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CHAPTER 11

Leadership, Integrity and the Future

Chapter synopsis

In coping with both continuous and discontinuous change, organizations require strong leadership and cultures which make them 'learning' organizations. This chapter offers some personal viewpoints on many facets of institutional leadership in today's society and on some of the mechanisms and techniques which can assist leaders of open-learning institutions, notably strategic planning, institutional marketing and staff development. The last section offers some lessons from the management of open learning for the future - lessons of organizations, of education, and of management and leadership.

Within the context of open learning, this book has focused on the theory and practice of management and institutional leadership in an increasingly complex world. After an analysis of the sorts of leadership which will be required, this chapter examines several of the key tools available to today's leaders, how they can be applied effectively in the management of open learning, and some general lessons that can be learned from the foregoing.

The search for leadership

WELCOMING CHANGE: THE 'LEARNING' ORGANIZATION

In the face of rapid and unpredictable change, society has a greater need for leadership than ever before. This constant change, both continuous and discontinuous, coupled with a more open society than in previous eras, makes leadership more difficult and leaders more vulnerable. It is no surprise that there is widespread cynicism in our society about our leaders, whether they be in politics, business or higher education.

For organizational leaders, it is increasingly difficult but no less critical to maintain a sense of purpose and direction in the face of such change. Tom Peters has stated this quite emphatically:

> *To meet the demands of the fast-changing competitive scene, we must simply learn to love change as much as we have hated it in the past.*[1]

The answer is not in any one technique or process but in an overt and fundamental commitment to coping with, and even thriving on, change throughout the organization. The challenge is to develop an atmosphere that is always ready for change, an institution that is alert and responsive, but one where it is also recognized that coping with change requires self-confidence and security and a strong belief in what the organization is doing. As Morrison has stated it, we must think of our institutions as 'learning organizations':

If learning is the raison d'être *of open-learning systems, then organizations involved in that process should be learning organizations.*[2]

Responsibility for this must start at the top with the chief executive officer. He or she will have to develop a clear and bold institutional direction and communicate it throughout the organization and beyond. No less critically, the successful leader will ensure the quality of management necessary to realize it within the contextual limitations and resource constraints that all institutions face.

An appropriate marriage of value-driven leadership and good political sense is essential to success (as discussed in Chapter 7). While there are some basic and fundamental values at the heart of any successful organization, no institution can afford the luxury of redebating them on a regular basis, both because any discussion of basic values can be divisive and also because it deflects energy away from action. Some critical decisions must be made at the outset, and they will not be easily or painlessly made, but once the directions are defined, the effective leader will channel energies towards their implementation and only tolerate debate at the most fundamental value level when it is essential to the well-being of the organization.

CHALLENGES FOR TOMORROW: WHAT KINDS OF LEADERS WILL BE NEEDED?

It is in the face of conflict and the 'organized anarchy' of a complex institution like a university where the real effectiveness of a leader is tested. A strong sense of purpose and direction are critical, but they must be assisted by sensitivity to those affected by decisions, good political judgement (notably in being able to identify the major issues where intervention is essential and the less important ones which can be left to internal processes) and, perhaps above all else, a good sense of humour, the sort that comes with strong self-esteem and confidence.

Universities, no less than any other organization, are in search of superheroes to lead them. Most universities looking for presidents these days want someone with at least the following:

- a PhD in a major discipline;
- a strong record of research and publication in that discipline;
- skill in consultative and collegial forms of governance;
- strong leadership skills;
- excellent communications and public-speaking skills;
- experience outside the university sector (private enterprise and/or government);
- proven ability to raise funds;
- excellent managerial abilities - to delegate, and build a strong management team;
- 'staying power' - a 'workaholic' with a 'thick skin';
- family stability - good marriage, the 'right' sort of kids (they don't dare say 'a wife who knows how to entertain', but that's often what they want; they wouldn't dare make the same demands on the husband of a female president).

Occasionally, they actually find such people, but, more often tha not, incumbents don't quite live up to expectations. In such cases, they are weighed against bright new applicants, usually from several thousand miles away, and are sometimes found wanting - at least, that is, until the replacement proves even less capable, by which time it is too late to recall the original incumbent.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS

Whatever the specifics of the above requirements, my own experience has suggested that the following characteristics are essential to strong positive leadership. No individual will have them all, but effective leaders have most of the following:

- a clear vision for the organization and the ability to articulate it and inspire commitment to it;
- a passionate belief in the organization and the directions it is pursuing;
- a positive view of people, one holding that people can achieve if they are given the opportunity and support;
- dedication to excellence and the unrelenting pursuit of the organization's goals;
- high self-esteem, and self-knowledge about both strengths and weaknesses, so as to capitalize fully on the former and to compensate for the latter by finding people who are excellent in these areas;
- a sense of humour, integrity and perspective that temper the strong leadership drive with sensitivity to colleagues, and the ability to lead a happy life, both on and off the job;
- a commitment to learning and change, first of all for his or her own lifelong development, and, secondly, for the organization.

While it is not usually associated with leadership, 1 believe that there is no more important characteristic than the ability to laugh at oneself , to put current problems into perspective and to ensure that whatever is achieved is achieved openly and fairly, with respect always given to (and therefore probably emanating from) those whose views did not prevail on the given issue.

A sense of humour has many manifestations, not all of them always conducive to institutional leadership. Whether it is right or not, our society still wants to put its leaders on pedestals, and much of the ritual surrounding government, for example, tends to be intolerant of those who take things less seriously. Following Max Weber's classic analysis of it, [3] charisma and familiarity do not go well together, as humour is so often a vehicle for breaking down rather than building up pomp and circumstance. Indeed, most dictators appear to follow Weber's prescription for combating the instability of charisma by routinizing it through the establishment of social distance and ritual. It is not easy, for example, to retain charisma within one's own family unless relationships are very formal, which brings to mind an oft-quoted remark attributed to Maryon Pearson, the wife of the former Canadian Prime Minister, to the effect that 'behind every famous man stands a surprised woman!'

The role of humour in management is partly a cultural phenomenon, with more traditional, patriarchal societies exhibiting a more serious and formal approach to position and rank. Even in North America, where informality is perhaps most prevalent, leaders are taken (and usually take themselves) quite seriously.

I would like to think that this is changing, that there is not necessarily a contradiction between serious commitment to a mission and the ability to laugh at oneself in the process. It follows from this that we should guard against tendencies towards self-importance and pomposity in management. There is nothing wrong with institutional leaders with big egos; for assuming positions of responsibility and accountability requires strong measures of self-confidence and the ability to withstand a great deal of opposition and stress. It is when such individuals start believing in their self-importance, take privileges way beyond those available to others, and stop listening to others that things begin to go wrong.

CHARACTERISTICS WHICH UNDERMINE LEADERSHIP

Everyone will have his or her own list of characteristics of leaders who are ineffective. On the basis of my own experience and observations of others in leadership roles, 1 would offer the following

behaviours or characteristics as ones which undermine the effectiveness of otherwise competent individuals:

- Uncertainty or confusion about goals and directions - you can't lead if you don't know where you are going.
- An undue sense of self-importance, whereby the so-called leader treats colleagues as subordinates, doesn't know the names of secretaries and clerks, and usually lacks the listening skills requisite to sensitive and effective organizational leadership.
- A leader without a sense of humour - the ability to laugh at one's own foibles and to keep things in perspective. I have worked closely with several individuals who had all the Attributes for management except this one, and, in all cases, it thoroughly undermined their effectiveness. On the other hand, I have worked with less talented people whose sense of humour was a redeeming characteristic which made them more effective than their humourless colleagues.
- All talk, no action - while people can be quite inspirational in the short run, we ultimately judge each other by our actions, not our words. Nothing can undermine a leader's effectiveness so quickly as procrastination or decisions which regularly contradict what he or she purports to stand for.
- Insincerity - trust is fundamental to the success of a leader, and it can quickly be undermined by any of the following - giving different messages to different groups, participating in catty gossip (there is a legitimate role for gossip in an institution but it can be a very negative force), or being openly manipulative in almost all dealings with people. A good rule of thumb for combating one's own tendency to gossip is to assume that whatever one says will eventually get back to those who will be less receptive to the message. This keeps one honest and curbs tendencies towards cattiness.
- Insecurity - it is almost impossible to convey a sense of direction and confidence if one is at the same time displaying personal insecurities. Concerns about status, power and how one is being perceived can be very transparent. If the leader demonstrates uncertainty and doubts, how can the followers be expected to have confidence in him or her?

Playing favourites - the notion of 'loneliness at the top' is not an idle one, for an effective leader must retain some objectivity and 'distance' from the rest of the organization to be effective when crucial decisions must be made. It is thus important that he or she stay in touch with a broad cross-section of the institution and avoid cultivating an 'in' group who wield all the power and receive all the perquisites. This is not to deny the value of cultivating the best people in the institution, but promotions and favours should be, and should be seen to be, dispensed on the basis of demonstrated competence rather than personal relationships or support for the boss's viewpoint. It should also be noted that even the fairest leaders .will sometimes be perceived as being unfair, and that, while being sensitive to the perception, the latter should not be unduly concerned about it as long as they believe themselves to be objective and fair.

NEW LEADERSHIP ROLES: WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

One of the trappings of traditional modes of management is the 'old boys' club', something that is increasingly being challenged, but which nevertheless prevails in most organization. In their 1982 survey of corporations in nine nations in Western Europe, Adler and Izraeli found that fewer than half of the corporations had ever hired a female manager and that 15 per cent of them would not even contemplate it..[4] This is going to change, for both egalitarian and practical reasons.

Far more women should be promoted to senior positions, not only because they deserve the opportunity, but also because of the impact they will have on styles of leadership and the way decisions

are made. While I make no claim to being an expert on gender differences, I am convinced that a more equal gender balance in senior management is ultimately in the best interests of almost any organization. The following observations and hypotheses are based on my own experiences in management over the past 15 years:

- Women, by and large, are better listeners and are thus apt to pick up important insights which men may miss.
- Women, by and large, are more sensitive to the feelings and present circumstances of their colleagues, and are thus better readers of nonverbal cues and hidden agendas.
- Probably because most of them have had less experience of team sports than most men, women tend to be less overtly competitive. Competition among men for status, power and authority all too frequently impedes good decision-making in an organization.
- Men's behaviour changes when there are women in the group. At least in the long run, they will become better listeners and more thoughtful about the impacts of their decisions.

At the same time, women face some major difficulties as they move up the corporate ladder (again, these are offered as hypotheses):

- The male culture, notably that derived from team sports, still drives most organizations and women are often not as experienced or effective in skills valued in this environment, such as 'rah-rah' leadership , public speaking or assertiveness and confrontation.
- Even where a woman's skills equal or exceed a man's, the way she uses them may not be as well received by men, who have been socialized differently.
- Many women still feel guilt or confusion about assuming traditional male roles, especially if they are in any way at the expense of more traditional female roles such as family nurturer. A very common tendency for women, far more than men, is to try to maintain both family and work roles to the point that often threatens burnout.
- There is still tokenism in the promotion of women, just as there is in the promotion of racial minorities in other contexts, and this can sometimes lead individual women to be quite bitter or disillusioned if they ultimately discover that their appointment was based on gender more than perceptions that they were the best qualified for the position (even if they were). Such a perception can also undermine their status and authority in the eyes of others.
- Because it has not been the norm, there are perceptions that staff do not wish to work or do not work as well for women as they do for men.
- Perhaps the difference is best realized at the lower end of the performance scale. There is little question in my own mind that there is usually far more tolerance for a 'difficult' or incompetent male manager than for a female. Perhaps my experience has been skewed, but 1 see daily examples of male incompetence apparently being overlooked, whereas this is seldom the case for women. It follows that women have to be better qualified than men both to achieve senior management positions and to be recognized as performing them effectively.

There is tangible support for my perceptions in the work of Davidson and Cooper [5] in a British study of 696 female and 195 male managers (supplemented by in-depth interviews with 60 female managers). They found a large number of statistically significant differences between female and male managers. The former were more apt to have conflicting responsibilities between home and career and to have less emotional and domestic support at home; to lack same-sexual role models; to suffer from sexual stereotypes, prejudice and harassment; to have a less flexible management style; to have higher 'Type A', coronary-prone scores on personality tests; and to have a higher total psychosomatic ill-health score. The male managers, on the other hand, were more apt to lack someone to talk to in coping with problems and stress; to be insensitive, and less sympathetic, cooperative or efficient; to have a higher alcohol consumption; and to be unable to produce a satisfactory quantity of work.

Junior and middle-level female managers demonstrated the highest stress levels of all the sample, while the lowest stress was reported by [6] senior male managers. The high stress factors reported by men perhaps reinforce my perception of the impact of competitiveness on male behaviour - they were most bothered by feelings of underpromotion and not being persuasive enough, while female managers were more apt to be concerned about stress factors beyond their control which limited the effectiveness of women in the organization [7]. Similarly, the finding that the women overwhelmingly named confidence building and assertiveness training as their two primary training needs reinforces my perception that women feel relatively powerless in the male culture which characterizes senior management in most organizations.

The promotion of many more women to leadership positions is more than an egalitarian issue, however, for, as Schwartz suggests, 'The sudden, startling recognition that 80% of new entrants in the [US] work force over the next decade will be women, minorities, and immigrants has stimulated a mushrooming incentive to "value diversity".[8] In other words, corporations will need to gain access to every available talent pool to maintain their competitive advantage in a fast-changing world.

Schwartz goes on to note, however, that the cost of employing women in management is greater than that of employing men, not because of inescapable gender differences but because of conflicts they experience in male-led corporations which produce much higher turnovers among women managers.

> *If we are to overcome the cost differential between male and female employees, we need to address the issues that arise when female socialization meets the male corporate culture and masculine rules of career development - issues of behavior and style, of expectation, of stereotypes and preconceptions, of sexual tension and harassment, of female mentoring, lateral mobility, relocation, compensation, and early identification of top performers.[9]*

Schwartz suggests four requirements for clearing a path to the top for career-primary women: identifying them early, giving them the same opportunities for development that are offered to talented men in the organization, accepting them as valued members of the management team and listening to them, and recognizing that the business environment is more difficult and stressful for them than for their male peers. [10]

Since most of the work cited has been conducted in the business world, it might be suspected that universities and other educational organizations would be more sensitive to gender issues. My own observations and experience suggest that this is not the case, and detailed studies by the Ontario Council for the Status of Women have documented very tangibly that women have no greater access to senior positions in academia than anywhere else.

As Chair of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment,"Canadian Judge Rosalie Abella asked, rhetorically, if universities, with their dedication to the advancement of learning and society could not provide leadership in the hiring of women to senior positions, then how could anyone expect private-sector corporations to do so? The surprising answer may be that economic necessity will win over social consciousness, and that corporations are outperforming universities in their adaptation to this new requirement.

One can only conclude this section by recognizing that all institutions, and notably universities, must and will appoint more women to senior management positions. While they should be given the same opportunities and support as men, it must also be recognized that they will bring different perspectives, skills and styles to the position, that their appointment will change the way some things are done, and that our organizations will be ultimately the better for this example of yet another more open approach to management.

The skills of leadership

Leadership is a lot more than charisma in these complex times. In fact, while personality and emotional leadership are important factors in the success of an organization's president, power based on charisma alone is, as Weber observed a long time ago,'[2] temporary and, once it is lost, the stark contrast with the high expectations it initially creates is very disillusioning.

Instead, the modern manager must develop a wide range of skills to ensure that his or her decisions are soundly based and to the long-term benefit of the organization. Three key components of this leadership are strategic planning, institutional Promotion and staff development, issues to which discussion now turns.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

No subject has received more attention over the past decade in the literature of organizational theory and development than strategic planning. Had this book been written about ten years ago, chances are it would be extolling the virtues of strategic planning through the creation of a special planning department within the corporation. This would have been staffed with specialist experts in all phases of corporate planning who would be charged with preparing all sorts of projections, plans and analyses to inform senior management decision-making.

However, experience with this approach has been less than satisfactory - too often, planning departments simply became large bureaucracies out of touch with the marketplace and with the corporate leadership itself . Corporate planners enjoyed a brief period of very high status, but disillusionment was not long in coming. Too often, strategic planning seemed like an academic exercise, imposed from above and directed by outside consultants, with very little immediate meaning for the busy managers who were supposed to help carry it out. Daniel Gray [13] describes a major aerospace and automotive supplier which, facing difficulties with its new emphasis on strategic planning, spent over $250,000 on a week-long conference of its top 40 managers during which consultants taught them strategic planning techniques in posh surroundings, with a last-day speech from the chief executive officer. For the fanfare, this initiative had very little ultimate impact on the organization.

For far too many companies, strategic planning was no more effective than were previous methods, but now they were saddled with large and expensive planning departments. As more and more chief executive officers realized this problem, massive cuts in planning departments followed. Strategic planning fell from favour as many Japanese companies, apparently without the same preoccupation, surpassed their American competitors in performance. [14]

However, the answer is surely not to fire all the planners, for organizations need excellent information and planning systems to succeed. On the contrary, as Michael Porter has observed, the time for strategic thinking has never been greater.

The solution is to improve strategic planning, not to abolish it. [15]

The trend more recently has been to involve line management throughout the strategic-planning process so that its issues are real, and planning is 'in touch' with what is going on in the organization and its surrounding milieu. Moreover, strategic planning must be closely tied to financial and s stems planning (see Chapter 8) - if the strategic plan does not drive resource allocations, it becomes nothing more than a wish list, a 'pie-in-the-sky' dream about which most staff will quickly become cynical. Gray also notes the importance of linking information and reward systems to strategic planning. [16]

A 1984 *Business Week*[17] cover story [17] assessed the results of earlier strategic plans of a number of American corporations, and found far more that were unsuccessful than successful. While it is difficult to draw broad conclusions from such a complex of factors, two stand out - the importance of involving

line managers throughout the strategic planning process and the need for chief executive officers who are true strategic thinkers.[18]

Ultimately, strategic plans must be translated into operational plans which establish clear priorities, specific benchmarks and standards against which they can subsequently be evaluated and which direct allocations from the organizational budget. The operational plans will not only establish the power and credibility of the strategic plan, but will also force managers to establish priorities by not allowing them merely to live with pious platitudes, a situation which has so often been the result of strategic planning. As Hobbs and Heany point out, 'it appears to be much easier to conceive a new strategy than to carry it out. [19]

Nor is it even enough to establish clear operating plans, for those responsible for steering them through an organization must follow through by ensuring their effective implementation and monitoring, on the basis of which the next plan should be determined. In this sense, strategic planning is never finished. Especially in a university, given academic freedom and its implied encouragement of dissent, it may be unrealistic to expect organization-wide commitment to all facets of a strategic plan. In some ways, the university climate offers advantages, for university leaders are more apt to be made aware of resistance and opposing viewpoints within their institutions than are their corporate counterparts who work in an environment which places a higher premium on company loyalty and compliance.

Perhaps a bigger internal danger to the success of strategic planning is apathy, with staff feeling little loyalty to or involvement with the dreams of their leaders. Indeed, Richardson has suggested that one of the major barriers to implementation is the perception of employees of a vast gap between their chief executive's rosy statements about the future and the reality in which most of them find themselves.[20]

My own experience with strategic planning has been an interesting one, in which most of the above lessons have been learned first-hand. Like most universities, Athabasca had a long-range plan which incorporated everyone's priorities into a general document which was strong on rhetoric but weak in establishing priorities or providing time-specific action plans for their realization. As vice-president academic, I was asked to come up with a strategic academic plan for the university for a five-year period which made specific and measurable the broad objectives of the long-range plan. In the traditional way of doing things at a university, 1 established and chaired a steering committee comprised of two deans of studies and three faculty members elected by the university's academic council (senate).

Using a technique called STOPS (an acronym for 'strengths', 'threats', 'opportunities', 'problems' and 'solutions'), the committee canvassed the university community for its identification of the key components of each of these factors facing the university at that point in its history. This process was very useful in ensuring broad consultation throughout the university environment and in increasing the visibility of the strategic-planning exercise. At the same time, it also raised expectations within the very diverse groupings that their particular agendas would be addressed as priority items. Concurrent with this internal exercise, several studies were commissioned to survey the external environment on similar issues and to identify major trends and concerns relevant to the university's future.

My attempts to oversee a democratic process, seeking consensus as to the major planks of the university's mission, mandate and planning, almost met with disaster. The three faculty members, as representatives of quite opposing viewpoints on such traditional left/right divisions as entrepreneurship versus social responsibility, and elitism versus openness, were clearly going to have difficulty agreeing on anything fundamental.

After months of position papers, debate and discussion, two of the three faculty members resigned (for different reasons), leaving the strategic-planning exercise in the lurch and me on a tightrope. The consultation process had gone as far as it could, and strong and immediate action was called for. With firm support from the president, 1 redefined the process so as to assign much more responsibility to the respective faculties and to give me the stronger position of making the final recommendations to the academic council and board of governors as vice-president academic, rather than as chair of a strategic-planning committee.

The resulting plan is a good one, with very specific priorities, indicators and timelines. It is measurable, ambitious and yet realistic; in fact, two years later, every major goal has thus far been achieved and some exceeded. What is of particular interest here is not its specifics, but the impact it has had on decision-making in the institution. It has shifted discussion away from what *ought* to be done to how it will be done; from dreaming to focused action. The dreaming does and must go on, but there is now a much greater tendency to carry the dreams forward into action plans, a process that is more and more common as more of the original plan is achieved. As dreams become realities, an institutional self-confidence develops, one that spawns even better ideas and new directions in response to changes in the environment.

It should not be surprising that the strategic-planning process deviated from its original design. While it would be folly to advocate the convoluted process which led to the creation of this particular plan, the experience underlines the importance of monitoring the process throughout and being quite open to change as new circumstances arise.

Of course, it is premature to judge the plan a successful one. The ultimate test of its worth will be not only in its successful implementation but also in results of that implementation which are in the best interests of the institution. In other words, the current process is far from over, and others in the organization are less buoyant about the plan than are those most closely associated with it. Some faculty feel that it is far too ambitious, especially given the levels of resources with which it is to be achieved; others are opposed to specific aspects; and still others are more concerned about issues it leaves out.

A fully committed executive team is absolutely essential to this process, [21] not only to ensure that the initial plans are well conceived, understood and supported throughout the organization, but also to oversee the long process of implementation, during which the plans will themselves be changing because of changes in the environment or levels of resources available. Ultimately, this concept of strategic planning becomes the value-driven management process advocated in this book. It calls for the chief executive officer and other members of the senior executive to be confident and highly visible advocates of the institutional vision and plans, but they must, at the same time, be sensitive to internal concerns and to environmental changes which may require the plans to be modified. It is a very large order, but also one which makes management a challenging and rewarding occupation.

A critical component of the process, and one that monitors its integrity, is strong institutional research. A major strength of Athabasca University's Strategic Academic Plan is its use of measurable 'benchmarks' in connection with almost all of its objectives. Hence, a target to increase completion rates by a specified figure by a specified date cannot be hedged or fudged, and can be measured by an independent observer. This builds accountability into the process, in terms both of setting the agenda for management to achieve over a certain time period and in judging their effectiveness in achieving that agenda. Where deadlines or targets are missed, the senior management will have explaining to do, leading to revisions in the plans or changes in the management itself.

Much of this strategic planning and follow-up implementation will take place in an atmosphere of 'crisis management'. Some textbooks leave the reader with the impression that a crisis is always precipitated by bad management. Certainly, a manager who is always operating in a state of crisis is probably someone who needs to do better planning or who lacks time-management or delegation skills. Nevertheless, while good 'anticipatory' management and planning can avoid such an atmosphere, which is often disruptive to the process, it is unrealistic to expect that any manager is so skilled or so in control of all factors that crisis can always be avoided. Moreover, many changes in the external environment or positions of competitors may not have been reasonably anticipated by even the best corporate leader. The real test of an effective manager is not the ability to avoid crisis, but to be able to take full advantage of it when it occurs.

An open and forthright response to crisis can overcome our natural tendency to resist change in times of strife. As Richardson asserts [22] it is not a time for dissension among the institution's leaders; for, the time lost debating the most appropriate response may be critical to the success of the plan, any plan. Good communications and strong leadership can capitalize on a crisis, one advantage of which is that

people are less apt to question the need for change, and hence energy can be directed at the problem of what kind of change, instead of whether change is needed at all. This is not to support the all-too-familiar tactic of 'creating' a crisis to serve one's own ends. While this tactic may be justifiable on occasion, it ultimately produces 'the same result as that encountered by the boy who cried 'Wolf!' once too often.

Strategic planning, then, is still the best answer to the need for clear and integrated leadership in today's institutions. No institution should provide more evidence of being a 'learning institution' than a university, and, if we accept De Geus's notion of 'planning as learning',[23] we will understand the role of strategic planning as the value-driven leadership mechanism which is essential to our future success.

> *We understand that the only competitive advantage the company of the future will have is its managers' ability to learn faster than their competitors. So the companies that succeed will be those that continually nudge their managers towards revising their views of the world. The challenges for the planner are considerable. So are the rewards.* [24]

Only through effective strategic planning and management will universities successfully cope with the discontinuous change which they increasingly face today.[25]

Institutional marketing

Universities have long resisted attempts by administrators to import and impose concepts and terms from the business world. Indeed, until very recently, many denied the legitimate place of business schools within their concept of a university (the demand for places in such programmes has tended to break down this resistance, especially where the universities have had to fight to maintain their student enrolments).

Increasingly, however, as they enter a more competitive environment and one of increasing public accountability, universities have had to pay attention to such concerns as 'their image', promotion and marketing. Far too frequently, this is not attempted until a crisis point, usually when falling enrolments are seriously undermining the institution's fiscal position. Again, too often, attempts to develop a marketing plan expose the lack of clear mission statements and strategic plans, and what starts out as a 'simple' marketing exercise ends up turning the institution upside down as staff agonize over its priorities in trying to come to terms with the messages it really wants to send out.

A particular concern for open universities is the danger that its marketing campaigns will breed false expectations among its students. It is inevitable that institutions which offer open admissions and flexible scheduling attract some students looking for the easy way through. However, anyone who has secured a degree through correspondence, distance education or other forms of off-campus and part-time learning knows that it is a very demanding way to pursue an education. As noted earlier (Chapter 6, pp 85-7), it makes unusual demands on the student's study and time-management skills and on his or her persistence.

Nevertheless, the 'competitive advantage' of an open-learning institution is its accessibility and the flexibility it offers to the part-time adult learner. It is therefore not surprising that such institutions regularly promote these Attributes, stressing the ease of admissions, the immediacy with which students can start and the flexibility of timetables and choices of delivery systems. By emphasizing access, convenience and flexibility, such promotions can further build on common (and false) perceptions that this is an easier way to get an education.

Herein lies a dilemma. One can hardly expect open-learning institutions to boast, 'There's no more difficult way to get a degree!' or 'Chances are, you'll drop out before you complete this programme !' but the reality is that far too many first-time students totally underestimate the demands of open-

learning systems and drop out as a result. As discussed in Chapter 6, the answer lies primarily in the institution's 'pre-admissions' and orientation services rather than in any change in its marketing.

The vagueness of such concepts as 'open learning' and 'distance education' poses another marketing challenge. At a time when promotion and fund-raising are so critical to an institution's success, how does one explain these concepts concisely and effectively? The preferred approach may be to avoid all the details of these complex terms, and simply promote the advantages the institution offers to the student - a university that tailors its services to the needs of the individual and that gives opportunity to those lacking formal qualifications, or second chances to those who have not succeeded in earlier attempts.

While it may be more difficult to explain, the concept of an open university has one invaluable advantage - it is very different from the norm. It can thus be seen as a 'new message', one that is very welcome to many who have been critical of universities in the past. Those who view higher-educational institutions as elitist, unresponsive ivory towers will be very open to open-learning institutions, which are working so hard to break down the barriers to a university education that have existed for so long.

It is not easy to describe and 'explain' an open university to someone without previous exposure to it. Prevailing negative attitudes towards e correspondence' education, open admissions and part-time students can lead to serious questioning of the status and academic credibility of such institutions. The time is past, however, when open-university staff need feel defensive about their institutions, which have not only dramatically increased accessibility to higher education but have demonstrated that many more people can be successful in universities than had ever previously been anticipated, and that there are real economic and social benefits for societies which open up higher education in this way. There is no question in my mind that this is the 'right business' to be in today, and that the open university will not only increasingly find its niche, but also provide leadership in defining the university of the future.

At a time when institutional fund-raising is so critical, open universities have the advantage of establishing their own distinct market niche, one that separates them clearly from most institutions of higher learning. Applying Michael Porter's work to distance education, Murgatroyd and Woudstra note the importance of selecting among his three market strategies (excellent provider, least-cost provider, or only provider of a learning experience for a particular niche), each of which will require a different approach to management if it is to be successful.[26]

There is, however, another dimension to marketing which has posed more difficulties for open-learning institutions - their need for acceptance and credibility among the rest of the higher-education sector. This has not been easy, especially in countries like Germany and Japan where the university Tradition has tended most strongly to elitism. In this context, the recognition and prominence which Britain's Open University has achieved in only 20 years has done a great deal for other open-learning institutions. While there has been a price for this, in the form of conservative pressures on such institutions to be less radical than they might otherwise be (see discussion in Chapter 4), a countervailing benefit is the influence of open universities on their more traditional counterparts and the latter's increasing acceptance of such notions as distance education, interinstitutional accreditation and more open admissions for adult students.

As might be expected, given the earlier sections on systems development and strategic planning, the position taken here is that institutional marketing follows naturally from a well-designed strategic plan which defines the institution's mission, priorities and target student groups. Again, it is not a task that can be left to public-relations specialists, but it is one that is central to the effectiveness of the institution's leadership group.

Staff development

If hiring decisions are the most important factors in the success of an organization, how it treats and develops its existing staff must be next on the priority list. Just as many executive officers pay too little attention to their hiring processes, so they ignore or underrate the importance of staff development. There is considerable irony in this. In some ways, universities pay a lot more attention to staff development than do most other institutions. They give faculty members a great deal of autonomy and unallocated time, encourage them to pursue their own research and scholarly interests, support research projects, fund travel to conferences, and encourage them to publish their ideas and findings. There is generous provision for sabbatical leaves and hence an inbuilt recognition that staff must keep up-to-date in their field and ideas.

On the other hand, many universities are carrying these out in a rather rote fashion, paying far too little attention to the value and fundamental importance of continuing staff development. Sabbaticals, professional-development leave and research are traditional, almost ritualistic benefits, and there is often very little scrutiny of what is actually being done. There is still too little accountabi4ity in the sense that one can do a great deal or very little during a leave or sabbatical without response from the institution. Staff development is thus left largely to the individual, without reference to the mission or specific goals of the institution or department.

Moreover, there is often a large gap between support for faculty members and that for other members of staff at the institution, a practice which can undermine the effectiveness of the whole programme by ignoring the importance of other professional and support staff in the realization of the academic programme. This is particularly the case in an open university where, very often, students have more contact with tutors and other-professional and support staff than they do with the academic faculty. The lack of effective orientation and development programmes for the part-time tutors who interact directly with students on a regular basis is a serious weakness in many of our open universities.

These practices (or lack of them) contrast quite vividly with those in our most successful corporations, especially those in quickly developing technological areas, where there is a tremendous emphasis on staff development - on-the-job training and upgrading, educational programmes (both within the institution and support for those pursuing it elsewhere), conference attendance, and similar programming. The difference is that corporations tend to be more systematic and integrated in their approaches to staff development, linking these approaches closely to their strategic plans and market competition.

Even when there is a formal staff development programme in an educational institution, it too often takes the form of high-profile courses, seminars and 'one-shot' offerings quite transparently intended to change staff in specific ways. The low success rates of such endeavours are well portrayed by Smyth,[27] who sees the villain as the politicization and centralization of education that robs teachers of their creativity and initiative.

The answer is not necessarily to abandon traditional university practices, for, academic freedom, in its best sense, is a protection against undue administrative interference in research and scholarship, but to build on existing practices. The large investment of public funds in universities brings with it an accountability as to how these funds are spent. There should be no doubt that the very nature of a university, as an institution devoted to the development and communication of new ideas, requires that it be a leader in ongoing staff development. This should be even more the case in an open university, with its dedication to lifelong learning. In all cases, however, the foundation must be respect for the integrity and professional competence of the individual staff member, and programmes which both support and challenge academics as they wrestle with the complexities of educating themselves and others.

Summary: leadership and integrity in the management of open learning

The central message of this book has been that those responsible for the management of open learning must learn to be more open managers and to lead organizations which are 'learning' organizations. I

believe that there is a great deal to be learned from the management of open universities, and that there are important lessons for education, for organizations and for leadership to be derived from this experience.

EDUCATION

The world's open universities have already justified their commitment to open admissions through the number and success of their graduates who would not otherwise have had access to postsecondary education. They have provided leadership in instructional design, in flexibility and adaptability, in student-support services and in training models which have had considerable impact on conventional institutions and which are modifying prevailing attitudes about the learning systems of the future. They have been less successful in their adaptation of new technologies to learning systems, but there is evidence that they will be more successful in this domain in the future. They are increasingly cost-efficient, especially in developing countries, where they can serve an enormous clientele at very little relative cost.

   The past decade has seen a realization of their Potential to the extent that their place in the world of higher education is firmly established. It is my own view that they will continue to be successful, so successful, in fact, that distinctions between 'conventional' and 'open' universities will gradually disappear as more and more institutions adopt and adapt the structures and processes of distance education and open learning in responding to the needs of society and their students.

ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

The professional/bureaucratic conflict outlined in Chapter 2 is nowhere more evident than in an open university, which combines an industrial course-production model with academia. As organizations which must constantly change in response to societal needs, open universities must avoid institutionalizing open learning so that it becomes a new rigidity in itself. It is easy to observe processes of conservatism at institutions like Athasbasca University and Britain's Open University, and one real test of the leadership of such institutions will be their ability constantly to challenge and change the way they do things. Only if they are successful will they be the 'learning' organizations that they purport to be, and continue to provide models and case studies for the development of organizational theory and for the emulation of even private-sector institutions in the 'knowledge' society.

MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

The argument has been advanced that the successful development of open universities requires 'open management', a value-driven approach which encompasses the qualities of open learning - openness, flexibility and a strong commitment not only to universal educational opportunity but also to the support systems requisite for student success.

   Above all, the success of open universities depends on leadership and vision - a value-driven commitment to the ideals of open learning, honesty and integrity without rigidity - a flexible approach in a world of ambiguity, change and challenge. If every institutional leader strives for open management, leadership which encompasses the values of open learning which we hold up for our students, the world's open universities will be much more effective institutions and will increasingly be seen as models for the university of tomorrow.

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