THE BROWN PAPER PASTE-UP ANALYSIS: AN INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

Public sector enterprises are being pressed for accountability data. Both governmental entities and publicly funded educational facilities are experiencing the accountability demands from the more vocal voter—who is both a contributor to and consumer of facility services.

The Brown Paper Paste-Up Analysis (BPP-UA) is an innovative institutional effectiveness model developed through a private-sector/public-sector partnership. The innovation was formulated by a team of volunteer business leaders in a metropolitan municipality, in cooperation with municipal employees. The problem to be solved was how to identify and mitigate the problem of expensive, inefficient, duplicative, and time-intensive transaction processing in a municipal financial services department.

The procedure involved wrapping inside corridor wall space of one entire floor of a city department with brown craft paper. The long-term goal was to automate and integrate the financial functions of all departments. The short-term goal was to begin to understand each department's financial functioning, one procedure at a time. There were no extant procedure manuals, only the informal network of employees who could be counted upon to "walk through" important transactions, which required timely processing.

The outside business volunteers queried the workers in each area of the department, trying to ascertain the area function, processing procedures, and the flow of documents. The oral procedures reported by the department workers were often contradictory or inconsistent. The volunteers began to "paste up" each document on the paper-covered corridor, visually representing the handling it received (shown by a handwritten notation explaining the processing, or with a stamp, cover documents, or other indicators of the processing actions).

The process was tedious and often required a restart until both the workers and the volunteers learned to work with the brown paper process. Once one procedure was "pasted up," the department workers were summoned to examine the depiction to verify that the procedures were valid. Then, the discussions began. Why does this document go here? Twice! What happens here? Where does it go next? Could this be done in a more effective way? The employees who performed the procedure were the initial effectiveness analysts. This procedure ceded to them the power to participate not only in the analyses of the problems, but in the development of solutions to problem areas.

The placement of all of the documents and all of the steps involved in transaction processing clearly illustrated bottlenecks, redundancies, and unnecessary steps. Placing the brown paper on the public corridors encouraged workers to participate because they and the public were observing the procedure and were curious about its meaning and vocal about its progress.

Once all procedures were pasted up and had been commented upon, and problem areas had been tentatively remediated by the area workers, the contents of the walls were flow-charted, with each component part labeled. The flow charts allowed the information to be portable and to be shared more easily. The process allowed the tracking of documents through departments. Similar pasting and analyzing occurred in each department until all had been brown papered.

The department management then analyzed inter- and intra-departmental flow. Common documents between and among departments were identified, and members of all involved departments discussed the processes. The presence of the business volunteers assured that the territorial issues were minimized and that the discussion focused on how to maximize processing.

Further, citywide meetings were convened, where recommendations for processing were discussed. Documents listing the recommendations were prepared, and the problem-solving analysis entered an even more critical phase.

In the municipal government environment, the BPP-

UA model led to citywide changes in the processing infrastructure. That clarified, simplified, efficient flow could then be integrated and automated. With integration and automation came procedure formalization and standardization, work area reengineering, and work task redefinition. The departments became more efficiency-minded. They now had performance data which could be used for benchmarking.

This model serves as a nonthreatening, yet thorough and accurate, instrument of analysis. The objective of the BPP-UA tool is to gather information on specific areas that interrelate directly with other areas. It affords the employee and the administrator a quantitative and qualitative perspective of the status quo, as well as a dynamic format allowing for innovation and change.

Its effectiveness depends largely on employee participation. Care must be taken to keep this tool effective by avoiding overuse. Its success relies on the quality participation of an energized employee, a member of a problem-solving team. Similarly, the process must not be protracted. In the municipal government application, the analysis was in clear sight of citizens who used the corridor for passage to other areas of the building complex, the mayor and the press, workers and administrators from other city divisions and departments, as well as the workers from the area under study. A large part of its effectiveness was the freshness and energy it generated with its "treasure hunt" nature and relatively short duration. (The actual brown paper exercise was transferred to smaller, more readable media; it was destroyed once its purpose had been achieved and its results had been characterized elsewhere.) The results of the analysis must be formalized (suggestions for change, improvements in processing flow, increased understanding and interworking among employees, for example) and shared with the group to allow all participants to benefit from understanding and owning the process, to assure everyone that the process is not a onetime occurrence and to emphasize that its results are pertinent.

The process itself is quite resource-independent. No particular supplies are needed, other than the brown paper, expansive walls, and capable facilitators who are able to assist the employees in depicting the workflows in a detailed, readable, and accurate manner.

The BPP-UA tool can be used in many environments. An important potential area for examination would be the registration process at a community college. It might be accomplished by papering an institutional access area, which could be rendered both impervious to graffiti and vandalism, and readily available to students, faculty, administration, staff, and taxpayers. Participants—students (student government representatives), faculty (department advisors), administration (student services, counseling staff), and "gateway" or processing staff—would be responsible for their own inputs/outputs. Other areas of analysis could lead to decisions impacting the improved self-management versus outsourcing of various community college functions, student financial aid processing, purchasing procedures, and so on.

The Brown Paper process is a dramatic tool that allows for the palpable depiction of a usually non-characterizable process. It affords an opportunity to focus visually on the whole or a portion of a process. It is an easy-to-understand, nonthreatening, and friendly medium which can be utilized in extremely diverse work settings. It is both motivational and enjoyable for the participants, and effective and decisive in determining the "next steps" to be taken—a win-win strategy.

Miriam M. Baker, *Doctoral Student*

For further information, contact the author at Community College Leadership Program, SZB 348, The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX 78712-1293.
e-mail: M.P.Baker@mail.utexas.edu