



Redesigning the MBA Curriculum: Implementation Challenges

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Change Formula

$$PR (CH) = D \times M \times P > C$$

Source: Professor Michael Beer,
Harvard Business School



D = DISSATISFACTION

- DEMAND
- DATA
- DISCUSSION & DIAGNOSIS
- DESIRE
- DIRECTION

M = MODEL / VISION

- MATCHES STRATEGY & VALUES
- MULTIDIMENSIONAL
- MODELING BEHAVIOR
- MODEL ORGANIZATIONS

P = PROCESS

- PARTICIPATION
- PRONOUNCEMENTS
- POLITICS
- PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL
- PROMOTION
- PERSISTENCE
- PLANNING

C = COST / FELT LOSSES

- POWER
- COMPETENCE
- SELF-ESTEEM
- RELATIONSHIPS
- REWARDS / STATUS
- SECURITY
- IDENTITY

Leading Change

$$(PR) CH = D \times M \times P > C$$

- OVEREMPHASIS ON **M**
- UNDER EMPHASIS ON **D & P**

Range of approaches to curriculum change

- From organic, incremental curriculum changes to planned, large-scale design
- From a focus on several unrelated themes to a broad unifying purpose
- From a traditional sequence of courses to a more radical repositioning of topics
- From minor variations on existing courses to novel and innovative course content
- From rigid requirements to greater flexibility and customization
- From loose integration to a tight coupling of courses
- From pedagogies based on large classroom lectures and case discussions to field work, experiential learning, small group activities & 1-on-1 instruction

Curriculum change at UVA Darden

Continuous improvement approach with extensive faculty engagement.

- Discussions between Dean & faculty revealed concerns, which the Dean shared widely
- Dean appointed faculty review committee to lead a facilitated process of data collection & brainstorming
- Two-day, off-site meeting with all faculty and staff resulted in unanimous commitment to revise in particular areas



Curriculum change at UVA Darden

- Faculty review committee proposed 18 major changes, pilots, and new directions
- Examples included:
 - a curriculum designed around competencies
 - integrated curricular & co-curricular activities



Curriculum change at Yale SOM

Large-scale planned curricular changes built around an overarching theme: Integration.

- Identified dissatisfaction with original MBA program
- Secured broad faculty engagement
- Multiple committees: Steering Committee and 6 subcommittees (mainly faculty, especially key opinion leaders, and some students)



Curriculum change at Yale SOM

- Heavy Dean involvement, including 1-on-1 meetings
- Faculty approved reform based on 11-page outline
- Design team: 8 senior faculty, with additional faculty involvement, developed new curriculum after the vote



Curriculum change at Stanford GSB

Large-scale planned curricular changes in sequence, structure, & content of courses.

- Identified dissatisfaction with MBA program
- Review process centered on one 11-person committee with broad authority, leading to final up-or-down vote
- Committee represented “the future of the school,” with each faculty area represented (included tenured faculty, two adjuncts, and two alumni)



Curriculum change at Stanford GSB

- Consulted broadly with faculty, alumni, and students
- Proposal to faculty: no advance material; 3 hours of presentation & discussion; 85% approved proposal
- Dean set up and chaired an oversight committee to guide implementation
- Dean tasked an implementation committee with managing and executing the change process



The challenge of change

“Never confuse motion with action.”
(Benjamin Franklin)