



Communicating and Leading for Change and Innovation

Introduction

It's been three weeks since the flood in Brown Trout Bay. The county's emergency operations center (EOC) is still activated, and you are still in charge of the Leadership Team that has been assembled to address this crisis.

The water supply situation has not been resolved, but it has been stabilized. Unfortunately, some of the poorer areas of the city are still struggling with water distribution—which has led to a good deal of negative publicity.

Because of this, the governor decides that the state needs to get involved more directly with the city's response and recovery operations. He has appointed a trusted assistant to co-facilitate the leadership team with you.

As you know, the members of your team have a variety of different communication styles—and some of them might be resistant to changes proposed by the assistant. You will need to use your leadership skills to help enact this change, and to encourage your team to be innovative.

Mayor's Email

You have two emails to read: one from the mayor, and one from the governor's assistant.

From: Mayor Brian Nicollet

Subject: Governor's Assistant to Join Emergency Operations Team

As you know, Governor Nixon is concerned about the negative publicity surrounding the water distribution effort in the city. I want you to know that in my opinion, this negative publicity is unfounded. Under your direction, the Emergency Operations team has done a great job distributing water to Brown Trout Bay residents as quickly as possible. People who do not currently have access to safe water have been given instructions to boil their water. However, the media has somehow translated this into an inaccurate narrative about how residents have been forced to drink unsafe water.

Because of this negative publicity, the governor is taking two steps. First, he is mandating that large water shipments be brought into Brown Trout Bay. Second, he is sending us someone from his office, who is going to co-lead the team with you. Your new co-leader's name is Megan Brock. I don't know much about her, but she's going to be sending you an email shortly.

I know that you're working with a challenging group of people on your team—and you've been doing a great job with them. However, I am certain they're not all going to be happy with these changes that have been mandated by the governor. You're going to need to employ your change management skills to help your team get on board. To do so, I suggest you follow Kotter's Change Model—which I believe you're familiar with?

Best of luck! I know you're up for this organizational challenge.

--Brian

From: Megan Brock, Governor's Assistant

Subject: EOC Team

Hello! My name is Megan Brock, and I'm an assistant to Governor Nixon. As you've probably heard, the governor has assigned me to co-lead your Emergency Operations Team. The governor thinks you've been doing an excellent job, so please don't think this is about your work. Rather, the governor feels the situation requires more direct state involvement, especially in light of negative publicity.

For starters, the governor immediately wants water shipped into Brown Trout Bay. I know that this will be expensive, and that this was not your team's original plan. I'm hoping you'll be able to work with me to get your team on board with this idea.

Additionally, I'm hoping to work with the team to think outside of the box and come up with some innovative ideas for addressing this crisis. I'd like to hold some brainstorming meetings with the team right away. The governor chose me to work with your team in part because innovation is very important to me, and he is hoping I can help facilitate innovation with the group.

Thank you!

--Megan

Kotter's Change Model

Here is Kotter's Model of Change. Use this model as you think about how to work with your team to make the needed changes, which they might resist. These changes are:

1. Accepting Megan Brock, the governor's assistant, as your co-leader.
2. Accepting the governor's mandate to ship water directly into Brown Trout Bay—which was not the team's original plan.
3. Developing a practice of creating innovative solutions together as a team.

Kotter's Model of Change

1. **CREATE URGENCY**

The leader needs to help receivers perceive an untapped opportunity as urgent. They need to believe that maintaining or preserving the status quo could, in short order, find them facing a crisis. Thus, they need to see not changing as more risky than changing.

2. **FORM A POWERFUL COALITION**

The leader needs to identify a team of supporters—a guiding coalition whom others admire and respect—to partner with him or her, sharing leadership, in pursuit of the opportunity.

3. **CREATE A VISION FOR CHANGE**

The leader needs to communicate a vision—one neither complicated nor vague—capable of pushing others forward into the future, one that is very ambitious but at the same time possible to achieve. The vision clarifies the organization's purpose, its values, and its goal.

4. **COMMUNICATE THE VISION**

The leader needs to communicate the vision repeatedly. The leader's message needs to be consistent, delivered through a variety of means, and reach the various groups or stakeholders involved in ways that speak directly to them. Persistence and repetition are essential—it takes time for a message to really get through.

5. **EMPOWER ACTION**

The leader needs to give those involved the power to act and take risks so that they no longer feel powerless—it's about involving the right people in doing the right things.

6. **CREATE QUICK WINS**

The leader needs to plan for and attain reachable goals. Small wins can be huge. In fact, small wins at the

beginning make the big wins at the end easier to get. Wins help the leader create support for change.

7. **BUILD ON THE CHANGE**

The leader needs to emphasize achievements, building on them to yield more change.

8. **MAKE IT STICK:**

Finally, the leader needs to institutionalize progress so that innovation becomes a habit—a continuing process and organizational pursuit.

EOC Team

You should speak to each member of your team about the changes—and think about strategies you might employ to get the team on board with them.

Melanie Cohen

Executive Director of Dodd County Transportation System

I still can't believe that the governor sent someone else to co-lead this team midway through this effort. For one thing, I'm annoyed on your behalf. You've worked so hard at establishing an effective team dynamic, and this is just wrong and unfair. And I don't know how we're going to get her onboarded efficiently. There's so many details in this operation. I'm very concerned that details are going to fall through the cracks.

And this business about sending water directly into Brown Trout Bay? I guess that would have been an okay solution if that's what we had decided upon in the first place. But people on this team had legitimate concerns about this, so we went in another direction, and we've put time and resources into other solutions. And now we're expected to drop everything and start organizing water shipments? That's a very complicated thing to do, for everyone involved in this process. It would be way more efficient to stick with our original plans and make modifications if necessary—but to go in a completely different direction? It gives me a headache just talking about it.

And Megan also wants us to be innovative? We don't have time to be innovative. Especially now that we have to change direction—that's going to take all of our efforts.

Rodney Saunders

Chief Engineer for Dodd County

So the governor's assistant wants us to be innovative? Heck, I can do that. That's what I do for a living. But I don't know about some of the other members of this team. You got people like Brad and Melanie who are way too into following the rules to come up with original ideas. And you got people like Matthew and Lisa who are all touchy-feely. Innovation isn't about coming up with feel-good solutions. It's about coming up with creative solutions based on evidence and reasoning. I don't want this to turn into a bunch of wishy-washy brainstorming sessions.

If Megan wants us to be more innovative, then she needs to form a smaller committee of people on this team who are actually effective innovators. Janice, Sophia... possibly Sebastian.

As for the governor's idea about shipping water directly into the neighborhoods... is there any logic behind that at all? If there is, I'm definitely willing to hear his arguments. Sophia's mad as all get out and thinks he's just doing this because of the bad publicity. And I'm sure that's a possibility, but I'd like to hear his side of the story first. I have to say, though, that I'm pretty skeptical. I haven't seen any evidence that shipping water directly into the neighborhoods is a reasonable solution.

Matthew Chu

Executive Director, Department of Business and Professional Regulation

I think this Megan has some great ideas. I'm all for innovation. Anything we can think of that helps people get the resources they need right now would help. I mean, seriously, the more brainstorming the better. It's just such a shame we have such naysayers on this team. There's no need for me to beat around the bush... it's been very hard for me to work with Brad Nygard, and Melanie hasn't been a picnic to work with either. Everything is rules and regulations with those two. I know they think I'm a total flake, but they don't understand that I'm a success because I've been willing to think outside the box.

As for the governor declaring that we're going to have water shipped into the neighborhoods... well, that's not the way I would have handled things. But what are you going to do? The governor made a decision, and we need to make it work. I don't understand why Sophia and Jenny are getting so upset because that's pointless. We have to work in the here and now. And if people were willing to be innovative, we could figure out ways to make the governor's plan work better.

Sophia Perez

Chief Liaison for the Dodd County Department of Planning

Look, I don't care if the governor wants the state to get involved more directly in this group. But what he's asking for just doesn't make any sense. Sending shipments of water into neighborhoods? We investigated this option at length in our group, and everybody agreed that this option is too expensive and very inefficient. The only reason the governor is going in this direction is because of the negative publicity. Are we going to make emergency management decisions based on logic and evidence, or based on mass hysteria?

Oh, and the governor's aide wants us to come up with more innovative solutions? Normally I'd be up for that, but right now I'm just too mad. We came up with solutions that were already working, and the governor threw them out. So if we come up with new innovative ideas, why should we trust that the governor would actually let us implement them?

Lisa Truman

Director of Dodd County Department of Public Health

I'm very glad to hear that Megan Brock wants us to work in a way that fosters innovation. Teams work better when they're able to solve problems collaboratively—and to me, that's what innovation is all about. It's about drawing on everybody's strengths to come up with the best solutions together.

But I have to say... I'm nervous about the ability of this group to collaborate effectively in an innovative way, especially after these changes. If she's going to get people to be innovative, she has some interpersonal challenges to overcome. People on this team are angry, and frankly, I think they have the right to be. They see the governor's decision to ship water directly into the neighborhoods as a ploy to end negative publicity. I don't know if that's true or not, but from my perspective, it's a pretty top-down decision that doesn't show a lot of respect for the thoughtful decisions we've made in this group. And on top of all that... well, I don't think this is the most innovative group of people, at least not in a traditional sense. You have some very logic-driven people, like Sophia and Rodney, and you have people like Brad who are very rules-driven. It's not that people like that can't be innovative, but a leader needs to find ways to facilitate this. Are you up for that challenge?

Brad Nygard

Administrator, Dodd County Planning Division

So this Megan woman wants us to be innovative? Really? Look, we're an experienced group of professionals, and there are protocols to follow when there's a disaster like this. This is absolutely not the time for innovation. If the governor wants innovative thinking, the time for that is after this disaster is over. Then we can have a "lessons learned" meeting and discuss things we could do better next time. But right now is most certainly not the time for that. That's not in the public's best interests.

And what's this about the governor demanding that water be shipped into Brown Trout Bay? Are we going to get funding and resourcing to make that happen? We've been busy for weeks working out the nitty-gritty of our disaster mitigation. If the governor wants us to change course completely, then he's going to need to provide us with a concrete plan. And don't even get me started on the fact that this is NOT how emergency management is supposed to work in this state...

Sebastian Cardoza

Undersheriff of Dodd County

I'm sorry that the governor sent someone to co-facilitate this group with you. You've done such a good job! And to tell you the truth, I feel sorry for Megan too. That poor woman is walking into a powder keg, and it's not her fault. People are angry that the governor is demanding that water be shipped into neighborhoods.

I'm glad to hear she wants us to be innovative, but I don't see how that's going to happen. Not with this group—even if people weren't so angry already. Maybe people could be innovative if they were working independently, but as a team. Brad and Matthew can barely stand to be in the same room together. Sophia can't stand to be in the same room as anyone. Lisa... she's really nice, but that's the problem—I think people like Sophia and Rodney are distrustful of her because she's such a people person and they're so logical. And I don't even want to know what they think of me.

Janice Keller

Brown Trout Bay Emergency Manager

I don't understand why the governor appointed someone we don't know to co-lead this group. For one thing, you're doing an excellent job. Why complicate things by adding a second leader? Especially considering the complicated interpersonal dynamics of this group. You've put a good deal of effort into helping us work together efficiently. Throwing a new leader into the mix is going to make it that much more difficult for us. I mean, don't get me wrong. I'll do whatever it takes to help Megan out. Believe me, I know how hard it is to be a woman walking into a new leadership role. But if it were up to me, I'd leave things the way they were.

As for Megan's emphasis on innovation... I don't know what to think about that. She represents the governor, and the governor just made a top-down decision to ship water directly to the neighborhoods. So that action doesn't scream "innovation" to me. If we do come up with out-of-the-box ideas, what's going to stop the governor from unilaterally shooting them down? I'm open to brainstorming sessions because in the past, I've seen them lead to good ideas. But brainstorming is time-consuming. I don't want to spend my time doing this unless there's evidence that this could actually lead to something.

Brianne Twyha

Social Worker

"I think a change at this late date may be difficult for all of us, but I'm sure we can make it work. As a group, we put a lot of effort into figuring out how to address this situation. We've found ways for people to get the resources they need – and we worked hard to do this. We'll need to be careful not to get distracted from our mission by getting caught up in interpersonal conflicts.

Politics are a reality and we will need to work with this new player. It is our responsibility to make sure this transition goes smoothly. I'm confident we can make this work. A big part of social work is about building coalitions and advocating for others. Dealing with personal challenges is part of the job. I'm hopeful the innovations she's talking about are in line with the people's needs during this emergency. There isn't time to get sidetracked with extraneous projects. Our goal is to help people get the resources and support they need and we've been making good progress on that."

Conclusion

Congratulations! You have completed the Riverbend City: Communicating and Leading for Change activity. In the courseroom, you will complete an assessment based on this activity.

Below are some reflection questions based on this activity. Answer these questions, and your responses will be saved in your Leadership Profile.

What strategies do you think are most effective at encouraging other people to be innovative? Discuss a time when you employed some of these strategies.

What strategies do you think are most effective when it comes to change management? Discuss a time when you employed some of these strategies.

If you had to remove one individual from this team, who would you remove? Explain why.

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