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## Just Business 5/25/2016

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The winds of change

Posted on May 25, 2016 by Kay Palan

TransitionAs some of you may know, I have accepted the position of dean at the Culverhouse College of Commerce at the University of Alabama and will be moving this summer. I have enjoyed my six years at WMU immensely. The progress we have made has been significant. Of all the things I will miss about WMU, I will miss the people I have worked with the most. The faculty, staff, students and alumni are passionate, engaged, smart, hardworking and caring. They are also extremely committed to the success of this institution, and though I am quite sad to leave the Haworth College of Business, I know that it is in very good hands.

Two things have been on my mind a lot lately: change and transition. Change can be scary; the unknown is just that—unknown—and it is natural for there to be apprehension when change is imminent. However, change can be a very good thing. With change comes the opportunity to infuse new thinking into organizations, to seek better solutions to business issues, to become stronger through people and processes. Change is healthy.

Here are a few things we have been considering that may be of help to you if you are initiating or taking part in an organizational change.

**Accelerating transition:** Organizations must accelerate transitions so new leaders create value quickly. A quick and seamless transition is the goal when leadership changes. Too often, transitions can be lengthy, and organizations can languish in the process. A compact timeline and well-structured onboarding helps a new leader to hit the ground running.

**All change carries challenges:** Internal transitions carry just as many challenges as when a new leader comes in from outside the organization. When someone from an organization takes the reins of that institution, they need to learn their new role and its responsibilities. While an internal person may have an advantage of knowing the organization and aspects of the new role, he or she may have the challenge of moving into a new role while simultaneously helping someone else transition to their former position.

**Support for change:** It is important for the outgoing leader to help make the transition process a positive development. If the outgoing leader supports the new leader, the process is much less stressful and disruptive for everyone. The new leader must also have the personal and leadership characteristics to manage the change.

**Communication is key:** Good communication regarding organizational change is critical. In the absence of reliable information about pending changes, speculation and misinformation can easily

spread throughout a workplace, creating a less-than-ideal setting for new ideas and methods. Clear communication during a transition process and an open-door policy help to create trust and progress.

Be a part of the change: If you are taking part in organizational change, use it as an opportunity to think about how you conduct business and where there is room for improvement. Become a part of the dialog on change in your organization and be a resource for leaders in your area.

Succession=Success: The most effective organizations have succession plans that clearly articulate who is being prepared to assume key roles in an organization, so transitions are planned, successful and carry no “surprises” for the organization.

An excellent team and transition plan are critical to making sure that change is a positive force and does not cause an organization to lose ground. The college is very fortunate to have an excellent administrative team in place, and one of those team members, Dr. Satish Deshpande, is stepping into the role of interim dean to lead the college as a national search for a new dean is conducted. Satish has been at WMU for 20 years. For the last five, he has served as the associate dean for graduate programs and operations, and before that, as professor in the Department of Management, teaching in the area of human resource management. He has also led the college’s strategic planning process and has research emphasis in the area of managerial decision making, among others. He is a frequent expert in the media and has been cited in the Wall Street Journal and USA Today. Before his career in academia, he worked in human resources in the pharmaceutical industry.

He and I have worked together closely for the past five years, and in the past several weeks, we have begun the transition process. He will do a wonderful job as interim dean. He understands the need to have this period be a time of forward motion for the college and of preparation for a new administrator. From here on out, you will hear Satish’s voice and perspective in these posts. I know you will be as impressed as I am with his thought process and leadership. In fact, the bullet points about change and transition in this post come from Satish; change management is part of his background academically and from his work in industry.

As I move to my new institution, I will look forward to watching the continued success of the Haworth College of Business—a college that has been a pleasure to lead and has been so good to me. I thank you all for your support.

This is Kay Palan, signing off.