

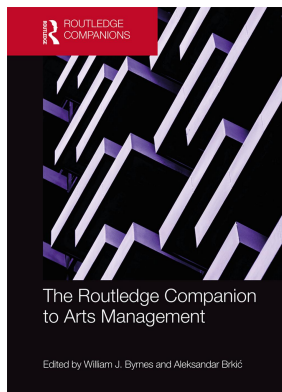
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10

LEADING CHANGE

Two executive leadership transitions through the lens of cognitive restructuring

Rachel Parker

Introduction

Change can be difficult and painful, but change is necessary; the adaptable organization is the successful one. While managing change is one of the most important jobs of the arts administrator, dealing with resistance to change is perhaps the most crucial step of that process. Leaders must learn to understand the implications of the change required, focusing on “who is going to have to let go of what . . . and what people *should* let go of” (Bridges and Mitchell, 2002, p. 40, emphasis added). Leaders must be able to shepherd the organization through the complex transition process, which hopefully leads to meaningful change.

This chapter will first explore the concept of cognitive restructuring and the change process, and then use it to analyze the first year of the new Executive Producer of the Utah Shakespeare Festival and the new Director/Curator of the Southern Utah Museum of Art. This unique opportunity presented itself when these two arts organizations in the small town of Cedar City, Utah, hired individuals around the same time from outside of the community to guide them through a period of great transition and change.

While a comparison of each organization and leader is apples to oranges, the study of how two different people stepped into the leadership role of organizations with unique histories and cultures can perhaps inform future arts leaders on how to be effective agents of change; to lead rather than manage through the inevitability of change. “We understand by now that organizations cannot be just endlessly ‘managed,’ replicating yesterday’s practices to achieve success” (Bridges and Mitchell, 2002, p. 33).

Introduction to change

The uncertainty that comes with change can be very difficult to navigate. It is a time when all logic and reason can fly out the window, and emotions trump everything. In the chapter “Leading Transition: A New Model for Change” from the book *On Leading Change*, contributors William Bridges and Susan Mitchell state that:

“thousands of books, seminars, and consulting engagements purporting to help ‘manage change’ often fall short. These tools tend to neglect the dynamics of personal and

organizational transition that can determine the outcome of any change effort. . . . In past years, perhaps, leaders could simply order change. Even today, many view it as a straightforward process: establish a task force to lay out what needs to be done, when, and by whom. Then all that seems left for the organization is . . . to implement the plan. . . . But then, why don't people *Just Do It*?

(Bridges and Mitchell, 2002, pp. 33–34)

The answer can be found in that often-neglected transition phase of change. “Transition is the state that change puts people into. The *change* is external . . . while the *transition* is internal” (Bridges and Mitchell, 2002, p. 34). To effectively enact change, a leader must first understand what needs changing, second uncover and manage the reasons behind resistance to the change or uncertainty, and third help those affected by the change through the sometimes-painful transition process. It is, frankly put, a minefield. So how does the successful arts administrator navigate transitions without causing more damage?

Cognitive restructuring as a vehicle for change

The root of resistance to change is found in loss and how people perceive it; loss of comfort, loss of some benefit, loss of ‘How we’ve always done things.’ In *Understanding and Changing Your Management Style*, which will be the focus of this chapter, author and multidisciplinary behavioral scientist Robert Benfari details the concept of *cognitive restructuring*. In it, the goal “is to identify internal monologues that are related to the stressful event, to evaluate this self-talk for its rationality and influence on behavior, and then to produce new self-talk to modify the original cognition and the undesired behavioral pattern” (Benfari, 2013, p. 17). If the leader can usher stakeholders along this path of cognitive restructuring, the external change can be accomplished because the internal transition has been carefully managed.

Recognition

“Becoming aware of our assumptions, perceptions, and feelings is the first step in cognitive restructuring” (Benfari, 2013, p. 35). In a single stressful situation, there can be 100 different reactions. The key is figuring out what those reactions stem from. As change leaders, we must first recognize our assumptions, perceptions, and feelings towards the situation before we can help other stakeholders recognize their own and start cognitive restructuring. We must assess what ‘loss’ is at stake; what need is being taken away or not met. “Needs are the forces that organize the perceptions, judgments, and actions that we use in our drive toward competence. . . . Because these assumptions and beliefs in part determine our needs structure, becoming conscious of them can help us modify these underlying elements and lead to change” (Benfari, 2013, p. 127).

Analysis

“Deeply rooted assumptions can distort our perceptions such that they reinforce the old assumptions. By opening up our perceptual field with ‘floodlight’ vision rather than ‘spotlight’ vision, we have the opportunity to alter these assumptions” (Benfari, 2013, p. 19). This is a common task in the critical thinking process, to try to see things from all sides, acknowledging bias. As change leaders, once we have checked our own bias, we must analyze the assumptions, perceptions, and feelings brought to the surface in Step 1, assessing the validity of such.

Correction

“Understanding and correctly interpreting the underlying patterns of our own and others’ needs are essential to any change effort” (Benfari, 2013, p. 127). Once the assumptions, perceptions, and feelings have been recognized and analyzed, it is time to make the course correction. Whether or not the resistance is valid, this is the point where the leader must ask “Where do we go from here?” It is up to the individual to decide if the barrier to change is too high and if staying or leaving is the right call. The leader cannot make that decision for the individual. The leader can only make sure all decisions are made with all available information. The leader must continue moving forward.

The case studies: an historical context

With an understanding of change and the role cognitive restructuring can play in the transition process, the historical context and analysis of the leadership shift of both the Utah Shakespeare Festival and the Southern Utah Museum of Art can begin.

The Utah Shakespeare Festival presents life-affirming classic and contemporary plays in repertory, with Shakespeare as our cornerstone. These plays are enhanced by interactive festival experiences which entertain, enrich, and educate (Utah Shakespeare Festival, 2018).

With a desire to capitalize on the thousands of tourists visiting the many National and State Parks in the area, to combat the ease being created by the construction of new Interstate 15 to “just pass through” the town, and with a love of the arts, the Utah Shakespeare Festival (USF) was founded in 1961 by Fred Adams and his wife, Barbara, in Cedar City, Utah. Under the umbrella of the College of Southern Utah (now Southern Utah University), the first productions were performed over two weekends in July. *The Taming of the Shrew* and *Hamlet* “drew 3,726 visitors and over \$2,000, enough to prove to the College of Southern Utah and the community that this could be a profitable venture” (Paul, 2011, p. 9).

By the second decade of operation, USF “had grown into an impressive and noteworthy regional theatre. The season had expanded, and the need for new facilities had become apparent” (Paul, 2011, p. 11). In 1977, the Adams Memorial Shakespearean Theatre was dedicated. The 1970s also saw an increase in performances and attendance; increasing ticket sales allowed USF to begin hiring more staff, increase production budgets, and add special events. In 1981 USF began offering Actors Equity Association contracts, increasing the quality and professionalism of the company. In 1989, USF opened a second venue, The Randall L. Jones Theatre. In 2000, the Tony for Outstanding Regional Theatre was given to USF.

In June of 2016, USF

celebrated the biggest event of its history with the ribbon cutting for the Beverly Sorenson Center for the Arts, including two new theatres for the Festival:

the Engelstad Shakespeare Theatre (which replaced the aging Adams Shakespeare Theatre) and the Eileen and Allen Anes Studio Theatre (a new, flexible theatre which seats about 200 playgoers). These two theatres join the existing Randall L. Jones Theatre to give the Festival three very different performing spaces for the future (Utah Shakespeare Festival, 2018).

The arts center also houses the administrative offices and a rehearsal/education hall for USE, as well as the Southern Utah Museum of Art. This Tony Award-winning festival has become a jewel of the state, and one of the most well-regarded regional theatres in the country.

Today, USF annually welcomes approximately 100,000 guests and produces more than 300 performances across three theatres during a 16-week season. The annual budget for the 2017 summer season was 7.4 million dollars. USF has 30 full-time and eight part-time staff, five graduate students working in assistantships, and 250–300 seasonal staff (depending on the season) including actors, designers, technicians, and audience services staff. Volunteers number above 200 annually and the board currently stands at 18 members, though the bylaws allow up to 25. USF has an education touring company, and during the regular season offers a free nightly Greenshow, literary seminars, facility tours, and workshops, among other things, to complete the USF experience (Utah Shakespeare Festival, 2018).

There is also much that has not changed at USF. Founder Fred Adams is still a fixture in the halls of the festival administration building. His influence is felt throughout each meeting, theatre space, and performance. Like most arts organizations, USF has experienced both success and struggle, and through both there permeates a deep sense of tradition. Honoring the past is something that is very important to many who work there.

In 2017, R. Scott Phillips, USF's first full-time employee, stepped down as Executive Director, a position he had held since it was created in 2005. After an exhaustive national search, Frank Mack was named as Phillip's replacement, with a title change to Executive Producer. Mack came to Cedar City from the University of Connecticut where he was the founder of Graduate Programs in Arts Administration. He had an extensive and impressive resume in theatre management and had been the managing director at such places as California Shakespeare Theatre, Connecticut Repertory Theatre, Geva Theatre Center, and the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival. Mack received his BGS in acting from the University of Kansas, Lawrence, and his MFA in directing from Virginia Tech.

The Southern Utah Museum of Art strives to foster engagement and experiential learning for students of Southern Utah University, as well as communities across the region through its permanent collections, diverse exhibitions, and participatory experiences (The Southern Utah Museum of Art, 2018).

Also on the campus of Southern Utah University is the Southern Utah Museum of Art (SUMA). Housed in a brand new, \$10 million building (as part of the Beverly Taylor Sorenson Center for the Arts, which is also the home of the Utah Shakespeare Festival theatres

and Administrative Offices), SUMA is an education-focused facility that is itself a work of art, inspired by the region's famous slot canyons.

The museum, which opened in 2016, is 20,500 square feet, with 6,600 square feet of that space dedicated to exhibitions. The remainder of the space is used for administration, education, conservation, and special events. Students and faculty of SUU's College of Performing and Visual Arts utilize SUMA for experiential learning. SUMA is the "Teaching Hospital" attached to the SUU Arts Administration Graduate Program "Medical School." Operating on a \$450,000 budget, SUMA is free and open to the public (The Southern Utah Museum of Art, 2018).

While SUMA itself is a very new entity, it evolved from the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery, also on the campus of SUU. The Braithwaite first opened its doors in 1976 in the basement of an academic building. There was a small exhibition space, as well as storage for the permanent collection. In its last year (FY16), the Braithwaite had approximately 5,000 visitors.

In 2009, Reece Summers, former director of the Braithwaite, approached beloved landscape artist, Jimmie Floyd Jones, about a retrospective exhibition for the Braithwaite Fine Arts Gallery. The discussion led to a much grander idea: an art museum for SUU and Cedar City. As a Cedar City native and lover of the arts, Jimmie had a vision of what an art museum could bring to this campus and community: the opportunities that he missed during his childhood. The university agreed to work toward the creation of a museum, which is now known as the Southern Utah Museum of Art (SUMA). For the new museum, Jimmie left his home and studio near Zion National Park, his collection of art, and 15 new landscape paintings created in 2009, the year of his death. Many in the community consider SUMA as "The house that Jimmie built."

Since opening, SUMA has welcomed over 40,000 visitors to see its temporary exhibitions and the works of Jimmie F. Jones. The museum is dedicated to featuring the artwork of regional artists, faculty, and students from the SUU Department of Art & Design, as well as emerging and distinguished artists from around the country.

Strengths of the nearly 2,000-object permanent collection include the body of work by Jimmie F. Jones that exemplifies his notable career in the region, as well as a robust collection of prints featuring well-known artists such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Salvador Dalí, Katsushika Hokusai, Thomas Hart Benton, and others (The Southern Utah Museum of Art, 2018). The SUMA staff is comprised of two full-time and four part-time positions, six graduate students working in assistantships, four work-study undergraduate students, 25 volunteers, and an eight-member board.

Shortly after the doors opened, Reece Summers retired, and Jessica Farling was hired after a national search to serve as the Director/Curator of the museum. With several years of demonstrated expertise in developing new audiences, donor cultivation, and board and volunteer management, Farling came to SUMA from the Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, located on the campus of the University of Oklahoma, where she had worked for several years. An emerging museum leader, Farling had the potential to be the visionary needed to bring SUMA out of the dream stage and into a working reality.

The case studies: interviews and observations

Both new leaders were asked the same questions separately. Following are the responses to those questions, coupled with observations of those responses through the lens of both general leadership theory and cognitive restructuring.

What is your leadership philosophy?

Frank Mack (FM): I try to live by a quote I once read: “A good leader is a person with integrity who is committed to the organization and the people who work together to accomplish the organization’s mission; this person leads by example, communicates without ceasing, and shows care, concern, and consistency in all dealings” (International Association of Administrative Professionals, 2009).

The reason I picked this philosophy was because it recognizes that the success of the organization is not just one person’s job. Collaboration is a key component in how we produce theatre and how we need to come together administratively. It’s pretty straightforward. It’s all about communication and respect and working together.

Jessica Farling (JF): I’ve been the middle management employee that was discouraged from empowering my colleagues. I came into this position with the determination to create a culture of empowerment. In fact, when I interviewed for this position, I made it a point to go beyond empowering the staff and discussed a vision statement that displayed a sense of empowerment for the community.

Rather than a traditional leader, I strive to be a creative leader by being interactive (rather than one way), concerned with being real (rather than being right), able to learn from mistakes (rather than avoid mistakes), open to unlimited critiques (rather than limited feedback), and able to take risks (rather than sustaining order). I don’t just believe in creativity because we are an art museum. I think these are qualities that make any leader a stronger, more transparent, and more successful.

At the end of the day, I pulled myself up through the ranks, starting as a part-time student employee in an art museum. I worked my way through middle management and hoped to be in a leadership position that could make real positive change. Those qualities are hard to teach and are easier when you’ve experienced it for yourself. I try to regularly reflect on past experiences to help manage current situations. In some cases, they help me understand my past supervisors. In other cases, they help me to not make the same mistakes.

Observations: The quote Mack uses to steer his leadership style like a personal leadership mission is, as he puts it, “pretty straightforward.” It succinctly describes a good general

leader. But a one-line philosophy can only do so much when in the thick of managing change. A leader must know how he or she reacts to many different situations and conflicts and personality types. He or she must know what pitfalls to avoid because of personal leadership weaknesses, and he or she must have a plan to discover why a person is reacting to change adversely.

Farling goes much deeper with her answer. Where a person comes from and what situations that person experiences inform how that person responds when given a leadership role. Farling knew what worked and did not work in her past dealings with leaders, she knows how she responds to conflict and stress, and she knows how to listen to others when they are experiencing similar conflict and stress. She uses this knowledge and experience to curate her leadership philosophy, which she acknowledges is constantly changing and evolving. She recognizes she too must be agile like the organization she leads.

**Upon your hiring, how did you begin assessing
the current state of USF/SUMA?**

FM: Through documentation and through conversation. What documentation I could find, I would study. And when I arrived in Cedar, I set up a system for meeting with the staff, board members, stakeholders, and university administrators. In those meetings, I would listen. I would keep a list for every person or department of the things I wanted to learn more about or didn't understand or was interested in possibly changing, and I would refer to that list every time I met with that person or department.

As I listened and asked questions, I began to see the big picture; what was working and what wasn't. I told people what I thought we could do, which was generally pretty well received. People were ready to do things differently.

JF: I did a good amount of research before I arrived in Cedar for the interview process, but there was a lot of stuff I couldn't figure out by just looking online. There were a lot of holes and things I didn't necessarily put together. So, when I started, it was mostly observing and listening.

One of the first shocks I received was walking into an exhibition before I was on contract and seeing prices on the labels and the little red dot stickers symbolizing that the piece was sold. It really surprised me. I thought 'Where am I?' This was supposed to be a museum, not a gallery, so it did alarm me. This is not what a museum does. So, with that history of the Braithwaite Gallery and even with SUMA as a new organization, that has been a big piece, realizing that we still have to transition from gallery to museum. But I also understood that the museum had been open and then everyone was "So. How are we going to fund this?" So, the first conclusion they came to was selling art.

My first day on the job I was preparing the budgets and I saw that SUMA had not made that much selling art. If they had made \$300,000, then that would have been a

different story, but that wasn't the case. This led me to start thinking about different sustainable strategies, and what ultimately led me to think about restructuring the board to focus more on fundraising. I wanted to come up with ways of making up for the money lost by not selling artwork.

Just observing in those first few weeks gave me a better idea as to what was happening, but the second part of assessment needed to be conversations and discussions and finding out what people wanted. In the first six months I had conversations with every staff member (part-time undergraduate students, part-time graduate students, and part-time community members) one-on-one where I didn't have an agenda or questions, just "Tell me about your job" and "Tell me what your vision is for SUMA." That was really helpful and showed me that these part-time employees have really great ideas and perceptions of SUMA because they are in the trenches. They know what SUMA and its potential is.

Then it was about building relationships outside of the staff with stakeholders and community members, asking "What is SUMA to the community?" "What are the community needs that SUMA can meet?" There is still a lot of work left to do there, as there were a lot of misconceptions about the purpose of SUMA, but it all goes back to the basics of communication, which isn't that complicated.

Observations: Before one can understand the path to change implementing cognitive restructuring, one needs to know the state of the organization, or how cognition is currently structured. When they stepped into the leadership role at USF and SUMA, both Mack and Farling observed and listened to discern what was working in their respective organizations, and (perhaps more importantly) what was not.

Through these meetings and observations, both leaders also had a chance to get to know the personalities of those with a vested interest in their respective organizations, from staff to patrons. This would theoretically allow each leader to anticipate any perceived loss to any changes that would need to be made.

Farling in particular took this time to get to know the people beyond the structure of the museum. She asked how stakeholders felt about SUMA, and what they envisioned for the future of the organization. While Mack focused on the business, Farling folded in the human factor. This would prove invaluable later as she managed a great deal of resistance to changes she wanted to implement.

How did you identify what needed to change?

FM: Having come from a professional theatre company in a university setting, I quickly understood how this one was structured, as it was very similar. It is very clear; it was not mysterious. But how people managed that structure was mysterious. The basic administrative structure of the festival is just plain as day: It's an auxiliary unit of Southern Utah University, it receives no direct financial support from the university, it's expected

to pay for itself and generate a surplus that is maintained in reserve accounts by the university. But how you actually do that successfully is a whole other story.

Knowing that USF had lost in the last two seasons about 1.65 million dollars, it doesn't take an MFA in arts administration to look at that and think "Something isn't working here." So the first change was that we needed to stop hemorrhaging money. The 2017 budget was 7.4 million and going into the 2018 season it is about 6.5 million. We had to make a lot of deep and painful cuts. And for the first time in my life, I proposed a budget at a deficit of \$424,000 to the board. They approved it, knowing that it is a process to get us to the point we need to be. The goal is to have a balanced budget for the 2019 season. We're almost there.

JF: I don't know that I consciously was prioritizing changes that needed to be made, but I knew we needed to start with our foundation, which is the board. It needed to be restructured and focused in on raising money. We are in the middle of that process right now and I think it has gone very well. Before, SUMA had two boards, an Advisory Board and the Friends of SUMA Board, which was problematic. The solution was merging the resources, moving some people from the Friends Board to the Advisory Board, and then changing the Friends Board into a committee under the umbrella of the Advisory Board which is working very well. I need the board out there building relationships and seeking new funding sources, I don't need them overseeing the day-to-day operations, which is what SUMA had in the beginning.

Once the transition of the board restructuring is complete, then we can start thinking about a strategic plan. That is the big change slated for my second year. Now all those opportunities that were identified in my first six months that needed to be changed but weren't pressing can be formalized through this strategic planning process.

Observations: Both Mack and Farling were able to understand what needed to change in their respective organizations rather quickly. Perhaps this was because they were both new to the organizations and did not have the preconceived notions or revisionist histories influencing decisions. Again, both listened and observed. It is important to do both because perceptions and reality can often be drastically different.

Mack's situation was black and white: USF needed to stop losing money. That was clear, perhaps even from Mack's interview for the job. There was no question: running in the red called for changes in how the money was both earned and spent.

At SUMA, it was not as clear. Being a new museum (though it had evolved from another entity with its own history), the best place to look for opportunities for improvements and course corrections was in the foundational documents, such as the policies and mission. Farling combed through the organizational structure and found those areas to adjust, specifically the board setup. She knew once that foundation was solid, she could shore up and improve the rest of the museum, changing the cognitive structure of the stakeholders.

How receptive has the Board been to the needed changes?

FM: The structure of the board for USF is a little different. It is established by the university as an Advisory Board. Members do not have any fiduciary responsibility to the festival because all fiduciary responsibility lies with the university. The Executive Producer reports directly to the President of SUU, who performs the functions of oversight on behalf of the SUU Board of Trustees and the Utah State Board of Regents.

The board is set forth in policies 13.22 and 13.23, which exist in the official Southern Utah University Policies and Procedures (Southern Utah University, 2018). These policies hadn't been updated in probably ten years, so we are currently in the process of doing those updates. Most of the changes were just cleaning up language and clarifying gray areas, but there were a few substantive changes. For example, we are adding a one-year, ex officio student position on the board. It makes sense to have student representation. It adds a dimension to the board that was badly needed.

As far as I'm aware, there has been no board resistance to any of the changes we have made. Most of the changes make sense, for example the tightening of the budget. It was a large amount of little changes or adjustments that all added up to a gigantic decrease in the budget and the proposing of the deficit I mentioned earlier. We fine-tuned every line item on that budget, and the board understood. The board members see the writing on the wall in terms of the cuts we've had to make and the restructuring we've had to do. So as far as the board goes, they are actually ready for change and ready for USF to get back to full financial health.

JF: First of all, let me reiterate that the board was initially called an Advisory Board, but it did more than just advise. But it wasn't a governing board, either. It was somewhere in the middle. Before the doors were open, we needed people to be really hands-on to even get those doors open. And in the first year, we had to have those people helping to keep the place running. We don't need that anymore. The board itself is being changed and restructured. What is important is getting those people who have been so involved over the past three years or so through the process of change; through the transition.

Usually board members don't have time to be involved in the day-to-day, nor do they want to. But here, they were very involved. I came in to a group of retirees that wanted to fill all their time with SUMA, and they were going to run it all. That was so foreign to me and I knew that if anything had to change, this was a priority.

One thing I noticed immediately was how the structure of the board was not healthy in regard to its board/staff relations. Staff, because they were part-time and/or students, were not valued. Board members were running the show, and without a foundation of empowerment. SUMA is a university-based museum. Since our university's mission lies in experiential learning, we have a unique opportunity to provide these students, both graduate and undergraduate, with the chance to gain

meaningful hands-on experience that can translate to galleries and other non-profit models.

How I approached the board changes, how I framed it, was that roles were changing, but everyone still had a role to play. I think that helped with their reception to change, and I tried, over time, to plant that seed, and water it, so it wasn't as painful as it could have been. We are now approaching the end of our transition. The change is almost complete, and it has been very positive.

Observations: The next phase Mack and Farling went through was to get buy-in regarding the identified changes from everyone in the organization through recognizing assumptions, perceptions, and feelings related to those changes, and to help key players recognize those factors as well. They also ventured into analysis, trying to see the reactions to change from all sides. Recognition and analysis are the first two phases of the cognitive restructuring process.

The board of USF was ready for changes in the financial structure of the organization. Mack did not have to sell the drastic cuts in the budget to the USF Board; they knew these painful changes were necessary.

Farling, on the other hand, had to do a great deal of selling of her ideas for changing the board. A good portion of the changes necessary at SUMA involved the board itself, and she needed to really be diplomatic with each conversation and each relationship. After much strategic maneuvering, Farling has arrived a point where the change has happened with a great deal of support from the newly restructured board, and those who were not supportive have self-selected out of service. It is important to note here that losing team players is absolutely all right. Organizations change, and so do the people involved.

How receptive have other stakeholders been to the needed changes?

FM: When there is a lot of change, there are a lot of questions to answer. And me being hired wasn't the only change. The festival moved into this new, state-of-the-art facility, away from the beloved Adams Theatre. We also moved from two Artistic Directors to one, we had our General Manager move on, we had our Development Director retire, we had to replace our Marketing Director (because she replaced the GM), so there have been a lot of changes in general at USF over the past few years.

There were some people who were concerned about some of the decisions that were being made, like the drastic cutting of the budget, but that is to be expected. There were audience members that were concerned that the festival wouldn't have the same "feel" as it did in the past. The feedback that we have been getting is that the plays are as good as they ever were and there is no change in the artistic quality. As for donors, we did get some pushback on decisions. There are donors that are in the wait-and-see mode, and some that support us fully, and some that have withdrawn support. But those are predictable reactions based on the degree of change we've had. We just deal with it as it comes. We've tried to rebuild relationships and build confidence. I think that is where I spend the majority of my time.

JF: It's all about seeing the big picture and the end goal, and then work backwards from there. So, if there are stakeholders that I need to finesse, I'm not just going to tell them what they want to hear, but I'm not going to blindside them, either. Open and honest communication is the key.

A good example would be the Art Auction. It was a fundraising event the Braithwaite had done in the past, but it didn't get implemented when the transition was made to SUMA. I wanted to try it at least one time to see how it would go, but I suggested we have the event at SUMA rather than the restaurant they had held it in for 20 years. It was like I poisoned them. It was blasphemy. The graduate students here have very strong opinions and great ideas about how we could do it better, and then we have stakeholders who can't see the auction any other way than it has been for the last 20 years. I'm in the middle of that right now. And I've been the staff person telling my director that we really need to push for change, and him not at least try to bring everyone together. He didn't like conflict, he just maintained the status quo. So, I've tried to be a different kind of leader. It just takes time and finesse. It won't come from one meeting. It will come from lunches and visits and conversations, always looking to the big picture. For the 25th annual Art Auction, we will be moving the event location to the museum. I finally had to tell them, "You're just going to have to trust us."

Observations: As to shepherding stakeholders through the transitions necessitated by the changes they both knew needed to happen, Mack and Farling continued to work on the first part of the cognitive restructuring process, recognition. This phase is perhaps the most important since one cannot fix a problem of which one is not aware.

Both also continued into the analysis phase of cognitive restructuring. With the stakeholders, both "learned to describe the change and why it must happen" succinctly (Bridges and Mitchell, 2002, p. 40). Additionally, they were both transparent in the processes leading to change. This increased "the degree to which the change agent the organization members are willing to hear, respond to, and be influenced by one another" (Lunenburg, 2010, p. 4).

How did you manage resistance to the needed changes?

FM: The way to figure that out was the only way I know how, and that is collaborative. I was trained as a theatre director, and what I know is the way we worked in rehearsal, which is everybody sits down and contributes to making the show successful. So actors and designers and crew have to come in with their ideas, their choices, they have to do their homework, and they have to contribute to the creative process. You can't get anywhere in a rehearsal if someone is not willing to explore choices. The only way we make progress creatively in rehearsal is by collaborating. It kind of sounds touchy-feely, but it's hard.

Ultimately, we have to think strategically, or we're all going to fail. Ultimately, you have to get over your obstacle or ego or whatever it is, or the show is going to fail. We

know when it's going to open, and we know the financial universe the show has to live in, but beyond that, we have to solve stuff on our own. I don't know another industry that has a better on-time delivery than ours. Opening night is an unforgiving deadline.

There are certain fallbacks in rehearsal, where you are in a scene and you don't really know what the next step is, you can always tap into basic acting training and think "What does my character want? What is the objective? What are the obstacles that are preventing my character from getting what he wants?" You can always default to that and you're going to make progress creatively, by asking those questions. And the same is true in arts administration.

The worse the situation is, the easier it is to get people to change. When the (financial) circumstances were as dire as they were at the festival, everyone knew that there needed to be change. Again, in a rehearsal, if the scene is dull and boring, you don't have to convince the actors that something needs to change. Everyone can feel it. And everyone at the festival knew that there needed to be change. There was not a constituency that said it needed to stay the same. Running a 1.65-million-dollar deficit over two years is evidence that something is very wrong. We all knew there needed to be cuts, but we also all wanted to make sure those cuts didn't damage the artistic integrity of the shows.

JF: I think I came into a situation where most were ready to change. As far as a search committee and a board goes, in museums, they can see a new director as a sort of savior; they're going to solve all of our problems and they're going to give us a vision. But the goal is to make sure that everyone is on the same page so that the vision and the mission are being fulfilled, no matter who is sitting in the director's chair. So for the most part, I have been very supported and trusted, and I have the right experience that I can bring to SUMA. So usually, if I talk through the resistance, it turns out fine and people understand the need for the change.

It is also important for the director to empower the staff, and I think in the past the staff had not been appreciated or heard as much as they should be. There has been a bit a resistance there to put trust in these students. It gets frustrating when board members are working with staff members and don't have that mutual respect for them because they are students. That is something I have been working on. But how do I fix that? How do I get the board to value and respect these people as professionals, particularly the arts administration graduate students? They know what to do, and they shouldn't have to check with me to do something. And it's just as valid for them to try something new and to fail. Let them learn from that experience.

Observations: Once the assumptions, perceptions, and feelings were recognized, Mack and Farling began to differ when they became fully immersed in the analysis phase of cognitive restructuring. Both treated the resistance which stemmed from the assumptions, perceptions, and feelings discovered in phase one, differently.

Farling worked to uncover the cause behind resistance to the changes needed in the organization. She compromised and negotiated and stuck to her convictions when needed.

Mack, on the other hand, had hard data to back up the need for change and felt that if anyone was resistant to that data, they needed to get over it.

Both ran into several types of biases, including the In-Group Bias (“overestimating the abilities and value of our immediate group at the expense of people we don’t really know”) and the Status-Quo Bias (“the unwarranted assumption that another choice will be inferior of make things worse”), but both were able to manage those biases with communication and transparency (Dvorsky, 2013).

How do you maintain the transition process until the changes are complete?

FM: The first thing that was different was that I was very open. Here was an organization where people were very accustomed to not knowing about the financial operation of the organization. Transparency wasn’t a thing. And I was very transparent in everything. Transparency is a very important objective.

The second thing was staying neutral on everything that had happened before. So I didn’t criticize the people who were there before me, I didn’t praise them either, except to say we wouldn’t be here without them. When it came down to individual decisions they had made, I stayed neutral. And I also knew I couldn’t fairly judge any of that stuff. I wasn’t there.

JF: A lot of it is knowing where the resistance is coming from, and not avoiding or ignoring it. For example, I know a lot of the artists in the community are not happy with SUMA because of misconceptions back at the creation of the museum. Can I ignore that? Sure! Is that the right thing to do? No! Therefore, we’re doing the total opposite by putting together an artist committee, and people who I know are going to say things that I don’t agree with are going to be on that committee. I want to face it head-on. Let’s have a formal way that this can be a discussion. There will be both resistance and buy-in on that committee, but what is past, is past. I wasn’t here when promises were made, and the person that made those promises isn’t here anymore. The conversation needs to keep going.

One of my goals is to be better about knowing what to do in the moment. I can reflect on situations and figure out what happened, but I’d like to be better prepared to address change and resistance and transitions right when it happens. I plan on applying to the Utah Division of Arts and Museums’ Change Leader Program. I also plan on doing some more listening sessions like I did when I started this job. I want to ask about what worked and what didn’t and try to continually improve. If we don’t build in times for reflection, as leaders or staff or boards, then we won’t have a good assessment of where we are as an organization.

Observations: Correction, or the third phase of cognitive restructuring, was also handled differently by both leaders. As mentioned, during the transition stage, or the process to achieve the desired change, leaders need to be advocates, mediators, and facilitators (Stagl, 2011).

Farling was all of these things. She allowed people to go through the transition process much like one experiencing grief: A mourning period for what is being lost, a neutral ground where the individual can sit in that loss and contemplate next steps, and then a period of getting back to work.

Mack treated those in the transition process with the adaptive leadership embodiment of “relentless realism” (Bernstein, 2016, p. 50). He encouraged his staff to solve the problems as a group, ensuring everyone had stock in the change. Farling opted for the more human-centered focus when dealing with transition, while Mack had his eye on the bottom line.

**At the end of your first year, what did you learn (or re-learn)
about managing change?**

FM: I will say that it’s harder now than it was when I first got here. I’m not new anymore, I can’t credibly say “I don’t know anything about that” because I do now. So, it gets harder, but you just have to focus on the things that are going well, on the things that are succeeding, and communicating that. I try to keep the focus on the benefits of all those hard decisions we made in my first year, and how they are propelling us into the future.

JF: This past year has reaffirmed the importance of communication. Not just *that* you communicate with staff, board members, volunteers, community members, but *how* you communicate with them. It helped that I took the same message and tailored depending on the audience. And that communication is a two-way street. I have to be open and willing to listen to our various stakeholders, even if I know I’m not going to like what I hear or agree with them.

Observations: Both Mack and Farling have learned a lot about themselves in the past year. They both recognize that there is still much to do in their respective organizations, and much to learn as leaders. And that, really, is the key to change leadership: knowing yourself and making an effort to know those you lead.

“Being an effective leader begins with understanding yourself. Knowing what motivates you, what your strengths and limitations are and how you respond in different situations all contribute to self confidence as you lead change. Along the same line, understanding and learning about those with whom you interact also contributes to your effectiveness as a leader” (The Utah Division of Arts and Museums, 2018).

It is also interesting to note that both Mack and Farling mentioned the importance of communication. Both had this seemingly obvious bit of knowledge reiterated and validated during their first year of leadership at USF and SUMA.

Conclusion

The change process is very hard for many, but to be able to change is necessary if one wants to succeed. As arts administrators learn to manage change, special care needs to be given to the transition part of the change process, and that care is found in the steps of cognitive restructuring.

The leader must understand what needs changing, manage the resistance created, and help those affected by the change through the transition process. “The advantage of cognitive restructuring is that it fully accounts for not just behavior, but also for thoughts and perceptions. . . . Cognitive restructuring makes us acutely aware of the role of our perceptions in determining our behavior” (Benfari, 2013, p. 35).

The new leaders at the Utah Shakespeare Festival and the Southern Utah Museum of Art were able to enact a great amount of change in their first year. As staff and stakeholders at both organizations become accustomed to the new normal, it will be interesting to see if both leadership styles were the ones needed for their respective organizations. I believe they were.

USF needed a person to put the company back on track financially; a person willing to make the tough (sometimes very painful) decisions that needed to be made. USF needed a person with no ties to the history of the organization, who could scrutinize it from a bottom-line point of view, without any baggage tainting actions taken. The USF staff members and stakeholders were there to speak up for tradition through the change process, but their new leader needed to challenge them with hard facts. I believe they found that person in Frank Mack.

However, while bottom lines are indeed important, so is the human factor. Emotions trump everything when it comes to change, and the key part of cognitive restructuring requires the leader to try to understand what the team members are thinking and feeling. While Mack made some effort to get to know the humans behind the structure and to be transparent with the decisions, there was little finessing when it came to managing resistance to change. Farling, on the other hand, was all about finesse.

SUMA needed a person to shepherd it into its new life as a university museum. With a new and beautiful building, they needed a person to help fill it with both art and organization. SUMA needed someone equipped with museum best practices, with new ideas and energy, and with creativity and practicality, to help guide the organization into its potential. Farling certainly was this person. She has been able to accomplish much cognitive restructuring in her first year through transparency, communication, collaboration, and strategy. SUMA is fortunate to have her.

Comparing two very different types of arts organizations at two very different points on their evolutionary arc might seem folly, yet observing two leadership styles at organizations in the same small town in Southern Utah can perhaps open up the possibilities of what will work in our organizations. What is certain is this: change is inevitable, and arts administrators must learn to navigate those rough waters effectively.

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