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Summer Therapy and Coaching Resource Notebook

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Author Note

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Abstract

This project aims to fulfill the need for an easily accessible and well-organized resource notebook for summer Educational Therapy and Academic Coaching that our organization has talked about doing for some time now but has always lacked the manpower to make happen. I desire to have this be a stepping stone towards offering a valuable, well-defined service for our administration to offer to our students and families in the future.

This approach will address the frustration of having data and information scattered between our three schools, departments, and people. It will also take current resources, information, and opinions from other educational therapists and academic coaches and combine them with my newly acquired information to finally have a tangible and accessible program to use moving forward next summer.

This project also gave me the ability to highlight and utilize the leadership and conflict management skills I have acquired during my last two years at Boise State University. I chose a project that highlighted the skills I already possess: communication, leadership, organization, active listening, problem-solving, etc.

Keywords: notebook, resource, therapy, academic coaching, summer, leadership

Introduction to your Capstone Project

The idea for this project was conceptualized as I began recognizing the frustrations my coworkers had as summer approached every year. Each therapist wanted the option to offer summer services and earn extra income, but no one had the resources for how to go about offering this service. Conflicting information from the business office, administration, and other staff members made it incredibly difficult to move forward with offering those services.

With the help of my team, my vision was to create a resource notebook that contains time logs, contracts, fliers, preliminary curriculum, and other miscellaneous resources that can be shared online, and any staff member can access the notebook, add their resources, and recopy for their use.

As the leader of this project, I created the initial "shell" of the online notebook and then delegated tasks to others in my department to research and add specific components to the project. My team utilized previously designed templates and strategies from workbooks and websites, and I collaborated with my supervisor and other therapists to ensure that this was able to be delivered in the most effective way possible. Each page in the notebook has a clickable link that can be accessed by anyone and modified as needed. The resource notebook is now ready to be shared with others in our department.

Elements coming together

Innovative Approach

This approach was not new, contemporary, or cutting-edge, but it worked because no one else had the desire, ability, or time to figure it out. Leadership "begins by setting a direction—developing a vision of the future (often the distant future) along with strategies for producing the changes needed to achieve that vision" (Kotter, 2001). Rather than reinventing the wheel, I set the direction by helping my team take *current* resources, information, perspectives, and opinions and expand a bit more. The idea was already there, just unclear and underdeveloped. Offering this simple resource allowed us to answer the question "How can we productively offer summer services" and move from "We can't" to "We can!"

Innovation has been described as "the practical implementation of ideas that result in the introduction of new goods or services or improvement in offering goods or services" (Wikipedia, 2023). My notebook solution is not new, but it does offer the practical implementation and improvement of a service we are already providing. I believe there is always room for improvement in everything we do. If we are always seeking to improve, we are also allowing ourselves to be open to learning and growing.

Emotional Intelligence

The concept for the project came from my ability to understand the emotions of the people around me. In this case, it was their confusion and frustration over the lack of resources or where to find them. Effective leadership begins with self-awareness and self-understanding and grows to understand others (Komives, 2013). However, knowing myself first as I approached my project allowed me to better understand my team member's perceptions, values, strengths, weaknesses, etc. Where I lack creativity for the notebook, Joanne excelled. Where Brit

lacked the ability to be organized, I thrived. When no one wanted to take initiative to start, I stepped in to lead. Each member was able to contribute based on their specific strength. My relational strengths of communication and empathy also allowed me to better understand why my team members were struggling with certain parts of the project and helped them adjust accordingly.

By taking the initiative and getting the initial project started, I was then able to encourage others in their creativity and confidence to present new ideas for the project based on my understanding of each individual and offered them opportunities to refine ideas already in place. By leading a team and delegating tasks rather than just doing all of the work myself, they were able to see the value of the notebook more clearly and have a sense of pride and ownership.

Recognizing barriers and frustrations was the first step. I began asking questions of my coworkers to help me better understand what was needed to remove those barriers and frustrations. The actual creation of the manual was the easiest part. Taking the lead, dealing with scheduling conflicts, and delegating research tasks was the bigger challenge. However, all of this was worthwhile because the feedback I received was that this will be very valuable during the next school year as summer approaches again. We all have more confidence, knowledge, and resources to be able to offer our services, should we choose to do so.

Creative Thinking

When it came to the creative framework and process for this project, I knew there were several other important elements that I needed to take into account aside from just the brainstorming process. Organization, communication, problem-solving, and open-mindedness were also going to be critical to the success of my project. I could come up with creative ideas all day long, taking time to think about them, research, expand on them, etc. But, creativity doesn't

stop there. The job of a creative thinker is to take it to the next step and implement the ideas effectively and efficiently. I took into account that "For Creative Problem Solving (CPS) to be relevant, useful, worthwhile, and impactful in application, it must be well-modeled and understandable in theory and application" (Isaksen et al., 2011). If I wanted my team to buy into this idea, they needed to *understand the relevance* first and foremost.

Organizing materials, thoughts, ideas, and people took the most time and energy as I had to be creative with how I communicated with people. Because we were on summer break, school offices were closed for a time, coworkers (my teammates) were on vacation, and some emails and phone calls had yet to be returned. Communication looked very different over the summer than it does during the school year.

Each team member brought their own unique and diverse ideas concerning appearance, content, and delivery method. These diverse ideas forced me to be more open-minded and accept the creative ideas and advice my team has given me about this project. According to *Creating Great Choices: A Leader's Guide to Integrative Thinking*, "The world is understood in different ways by different people. These opposing ways of seeing the world represent an opportunity for us to improve our models" (Riel, 2017). I had a vision of how this Resource Notebook would look, however, part of leading this project meant having the ability to see others' visions and be willing to adapt and change if needed. This is an area in my leadership skills that I recognize still needs improvement: adaptability and flexibility.

Innovative Solution

I am aware that this project is still a work in progress. Educational standards change, goals evolve, curriculums are enhanced, and people transition in and out of the department. For me, this project was important, not just for a Capstone grade, but for my department to see me

step up as a leader, acknowledge gaps and frustrations, and take the initiative to begin finding a solution to some of these issues. I take pride in the fact that, while my innovative project didn't affect a large number of people in the community, it took a problem that hits "close to home" and offered a *solution* that will have an impact, not only on myself, but the people around me, and eventually, the families at our school when we can confidently offer our services.

While I have not yet had too many problems to solve to this point so far with my project, I am mindful that as we continue to add to this notebook, delete unnecessary information, and collaborate, we will inevitably run into some issues. It will be up to me to utilize the skills I have learned in my Conflict Management classes as well as my Leadership classes and find effective, creative solutions to the problem. Because we have six distinct and different personalities on our team, we will likely have six different solutions and ideas for how this notebook should look and function. I will strive to find ways to acknowledge each of these different ideas and be able to effectively communicate why the idea may or may not be implemented.

Results

The other therapists and coaches I work with were the primary stakeholders of this Resource Notebook as they are the reason I chose to build and implement this project. The benefit is an easily accessible location for our resources, data, and other reproducible. The school administration would be considered secondary stakeholders as they will be able to soon offer summer Educational Therapy and Executive Functioning as an option to inquiring parents. Once our department feels confident in our ability to offer services, the administration can feel confident in promoting those services.

Measuring the success of this project will come with time, however. I met with each therapist, coach, interventionist, and supervisor and asked for their feedback, perspective,

opinions, and critique about the notebook within the last few weeks. I also provided them with a

Google Forms evaluation to collect more feedback. Their excitement and gratitude were

incredibly positive and encouraging. Each was able to provide feedback for me to ponder as we

continue to add to the notebook throughout the year. The main feedback was that the notebook

originally contained too much information and should be more user-friendly and able to be more

easily navigated for a more comprehensive understanding of the material. The true measure of

success will be seen next year as to whether or not the effectiveness and efficiency that the

notebook brings will allow others to feel more confident offering their services during the

summer. It will give us all an easy-to-follow method that will be consistent among all of our

therapists at both campuses.

At the beginning of my project, I anticipated surveying the parents of the students I was

working with to obtain their feedback. However, as I moved forward with the project, I realized

that while they are stakeholders that will *eventually* be impacted, their feedback on the structure

and purpose of the Resource Notebook is not necessarily needed as they will not have access to

it. This is an internal document that does not need to be shared with parents. I had to reflect quite

a bit on who my true stakeholders were. A project stakeholder "is someone who gains or loses

something (could be functionality, revenue, status, compliance with rules, and so on) as a result

of that project" (I. Alexander, 2004). My coworkers and teammates (Educational Therapists,

Coaches, interventionists) stand to gain the most and are the reason the project exists… their

feedback and opinions are the ones that currently matter.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I opted to choose a professionally related action project that allowed me to

contribute work that is not normally in my capacity as an employee. It gave me the ability to

highlight and utilize the leadership and conflict management skills I have acquired during my last two years at Boise State University. I chose a project that would benefit myself, my coworkers, and our school. I worked exceptionally hard on this project with my team and, to the best of my ability, tried to display the characteristics of a servant leader throughout the project. "Servant leaders put followers first, empower them, and help them develop their fullest personal capacities (Northouse, 2022).

Because I chose a project that was in the realm of my current as an Educational Therapist, the results I anticipated were not surprising. My stakeholders were grateful for this new resource as we had all been wanting it for some time. By choosing a project that requires collaboration among our team members, we all benefit in the long run.

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Appendix

Capstone Project Screenshots

Resource Notebook Team Evaluation

Team Meeting Agenda