.

5. Enable Action by Removing Barriers. Look for areas that cause friction, such as outdated policies or unnecessary processes. Recognize people who enact the desired behaviors.

6. Generate Short-Term Wins. Look for top pain points or big opportunities that you can take care of quickly and inexpensively. Early on, avoid issues that will face the most opposition. Celebrate successes publicly and build on the momentum.

7. Sustain Acceleration. Hold multiple “lessons learned” sessions throughout the process. Recruit new members to your coalition and volunteer army to keep increasing energy.

8. Institute Change. Reinforce the change by building it into hiring or employee training processes, talking about it often, and highlighting the success stories.

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