Inter-Departmental Coordination

Breaking Down Silos

AMCTO’s 79th AGM & Conference
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Presented by: Dara Barry, Director, Organization and Employee Services,
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The Silo Mentality...

- A mindset present when certain departments or sectors do not wish to share information with others in the same company.
- This type of mentality will reduce efficiency in the overall operation, reduce morale, and may contribute to the demise of a productive company culture.  
  
  *Business Dictionary*

- A system, process, department, etc. that operates in isolation from others.

  *Apple Mac Dictionary*
Silo Mindset Symptoms

- Department and organizational inefficiencies
- Duplication of work
- Lack of cross-functional solutions and collaboration
- Strained or ineffective interdepartmental* relationships
- Immature working relationships between individuals and teams
- Low ratings on customer and/or employee satisfaction surveys
- Low morale
- Lack of awareness of needed information
- Unwillingness to share resources
- Unwillingness to share information
- Sabotage (subtle or overt)
- …
Root Causes of Silo Mindset

- Conflicted leadership team
- Control orientation and leadership style
- Dysfunctional relationships
- Physical separation
- Stereotyping and finger pointing
- Competing goals and priorities
- Insufficient resources and rewards
- Funding streams
- Culture or value differences
- Vague or conflicting roles
- Rigid policies or standard operating procedures
- Politics
- “Tribalism”
Are Silos Ever a Good Thing?

- Instances where a silo approach may be necessary
  - Security type functions (where effective functioning requires limited access to info, systems, etc. by a few individuals)
  - Audit functions (for integrity of process)
  - Ombudsman type functions (for objectivity)
  - Other areas requiring independence from influence from other areas of the organization in order to ensure the right, fair, impartial outcome
5 Levels of Interdepartmental Relationships

1. Independence
2. Information Sharing
3. Joint Problem Solving
4. Joint Project Management
5. Process Management
Breaking Down Silos EXERCISE
Effective Interdepartmental Relationships Require...

- Communication
  - The purposeful exchange of information from one individual or group to another
- Cooperation
  - The harmonious association of individuals for common benefit
- Collaboration
  - The willing exchange of resources (time, human, financial, and physical) to achieve organizational goals
- Coordination
  - The smooth functioning of parts for desired results
5 Ways for Leaders to Encourage a United Front

1. Create a Unified Vision and Mission
2. Work Towards Achieving Common or Interdependent Goals
3. Motivate and Reward
4. Execute and Measure
5. Collaborate and Create
Breaking Down the Silos

...some how to’s

- Understand why the silos exist
- Become a “tribal” expert
- Create a clear, compelling and urgent cause
- Never burn a bridge
- In the face of drama, take a step back
- Get to “YES” fast – focus on what’s working
- Create small wins
- Promote meetings between department heads and staff
Encourage people to socialize outside of work

Recognize, reward and celebrate collaborative behaviour

Make innovation a preeminent focus

Brand everyone as a junction box for knowledge

Think systematically

Walk a mile

Ask the tough questions
  - Let the customer weigh in
  - Look at yourself in the mirror
Breaking Down the Silos
...some how to’s

- Honour requests – keep your promises
- Create a climate of psychological safety
- Check your perception and attitude
- Establish and maintain relationships
- Offer to help
- Resource sharing
- Exploratory interviews
- Role clarification
Breaking Down the Silos
...some how to’s

- Show-and-tell “road shows”
- Job shadowing, switching, or rotation
- Group training and information sharing
- Office redesign, relocation or co-location
- Process mapping and redesign
- Cross-functional teams
- Interdepartmental service agreements
- Jack Welch’s “Work-Out” approach
“A Real Team is…

An intact social system, complete with boundaries, interdependence among members and differentiated member roles. Members are dependent upon one another for some shared purpose, and they invariably develop specialized roles as that purpose is pursued. The team produces some outcome for which members have collective responsibility.”

Hackman, J.R., 1990, Groups that work (and those that don’t). Jossey Bass
All I really need to know I learned in kindergarten.

All I really need to know about how to live and what to do and how to be is what I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate-school mountain, but there in the sandbox at Sunday School. These are the things I learned:

1. Share everything. Play fair. Don’t hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don’t take things that aren’t yours. Say you’re sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life—learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.

2. Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch for traffic. Hold hands and stick together.

3. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup. The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

4. Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup—they all die. So do we.

5. And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first word you learned—the biggest word of all—LOOK.

6. Everything you need to know is in there somewhere: the Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation. Ecology and politics and equality and some living.

7. Take any one of those items and extrapolate it into sophisticated adult terms and apply it to your family life or your work or your government or your world and it holds true and clear and firm. Think what a better world it would be if we all—the whole world—had cookies and milk about three o’clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if all governments had as a basic policy to always put things back where they found them and to clean up their own mess.

8. And it is still true, no matter how old you are—when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

By Robert Fulghum