

Organizational Change in the Heartland of Opportunity

Robert J. Askelson
Chief U.S. Probation Officer
Northern District of Iowa

“IS THIS HEAVEN? It’s Iowa . . . If you build it, he will come.” Do you recall those most notable lines from the popular movie, *Field of Dreams*? A movie about baseball, our nation’s favorite past-time, and for Ray Kinsella, played by Kevin Costner, a rare opportunity of a lifetime, a dream fulfilled, to step back in time and play catch on a ball field with his father.

Reconnecting with some of our past times, fulfilling dreams, taking a historical look at our probation organization’s past leadership and then fast-forwarding to the present with an eye toward transformational change in an organization in the heartland of America is what this article is all about. Imagine people nowadays who believe it is possible to create a better future by reconnecting with the past. John Gardner, author of *On Leadership*, states, “Each generation must rediscover the living elements in its own tradition and adapt them to present realities” (Gardner, 1990:13-14).

In federal probation, we have leaders all around us who long for a better future for our organization, the people who work within it, and the criminal justice clients we endeavor to help so that they may create a better life for themselves. Consequently, this is a story of historic and transformational change within the U.S. Probation Office in the Northern District of Iowa. I will discuss the organizational strengths of the U.S. Probation Office and detail a bold, opportunity-led strategic initiative (e.g., shifting to an evidence-based agency management approach with implementation of evidence-based practices) designed to provide deep change and improvement by adding to and improving upon the bedrock of leadership that was laid by past chiefs in our districts. Additionally, I will discuss the dilemmas, challenges, and some of the daunting choices that lie ahead for the leaders and followers in the U.S. Probation Office, who will plot their own destiny through the journey of

change. Because change can be controversial, the U.S. Probation Office, its leadership, and its people will necessarily need to make some difficult decisions. The future will lead them to a fork in the road and they will need to decide which road to take to best confront the challenges of the 21st century. Will the U.S. Probation Office follow the road that leads down an old paradigm, or will its leadership, when faced with change, choose to take the road that leads down a new paradigm filled with opportunity, risk, and potential success? Unquestionably, it will all come back to leadership when hard choices need to be made.

Here are some of the critical questions that have faced the U.S. Probation Office and its leadership in recent years:

1. Will the organizational structure resemble the traditional hierarchal, bureaucratic

organizational structure or will it be shaped like an entrepreneurial, team-based organizational structure?

2. Will there be a transformation in the paradigms of people and of the organization to a proactive, empowerment-oriented leadership approach?

In essence, the choice for the people in our office was whether to be on the living or dying edge of the organization. It was a choice between maintenance and greatness, caution and courage, dependency and autonomy.

Because it does come back to leadership and leadership would be crucial through this period of change, one must understand the interrelatedness between paradigm shifts and leadership. Joel Barker, a leading author on the power and influence of paradigms, has stated, "You manage within a paradigm. You lead between paradigms" (Barker, 1992:164). A paradigm is a set of rules and regulations (written or unwritten) that: 1) establishes or defines boundaries; and 2) tells you how to behave inside the boundaries in order to be successful. (Barker, 1989:32). In *Paradigms - The Business of Discovering the Future*, Barker explains that leaving one paradigm while it is still successful and going to a new paradigm that is as yet unproven looks very risky. But leaders, with their intuitive judgment, assess the seeming risk, determine that

shifting paradigms is the correct thing to do, and, because they are leaders, instill the courage in others to follow them (Barker, 1992:164).

Organizational Structure - Traditional versus Empowered Organization

In federal probation and pretrial services offices across the country, managers are working with their staffs to restructure the workplace. To meet goals to operate successfully with a limited budget, to increase productivity, to improve work quality, and to make the best use of employee potential, probation staff are transforming their organizational style. Increasingly, the traditional approach in which supervisors control and oversee work is being replaced by team-based approaches in which all employees share responsibilities. Team-based management has radically changed the role of supervisory staff in federal probation and pretrial services. (Alston and Thompson, 1996:83).

In a team-based approach, teams of employees gradually assume increased responsibility for controlling and coordinating their own work. What was once the clearly defined domain of the supervisor, such as quality control functions under the traditional approach to management, became the responsibility of teams. Such a work environment does not devalue supervisors or their skills. Instead, it encourages supervisors to use their skills - and to develop new ones - to help employees work together more effectively (Alston and Thompson, 1996:83).

As teams are empowered and move toward self-management, supervisors continue to provide leadership and motivate employees. Successful transition from a traditional management approach to a team-based approach depends on supervisors' adaptability and willingness to learn new leadership behaviors and on their continued commitment to the mission of the organization. Among the roles they assume are team builder, team trainer, negotiator, mentor, and facilitator for team operations or intra-team communications (Alston and Thompson, 1996: 83). When the line staff and management work toward the same agency goals and collaborate to create vision

and mission statements, their partnership gives the transition process momentum. Most of all, future supervisors in probation will demonstrate leadership to get the job done through others and in the process encourage the independence, commitment, and adaptability of yet another generation of supervisors.

Empowered organizations value autonomy as an end in itself - an end that contributes to personal fulfillment and advances democratic ideas in organizations. In *The Empowered Manager*, Peter Block states, ". . . as managers, our fundamental purpose is to build an organization that we are proud of. Our unit in many ways becomes a living monument to our deepest beliefs in what is possible at work. We strive to create both a high-performing unit and one that treats its own

members and its customers well. Each time we act as a living example of how we want the whole organization to operate, it is a political act” (Block, 1987:7). Block states that the essence of positive political acts is when we each focus on the present and become living examples of the organization we wish to create; at that point the larger change process has begun (Block, 1987:190).

Kimball Fisher, in *Leading Self-Directed Work Teams*, states that our work paradigms are firmly entrenched in our organizational structures and practices. Noted employee involvement expert Richard Walton, for example, identifies the primary difference between managers in traditional organizations and managers in empowered work systems not by their actions, but by their paradigms about management. Walton suggests that most supervisors at all levels of organizations today operate with the “control” rather than the “commitment” paradigm, seeing their job as controlling the workforce through policies and punishment. It is a logical extension of the “Theory X” assumption. However, the successful team leader sees his primary responsibility as engendering the commitment of the workforce rather than eliciting compliance. They do this by teaching, coaching, and leading team members so that the workers’ own self-control can replace the externally imposed controls of traditional supervision (Fisher, 2000:106-107).

Most of us (at least those who can call ourselves “Baby Boomers”) have been influenced by the control management paradigm because it is the most prevalent operating paradigm of management in modern organizations of all kinds. Many of today’s supervisors and managers were raised in families in which parents were bosses who set rules, made the decisions for the family, determined who did which chores, allocated resources, and imposed punishments. Their schools and churches were run in similar ways. Many served in the military and were subjected to heavy doses of control management. Governments created bureaucracies to regulate and enforce national, state, and local laws. In the workplace, there were clear chain-of-command hierarchies with every level of management responsible for the work of those below that level. The old paternalistic, bureaucratic organizations in America were never entrepreneurial. It is not difficult to see that the control paradigm has been so pervasive.

The following table displays the differences between the control management paradigm and the commitment management paradigm described by Kimball Fisher:

Differences Between Management Paradigms

Control Paradigm	Commitment Paradigm
Elicits compliance	Engenders commitment
Believes supervision is necessary	Believes education is necessary
Focuses on hierarchy	Focuses on customers
Biased toward functional organizations	Biased toward cross-functional organizations
Manages by policy	Manages by principle
Favors audit and enforcement processes	Favors learning processes
Believes in selective information sharing	Believes in open information sharing
Emphasis on means	Emphasis on ends
Encourages hard work	Encourages balanced work/personal life
Rewards conservative improvement	Rewards continuous improvement

Organizations characterized by traditional top to bottom authority hierarchies are defined by the fact that the roles of staff members are so circumscribed that most relationships within the organization are both formal and impersonal. In their purest form, they engender a system of one-way communication in which managers tell employees how, when, and what to do (Chavaria, 1994:19).

Managing Change

In Peter Drucker's Foundation of the Future Series, *The Organization of the Future*, Frederick G. Harmon states:

The organizational chart and the policy manual are only representations of the intricate arrangement that shapes the work organization. Behind the chart lies the true organization - the managers and workers, their physical energy and skills, their attitudes, opinions, and values. At the core of the issue lies people's ability to change, their capacity to resist change, and their willingness to adapt (Harmon, 1997:240).

According to Drucker, the purpose of and function of every organization, business and non-business alike, is the integration of specialized knowledge into a common task (Drucker, 1992:96). Federal probation officers are knowledge workers - they apply their knowledge of human behavior to a criminal justice population in order to carry out probation's mission. That mission has to be achieved in an environment that is dynamic, fluid, and non-static. Probation officers do not operate in a vacuum. No two offenders are precisely the same. The rules and laws that govern their work are in continual flux, and public expectations are increasingly more demanding.

Therefore, it is essential that the probation office of the 21st century be organized so that change is encouraged and understood. Drucker states, "For managers the dynamics of knowledge impose one clear imperative: every organization has to build the management of change into its very nature" (Drucker, 1992: 96). The leadership challenge for probation managers is to be able to move between emphasizing tasks and the pressures associated with completing them to emphasizing relations. Simply put, the probation manager needs to do as much listening as talking, show concern for what probation officers do, but more importantly, ask why they do it, and what the job means to them (Chavaria, 1994:19).

Change cannot be managed alone - it requires teamwork. It can be described as a balance-seeking exercise that facilitates the mission of probation within the context of a positive, stimulating work environment. L. Miller, in *Barbarians to Bureaucrats: Corporate Life Cycle Strategies*, referred to the type of manager who strikes a balance as a "synergist." The synergist is the manager "at the fulcrum, sometimes adding weight to one end, sometimes the other, always sensitive, always adjusting to the forces in place . . ." (Miller, 1989:163).

If federal probation is to avoid being characterized as "anachronistic," it must be willing to expand continually the boundaries (its paradigms) of its operational parameters and challenge static answers to evolving problems. Probation managers and leaders must develop the ability to lead by coaching and teaching, rather than by controlling or supervising.

John P. Kotter, a Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership at the Harvard Business School, has watched more than 100 companies in the last decade or so try to remake themselves into significantly better organizations. A few of these corporate change efforts have been very successful. A few have been utter failures. Most, Kotter says, fall somewhere in between, with a distinct tilt toward the lower end of the scale. He says the most general lesson to be learned from the more successful cases is that the change process goes through a series of phases that, in total, usually require a considerable length of time (Kotter, 1995:59). Kotter adds that transformations often begin, and begin well, when an organization has a new head who is a good leader and who sees the need for a major change. He offers the following eight steps to

transforming an organization (Kotter, 1995:61):

Eight Steps to Transforming Your Organization

Step 1: Establish a Sense of Urgency

- Examine market and competitive realities
- Identify and discuss crises, potential crises, or major opportunities

Step 2: Form a Powerful Guiding Coalition

- Assemble a group with enough power to lead the change effort
- Encourage the group to work together as a team

Step 3: Create a Vision

- Create a vision to help direct the change effort
- Develop strategies for achieving that vision

Step 4: Communicate the Vision

- Use every possible way to communicate the vision and strategies
- Teach new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition

Step 5: Empower Others to Act on the Vision

- Get rid of obstacles to change
- Change systems or structures that undermine the vision
- Encourage risk taking and non-traditional ideas, activities, and actions

Step 6: Plan for and Create Short-Term Wins

- Plan for visible performance improvements
- Create those improvements
- Recognize and reward employees involved in the improvements

Step 7: Consolidate Improvements and Produce Still More Change

- Use increased credibility to change systems, structures and policies that don't fit the vision
- Hire, promote, and develop employees who can implement the vision
- Reinvigorate the process with new products, themes, and change agents

Step 8: Institutionalize New Approaches

- Articulate the connections between the new behaviors and success
- Develop the means to ensure leadership development and succession

Leadership

In *Leadership is an Art*, Max DePree defines the art of leadership as “liberating people to do what is required of them in the most effective and human way possible” (DePree, 1989:1). DePree has also found leadership to be a journey and it can be elusive. He states, “Leadership is an art, something to be learned over time, not simply by reading books. Leadership is more tribal than scientific, more a weaving of relationships than an amassing of information, and, in that sense, I don't know how to pin it down in every detail.” (DePree, 1989:3).

The first chief probation officer in our district, Ed Anderson (1946 - 1975), is the foremost storyteller for the history, culture and values of the U.S. Probation Office. Perhaps it's because of Ed's prior employment as an educator and Superintendent of Schools that he is so capable of

teaching us about the history of probation's values, but this writer believes it has more to do with his inner core. His life has been centered on value, honesty, and integrity. These traits cannot be taught, they are inherently a gift from within.

John Gardner, in his book entitled, *On Leadership*, states:

Each generation must rediscover the living elements in its own tradition and adapt them to present realities. To assist in that rediscovery is one of the tasks of leadership. The leaders whom we admire the most help to revitalize our shared beliefs and values. They have spent a portion of their time teaching the value framework (Gardner, 1990:13-14).

It is clear that the majority of us can agree on what we want from our leaders. We want them to have a sense of direction, for as Gardner observes: "To have a sense of where the whole enterprise is going and must go, is, I am inclined to say, the very core and essence of the best leadership" (Gardner, 1990:21). We want leaders to be able to stand before us and confidently express an attractive image of the future, and we must be able to believe that they have the ability to take us there.

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, in *The Leadership Challenge*, write about the striking relationships between what leaders say they do when at their personal best and what followers say they admire and look up to in their leaders. Clearly, the leadership practice of inspiring a common vision involves being forward-looking and inspiring. By challenging the process, leaders enhance the perception that they are dynamic. We trust leaders when their deeds and words match. Trust is a major element of enabling others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 1987:25).

Kouzes and Posner offer the following five fundamental practices that leaders use to get extraordinary things done in organizations:

1. Leaders challenge the process. They search for opportunities to change the status quo. They look for innovative ways to improve the organization. They experiment and take risks.
2. Leaders inspire a shared vision. They passionately believe they can make a difference. They envision the future, creating an ideal and unique image of what the organization can become. Through their strong appeal and quiet persuasion, leaders enlist others in the dream.
3. Leaders enable others to act. They foster collaboration and build spirited teams. They actively involve others. Mutual respect is what sustains extraordinary efforts, so leaders create an atmosphere of trust and human dignity. They strengthen others, making each person feel capable and powerful.
4. Leaders model the way. They establish values about how employees should be treated. They create standards of excellence. They plan small wins to overcome the complexity of change. They unravel bureaucracies and create opportunities for victory.
5. Leaders encourage the heart. They recognize contributions that individuals make to climb to the top. They celebrate accomplishments with employees (Kouzes & Posner, 1987:279-280).

No discussion of leadership would be complete without some comments about succession and leaving a legacy. These have always been very important components in the U.S. Probation Office, and will be in the future. John C. Maxwell, in his book, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, says the Law of Legacy is the one law that the fewest leaders seem to learn. He states, "Achievement comes to someone when he is able to do great things for himself. Success comes when he empowers followers to do great things with him. Significance comes when he develops leaders to do great things for him. But a legacy is created when a person puts his organization into the position to do great things without him" (Maxwell, 1998:221). In other words, a leader will be judged by how well his people and his organization perform after he or she is gone. His or her lasting value will be measured by succession.

Every probation leader should aspire to instill in each officer the desire to challenge persistent

problems and to generate new ideas. Organizational success is a predicate of leadership capable of shaping a vision. As such, federal probation needs leaders committed to channeling the energy created by the vision and prepared to recognize the potential benefits of shared decision-making. They must recognize that change must be built into the organizational structure. If done correctly, probation leaders will instill in employees the skills necessary to ask questions such as, “How well are we doing?” and, more importantly, “How can we do it better?”

Stephen R. Covey had this to say about “shifting your management style.” He stated:

How do we become more effective? I have found that if you want to make slow, incremental improvement, change your attitude or behavior. But, if you want to improve in major ways, — I mean dramatic, revolutionary, transforming ways — if you want to make quantum improvements, either as an individual or an organization, change your frame of reference. Change how you see the world, how you think about people, how you view management and leadership. Change your paradigm, your scheme for understanding and explaining certain aspects of reality. The great breakthroughs are breaks with old ways of thinking (Covey, 1991:173).

For probation leaders to move forward in the 21st century will require a departure from the traditional way of thinking. This writer conceptualizes it as “thinking beyond the whole,” to extend beyond the traditional way of interacting with differing generations of employees, of structuring our organizations, of communicating a vision, and of empowering employees and allowing them to share in the decision-making process. For some, this will constitute a substantial challenge, requiring a willingness to step outside the familiarity and comfort of some old paradigms. This new paradigm in leadership will involve creating a commonly shared vision that encourages everyone in the probation district to continuously improve processes.

Beginning a New Future & Adapting to Present Realities

As chief probation officer, I believe my mission-critical role is to create a better future for our probation district through transformational change in our approach to positively impacting offenders and changing their behavior, and through moving squarely from an old hierarchal organizational structure to a firm foundation in a participatory organizational structure.

When I was named Chief Probation Officer (Designee) in May 2006, I chose to make use of the seven months before I officially took office in January 2007 to prepare the organization for long-term sustainable change. This was an opportunity to anticipate the future and to lead between paradigms. As Joel Barker stated, “. . . Leaders, with their intuitive judgment, assess the seeming risk, determine that shifting paradigms is the correct thing to do and, because they are leaders, instill the courage in others to follow them.” I believed that, however risky it seemed, a break with the old hierarchical organizational structure to a participatory organizational structure was absolutely necessary to build the type of future the probation district and its people longed to become. To me, the staff of the U.S. Probation Office in the Northern District of Iowa were poised for change. I hoped for a future would allow them to become a learning organization and become more fully knowledgeable and engaged in the decisions that affected them. I hoped that we could unlock their intellectual curiosity and move them toward innovation. I hoped that they would find their creative spirit and begin to show it in how they would go about their work. I hoped they would see the value of examining the work processes and improve the workplace along the way. I hoped that each employee would feel valued and challenged to reach his or her highest potential. Finally, I hoped that the employees themselves would be inspired to act to create a work culture of trust, respect, and collaboration that they could be proud of.

A Vision for the Future

Shortly after I was appointed the chief designee and in preparation for the August 2006 district meeting, I determined that we needed to have courageous discourse with our management staff regarding the need for change. I asked the post-conviction supervisors to analyze “key indicator data” on organizational performance that would show what was and what was not working in our district when it came to post-conviction supervision practices. The same request was made of the

presentence supervisors to examine work processes and data. At the district meeting, management team members presented the data to staff in the form of power point presentations and discussion. Statistical data and results were presented on our district's Zero Tolerance Policy (DROPS-Drug Reduction on Probation or Supervised Release), including positive urine screen rates and missed urine screen rates. We also analyzed the historical increase in post-conviction offender supervision caseload numbers, the number of violation reports written, and the amount of funds expended on urine screens and substance abuse treatment, as well as our district's offender unemployment rate. Perhaps this approach, which consisted of showing evidence that indicated where our practices were not in sync with our mission, was perplexing to our staff. However, it was our district's first attempt at examining the raw data and letting it inform us to make better decisions about our work processes. This was also the beginning of our present-day movement or shift toward becoming "outcome-based/results-driven," when we would conduct a critical review and analysis from the data in relation to how it was producing an outcome (desirable or undesirable).

At the conclusion of the district meeting, I began my presentation as chief designee by sharing the following quote from Frances Hesselbein, a 1998 Presidential Medal of Freedom Recipient:

. . . [W]hen we are called to lead – as all effective leaders are – we are leaders of change, not the protectors and perpetrators of a cherished, honored past. Leading the organization of the future in turbulent, tenuous times makes new demands on leaders: banning the hierarchy, building new and inclusive structures and systems that release the energies of our people, challenging the gospel of the status quo, and finding the leadership language that mobilizes our people around mission, innovation, and diversity.

I believe it is important for those called to lead to let those you will be leading know what motivates you, what you value, and what you are passionate about. These new followers will look at you with your new positional power, and they will need to know what they can expect in a new leader. I began my dialogue with our staff with the following outline for our discussion:

- Asking Questions - Who is this New Chief?
- What are my Values and Beliefs about People?
- What are my Beliefs about the Organization?
- What is my VISION for the People and the Probation Organization?
- What is my Leadership Strategy for the Present and Future?

In this meeting, we sought to accomplish at least two objectives. First we, as a staff, would confront and attempt to establish what needed to be changed in our work processes. From a management perspective, we wanted staff to buy into a sense of urgency. Presumably, staff would be convinced with the data and see the urgent need to change to improve our work processes. John Kotter in *The Heart of Change* identifies the single most important message in his book as this: "People change what they do less because they are given analysis that shifts their thinking than because they are shown a truth that influences their feelings" (Kotter, 2002:1).

While we were less than successful through our data presentations, we learned a valuable lesson: "making a business case" with data and deep thinking was not the ticket for staff buy-in. However, all was not lost. I attempted to touch staffs' feelings by showing them what they could put their hearts into and believe in. So that staff could get to know their new chief designee and see a new truth, a different feeling, and vision for the future, a future I hoped they would be inspired to participate in, I began with *My Values and Beliefs about People*. People are undeniably at the heart and spirit of the probation organization and thus they would make or break its future. The Chief Designee's values and beliefs, as communicated to staff through a series of power point slides, are as follows:

- Accept people for who they are
- Never give up on people
- Treat people with dignity and respect

- Have sincere interest in people and in what they think and feel
- Help people become better at what they do
- Believe we all must be given an opportunity to fulfill our “calling” – That’s what truly motivates us
- Believe we can always talk

Next, I introduced *My Beliefs About the Probation Organization* because I felt the staff should know what sort of steward I would profess to be of the organization that they work and live in. Those beliefs are as follows:

- Believe every day is an opportunity to help the organization learn, grow, and move forward
- Believe our organization is poised for collaborative opportunities within and outside our organization that will provide staff with openings to become more actively engaged in the organization
- Believe our organization can make even greater improvements in its work culture
- Believe the organization’s award & recognition program must come alive and show what the organization values in its people
- Believe we must work as “One District” - To become a healthy, smart, and productive probation organization

Dialogue in these areas was intended to evoke emotion in the staff so that they would begin to get a sense that things would change because of the change in leadership. We were on a mission to change their feelings, their thinking, and ultimately, their behavior, into a new way of doing things, based upon the beliefs reflected above and the approaches that support those beliefs.

Steps 3, 4, and 5 of John Kotter’s Eight Steps to Transforming Your Organization deal with Vision. In addition, Kouzes and Posner espouse that one of the five fundamental practices that leaders use to get extraordinary things done in organizations is to “inspire a shared vision.” This was my opportunity to talk with staff and provide them with my view of “the desired future.” According to the publication *Court Manager*, research suggests that vision statements are most effective when they “tell a story” of a new reality - a lucid and detailed preferred future. Effective vision statements elevate and compel action because they are both bold and inspirational, both believable and achievable. My power point slide was titled, *My Vision & Mission Critical Role*, from a new Chief. The Vision statement read:

Stimulate and Create a Sense of Confidence and Responsibility Throughout the Organization so that Staff Will Take Leadership-Like Actions in Pursuit of the Organization’s Mission and Values.

I referred to the Charter for Excellence when making reference to the “Organization’s Mission and Values.” My belief is that every staff member meet the criteria of “leader” if they aspire to make our organization better. Mary Parker Follett - arguably the 21 st century’s most prescient management thinker, made the following point about leadership in her book, *Creative Experience*, first published in 1924. Follet pointed out, “Leadership is not defined by the exercise of power, but by the capacity to increase the sense of power among those who are led. The most essential work of the leader is to create more leaders” (Hamel, 2007:186). It is about the little things that each of our staff could do every day to positively influence each other, offenders and defendants, and our communities. These “leadership-like actions” multiplied over time, would create a new and better future for our probation organization; in turn, this improved probation organization would positively impact the lives of the people under our responsibility. And, we would learn that you don’t need a “title” to be a leader. We learned from retired Chief Ed Anderson that the offenders he supervised looked at him as another human being who was willing to give of himself to help them become better citizens, and he did not need a title to do so.

To model the way as the new probation chief, I realized that staff deserved to know how I would impact the workplace, what standards for excellence I would champion, and how I would

encourage their hearts and minds. I shared with staff *My Five Leadership Strategies for the Future*, as follows:

Strategy No. 1 - Communication and Recognition

- We must be patient and listen to staff
- We must give staff optimism and positive feedback and listen some more
- We must express our pride and gratitude for the hard work done by staff day-in and day-out

Strategy No. 2 – Vision-Driven Action

- We must be as inclusive as possible to spread the positive effects of small wins that support the vision and change
- We must create opportunities for staff to rehear and relearn the vision and be actively involved; for example, through work groups, committees and team-focused projects
- We will fund programs and projects that support the vision

Strategy No. 3 - Changeability

- We will remind staff of the many changes they have weathered in the past and credit them for getting through the tough times
- We will show staff their strengths and communicate confidence in their ability and skill to deal with change

Strategy No. 4 - Culture of Independence

- We must break the culture of “control” and its stranglehold on creativity
- We must liberate people to discuss, debate and decide
- We must give staff “running room” to show what they can think and do
- We must strive for and accomplish changing the traditional face of our management structure and its implemented ideology
- We must ask and look for new and diverse ideas and those willing to share them and risk acting on them

Strategy No. 5 - Managing Intelligently

- Gather key indicator data on organizational performance
- Analyze the data to assess desired outcomes

For example: How well are we delivering service to the courts? To the public? To the people under our charge?

- Communicate/share key indicator & mission-critical data with judges and probation staff
- Consistently use this data to make decisions and to improve organizational performance

I concluded my presentation with the following quote by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus:

A vision cannot be established in an organization by edict, or by the exercise of power or coercion. It is more an act of persuasion, of creating an enthusiastic and dedicated commitment to a vision because it is right for the times, right for the organization, and right for the people who are working in it.

This was a golden opportunity to begin working toward a breakthrough regarding the old ways of thinking and change our organization’s frame of reference, to set the stage for quantum improvements in our organization in transforming ways.

A Strategic Initiative for Organizational Change

Our probation organization has been challenged to change in a way for which it has no

precedent. Consequently, we have tried to change ahead of the curve so that we could be positioned for the future. (I refer to this as seeing things out there, and although we are not there yet, we go there and work from there.) That is why, in the fall of 2006, when our management team was getting ready for a change in chief probation officer, we contacted leadership staff in the Office of Probation and Pretrial Services (OPPS) to seek counsel and agreement with our wishes to proceed with exploring the implementation of evidence-based principles of supervision in our probation district. In the months preceding this contact, we had discussions with our counterparts with the Sixth Judicial District of Department of Correctional Services in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, about their experiences and lessons learned from working toward implementation of evidence-based practices since the early 1990s. We learned from OPPS staff that grant funds under a pilot project called Research to Results (R2R) would be made available to districts that wished to apply for the same. We continued to chart an aggressive course toward learning about evidence-based practices and what it would take to implement them in our district. Eventually, on January 8, 2007, we submitted our first-year R2R grant application to OPPS. A second-year R2R grant application was submitted on November 20, 2007. Funding was approved in each year of application.

A Chief Probation Officer's Perspective on Research to Results (R2R)

How has the implementation of evidence-based practices affected organizational change?

Our rationale for moving forward with this R2R project was to improve supervision effectiveness and enhance the safety of the communities in the Northern District of Iowa. For those reasons, we embraced "Evidence-Based Principles" of supervision – principles that have been scientifically proven to reduce offender risk and recidivism. Simply put: Evidence-Based Practices is Research Informing Practice. Research shows that punishment alone does not reduce offender recidivism and can actually increase recidivism. However, punishment coupled with programming matched to an offender's needs has been shown to reduce recidivism.

We recognized that implementation of evidence-based practices would mean changes in the way we do business and would require us, as practitioners, to change as well. In addition, we recognized that maintaining public safety with a larger population of offenders is a difficult enterprise for any probation organization. This is particularly true when probation offices are operating in an increasingly more complex work environment, an environment that requires more momentum and efficiency, in an era of limited financial resources and cost-containment. These driving forces would require us to rethink how we could do business in the future and lead our probation organization through rapid change. Change was needed as we acknowledged that traditional methods of offender supervision would not meet the challenges facing federal probation now and in the future.

We have followed *An Integrated Model for Implementing Effective Correctional Management of Offenders in the Community*. This model emphasizes an equal focus on evidence-based principles (content), organizational development (internal strategy), and collaboration (external strategy). Each of these three components is essential for an integrated model for system reform. We have also developed our own model for change based upon the Integrated Model.

After nearly 18 months since we began our R2R journey, we have just recently reached the threshold of being able to organizationally implement evidence-based principles of supervision into our professional practice. This is an exciting time and what a journey it has been, thus far. We have a long road ahead of us, but our staff recognize and appreciate the

benefits for our criminal justice clients in making this journey. This journey has transformed our staff and our organization. We recognized that we needed to make dramatic changes in ourselves before we could begin to change the behavior of our clients.

During this journey, we worked tirelessly on staff "buy-in." One might say we launched an all-out assault on the status quo. We brought staff into the process to see how decisions were made and the complexities behind them. We called upon the nine senior officers in our organization to

help us with “warming” other staff to the process of change. We took aggressive steps to free supervision officers from some of the bureaucracy of their workload and put some of those mundane tasks in the hands of technicians hired under the grant funding process. This strategy of teaming officers with technicians was aimed at leveraging the ability of our supervision officers to work with criminal justice clients in the field and concentrate on helping their clients change their behavior and meet their commitments. We have also “teamed” with our judicial officers to gain their support of this R2R strategic initiative. Our judicial officers have been continually updated on the progress of our district’s ongoing R2R implementation efforts. In August 2007, both of our active district court judges and our new magistrate judge attended a two-day training seminar on our Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment program with our supervision officers and staff from our seven treatment providers, Bureau of Prisons North Central Regional Office staff, and the national trainer from the Courage to Change Companies.

Performance measurement of staff was altered to ensure officers were utilizing the risk/needs assessment tool to develop strategies and goals with the case plan. Our Performance Appraisal System was modified to include critical elements of evidence-based delivery provisions, including the use of motivational interviewing techniques. We modified our officer vacancy announcements to include evidence-based training and facilitation experience as a preferred skill for new officer hires. Subsequently, we were fortunate to hire three officers (one from Minnesota and two from Iowa) who had been trained in specific evidence-based programs. We introduced quality assurance into our Supervisor Case Plan Review process to help supervisors critically examine the fidelity of evidence-based principles in each case. All the while, we trained our staff and collaborated with our partners in transforming the way we provide supervision to our post-conviction caseload of 650 offenders.

Along the way, we developed a written District Culture Action Plan. This Plan was created at the Executive Team Seminar held at the Federal Judicial Center in early May 2007. The Goal of the Plan is: *Become an Outcome-Based/Results-Driven Probation Organization Through Continuous Improvement and Embracement of Evidence-Based Practices*. Our Plan is focused on improving our organizational culture through involving our staff in creating a changed work environment. Simply put: We refuse to be prisoners of our own paradigm. When the future of federal probation can be changed for the better through research informing our practice, we intend to move full steam ahead. Our words must be followed by actions so that our staff see the results of what we action plan. The workforce of today needs this more than the worker of yesteryear. We are all knowledge workers and, more than anything else, probation staff are doers. They get the job done. The work can definitely be more fulfilling for our staff when we positively impact the lives of our criminal justice clients. Our integration of evidence-based principles and the tools of science will have the effect of creating an environment where federal probation officers think and see themselves as being more like professional probation practitioners.

The implementation of Evidence-Based Practices in our probation district is in alignment with federal probation’s *Charter for Excellence*, which emphasizes becoming a system that is “outcome driven,” striving “to make our communities safer while also making a difference in the lives of those we serve,” and by “. . . positively impacting the community and the lives of victims, defendants, and offenders.”

The engagement of our staff in workgroups formed on February 1, 2007, has been an integral component of our evidence-based principle implementation success. Our staff have risen to the occasion and have learned much since we began this journey. During a two-day workshop in April, our supervision officers teamed up to conduct peer-to-peer training on the core elements of *Monograph 109 - The Supervision of Federal Offenders*, as well as on the implementation of motivational interviewing, the Courage to Change Cognitive-Behavioral Interactive Journaling Process and our Supervision Case Flow Process. The results from this training are the strongest evidence to date that our staff are ready and able to effectively implement evidence-based principles of supervision. They are united as a learning organization and are ready to move forward with implementation.

The following chart reflects a before and after snapshot of how implementation of evidence-based practices has affected organizational change in the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Office for the Northern District of Iowa.

Organizational Development and Change

Become an Outcome-Based/Results-Driven Probation Organization Through Continuous Improvement and Embrace of Evidence-Based Practices

Iowa Northern Probation and Pretrial Services

Before R2R Implementation	After R2R Implementation
Organization “coasting” - No precedent for change	Organization awakened - Given new life
No plan or direction in place for challenging or changing the “status quo” - the “way we have always done it”	Desired District Culture Action Plan with a goal, objectives, strategy, action steps and target dates to create change & improve how we do business
Minimal coordinated effort toward data quality - single data quality coordinator - marginal data coordination or quality assurance	Establishment of Data Quality Team (wide staff involvement approach) with emphasis on improvement of data and “blend” with R2R
Staff lacking knowledge about the causes of crime and offender recidivism - not cognizant of research studies on recidivism	A learning organization full of questions and curiosity - Unlocking of staffs’ intellectual curiosity and creativity
Staff hungry to communicate ideas and be creative	Ideas welcomed and tried out to improve programs
Organization bound by and stagnated in processes and paper	Going paperless and using technology to our advantage - document imaging, mobile computing, redundancy elimination
Managing offender behavior with compliance-driven approach	Changing offender behavior with commitment- engendering approach
Staff input “stalled” or lacking energy - The old attitude “No one is interested in hearing what I think” prevailed	Staff revitalized, opportunities abound to delegate improvement projects and tasks to staff, staff input seen and realized
Staff not exposed to change - no resistance - things stay the same	Change happens - staff resist - staff excel at winning over change
Operational decisions not well-grounded or informed by data	Data informs and supports decision-making
Staff working in the “singular” context	Workgroups and teams established - collective thinking with greater collaboration within the organization
Minimal peer to peer training or coaching	Peer to peer influence strengthened through coaching and training
District did not collaborate or partner with OPPS or state counterparts - district lacked identity	R2R collaboration with OPPS and Iowa Judicial Districts of Correctional Services - District identified as committed to improvement, research and positive change

Charter for Excellence - A less-recognized document	Charter for Excellence given new relevance & meaningful relationship to mission, values, outcomes, achieving results
Work environment in need of revitalization & improvement	Work environment much improved - staff more productive, satisfied and recognized
Employee Award & Recognition Policy non-existent	Employee Award & Recognition Policy established with clear ties to recognizing staff for continuous improvement & EBP accomplishments
Officers hired with no EBP knowledge or experience	Officer vacancy notices include EBP knowledge/experience as "preferred skills" - officers hired with EBP knowledge, program facilitation skills and experience
No performance management program in place - written appraisals not done	Performance Management Program active - written appraisals - officers appraised with EBP principles (MI, CBT Referrals, Case Planning)
Probation practice - A profession with practices based on "traditional" methods	Probation practice - A profession with practices supported by scientific evidence - "What Works"

Conclusion

The process of change has been a renewal of ourselves and our probation organization. Our staff have shown great courage and determination. They have embraced the management of change so that it could be built into the very nature of the organization. Staff stepped outside of the familiarity and comfort of an old paradigm and into a new paradigm, one filled with promise and potential. Our probation organization has become a place of realized potential that continues to offer opportunities for our staff to learn and grow. Indeed, the future of our staff, our probation organization, and federal probation is very bright.

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