

**Southern Association of College and University Business Officers
Best Practice Submission**

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Abstract

North Carolina State University is a state supported university. Currently, the state of North Carolina is experiencing a \$900 million shortfall due to a fall in revenue from key state taxes.

Therefore, NCSU Training Services had to consider the following business constraints as part of strategic planning to support and service our customer base:

- ❑ *The University experienced a five percent budget cut in May 2002*
- ❑ *Our customers were experiencing reduction in force (RIF)*
- ❑ *Within the University, expectations were to increase efficiencies and effectiveness wherever possible*

Due to these economic constraints, our unit had three strategic questions to answer:

- 1. How could our group reduce internal costs for printing, publishing, and mailing a critical resource to our customer base?*
- 2. What products and services could our unit offer to support the critical skills and knowledge our customers needed to be effective and efficient over the next 12 – 18 months?*
- 3. How could our unit capture a new target market in a time of downsizing?*

As a result, HR Training Services created a new curriculum founded upon a new competency, “Business Acumen,” with which to support business efficiency, created a certification program to support effective people management skills, and saved \$4100. The curriculum contains three new decision-making tools to ensure customer return on investment (time/money) when making training purchases.

Introduction of the Organization

North Carolina State University (NCSU) was founded March 7, 1887 to provide education and encourage economic development in agriculture and engineering.

Located in North Carolina's capital city, Raleigh, NCSU anchors one corner of the Research Triangle Park, which is home to more than 140 organizations dedicated to innovative research and development.

NCSU is managed under the leadership of Chancellor Marye Anne Fox, and has 10 colleges with more than 2,700 faculty and academic personnel, and a staff of approximately 3,500.

NCSU is the largest university in the state with more than 28,000 students from 50 states and 90 countries. The University offers 5,200 degrees in more than 100 fields of study and has 55 research centers.

The mission of the University is to serve students and the people of North Carolina as a doctoral/research-extensive, land-grant university. The University has three strategic goals:

- Building a diverse and inclusive campus community, fostering demographic and intellectual diversity
- Fostering new partnerships, both internally and externally
- Adopting a new business model that embraces efficiency and accountability

Training Services is a unit within the division of Human Resources. The mission of Training Services is to provide high-quality learning solutions and customized services to enhance organizational effectiveness. The unit addresses this mission by assessing, designing, and implementing departmental/work team/individual learning opportunities, which meet the specific needs of our customers.

Training Services operates on a six month, or semester, schedule. Products and services are offered in Fall (August to December) and Spring (January to June) and a development guide outlining Training Services' products and services is published each semester.

The unit's customer base is large, approximately 7,000 people, and diverse in that it includes housekeeping and groundskeepers to program directors and senior administrators. In addition, the diversity of education levels and English as a second language are two prominent issues within our customer base. Our key customer segments and markets include:

- College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS)
- College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHASS)
- Facilities Operations
- Finance and Business
- University Libraries
- Veterinary Teaching Hospital (VTH)

The Training Services unit has a staff of six and is under the leadership of the Director of Employee Relations and Training. The staff of HR Training Services is shown below.

Role	Description
Assistant Director	1 full-time; Bachelor's in Business, Master's degree Adult Education
Staff Development Specialist	1 full-time, 2 part-time; Bachelor's degrees and Master's in Public Administration
Program Coordinators	2 full-time
Adjunct Faculty	21 full-time and part-time employees across the University with subject matter expertise; who facilitate policy and administrative courses.

Human Resources Training Services' key products and services are described in the table that follows.

Key Products / Services	Description
PATHWAYS	A certificate program focusing on leadership development through completion of 18 courses related to individual and departmental goals.
Supervisory Development Series	A certificate program focusing on 14 federal, state, and University policies and guidelines related to people management
Key Products / Services	Description
Open Enrollment Curriculum	50 courses focused on self-development, HR policy, and wellness
Computer Curriculum	22 courses focused on development of computer

	literacy from email basics to web page development
Survey Design Services	Survey design services to develop surveys to measure employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, and departmental effectiveness.
Customized Solutions	Design and facilitation of customized learning solutions and interventions for teams and departments.

Statement of the Problem or Initiative

In March 2002, the state of North Carolina experienced a \$900 million shortfall due to a fall in revenue from key state taxes. This state revenue shortfall resulted in a five percent budget cut for the University at a cost of \$17.9 million. University budget cuts also required a five percent reduction in force (RIF).

The table below outlines some key effects we predicted the budget cuts would have on customers and our unit.

Customer	Training Services
Reduced training budgets	Reduced operating budget required more effective use of all resources
Reductions in force resulting in learning and development as a lower business priority	Loss of appropriated monies from General Assembly
Needed tools to make appropriate buying decisions using limited budgets available.	Fewer customers attending open enrollment training and requesting customized learning solutions.

When budget cuts were made in March 2002, our first step was to review our three operating budgets to determine the scope of the impact on our business.

Our first step was to analyze our existing curriculum by using variety of management and decision-making tools including:

- Affinity Diagrams
- Nominal Group Technique
- Cause and Effect Diagrams

To analyze our existing curriculum, we used the following data and information:

- Employee Relations data
- Level-one and level-two participant evaluation data
- University, HR, and Training Services strategic plans
- Competency models from American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) and Center for Creative Leadership (CCL)
- Program and course descriptions

As a result of analyzing the above data, we determined the following:

- Our primary customers were employees and first-line supervisors and these customers attended multiple courses. However, managers, senior managers, and administrators did not perceive Training Services as a resource for their own development needs.
- Senior managers needed a learning track to develop the interpersonal skills needed to effectively develop teams and manage individuals.
- The culture of the University was that attending training equated to learning.
- Customers were being sent to training without a clear understanding of what they should and would learn, and how learning would be applied back at their job.

Training tracks or development paths did not exist to help customers link training to learning.

- The University does not have competency models upon which to base development paths, curriculum design, or course offerings.
- Training services had to provide the direction for education and learning because course descriptions alone did not offer enough information for our customers.
- Business acumen had to become part of the curriculum as ethics and integrity were at the core of many ER issues.
- Courses making up certification programs and open enrollment curriculum were “nice to have” but were not linked to the overall strategy of the University. Examples included: Humor In The Workplace, Memory Improvement, and Self-Confidence.
- Courses were heavily knowledge-based but few offered true skill-building opportunities necessary for cultural and organizational change, which was the focus of Training Services’ mission.
- Staff salaries were being used to manage wellness programs such as Weight Watchers, Red Cross CPR, and Self Defense. Wellness programs were also not part of core competence of training unit.

As a result of the analysis, the following decisions were made:

- Created a new certification program called, “Performance Leadership,” focused on interpersonal skills and targeted to senior managers and administrators
- Segmented our customer base into four distinct segments with specific needs
- Created a “Customer/Product Matrix” to identify which classes were designed to met the learning needs of a particular customer segment

- Created and defined six “pillars” to support the University strategy, including a Business Acumen pillar. Showed all courses, which related to a particular pillar therefore allowing managers and employees to develop in-depth expertise in a particular area of knowledge and skill.
- Archived 13 classes from existing curriculum
- Designed nine new classes to support the new curriculum
- Redesigned 11 classes to enhance depth of content and enhance skill building
- Wrote measurable learning objectives for every course to enable customer decision-making and evaluation of programs to Level 3, or behavioral change.
- To offer English as a Second Language course descriptions in Spanish to accommodate the University’s growing Latino population.

As a result of the above decisions, we determined the University needed a development guide that reflected its new direction of learning and education. That guide, “The Compass – Plot Your Course”, was designed using instructional system design methodology to create measurable and behavioral-based learning objectives for each course. This allows our customers – managers and employees – to make better buying decisions for training and learning.

In the past, managers selected courses based on what was offered, without the benefit of a guide that provided an organized, competency and skill-based approach to staff development. This is an important change because managers with a limited budget need to know how to make the most effective use of their training dollars. It means their staff will develop usable, transferable skills, not just classroom knowledge and that their staff will develop the skills needed to implement departmental goals and objectives in support of the University’s strategy.

One overriding constraint in implementing The Compass was budget cuts. In past years, Training Services budgeted approximately \$2200 a semester to publish its development guide. However, due to budget cuts, we had no funds with which to print and publish this key University resource or to hire temporary help to mail the resource to campus. In

addition, we had no funds to hire contractors or temps to help with the curriculum and course design, which was integral to the project.

Therefore, we made the decision to format The Compass using Adobe Acrobat. We decided to “publish” the document by electronically mailing it to our key customer groups, loyal customers, and posting the document on Training Services’ web site. This decision had many benefits including:

- A total cost savings of approximately \$4600 dollars which included printing costs and staff hours to develop and revise a blue line version for printing
- The flexibility to update The Compass with additional information or changes as needed. This meant our customers would have the most current information on the availability of our products and services.
- Reduced the amount of paper needed to print this key resource. Each semester, 1500 copies of this typically 26-page document were printed and mailed to campus. Therefore we were able to eliminate 78,000 pieces of paper from being used.
- Increased the ease of use for our customers to access The Compass. They could access the most current copy of The Compass at their desktop.

Implementation

The staff of Training Services met to create an overall project timeline for The Compass. Using the publication date of August 15, 2002, we created a Tree Diagram to identify the key tasks and sequence of tasks, which would enable deployment of The Compass to our customer base for Fall semester 2002.

To prepare the Staff Development Specialists, the Assistant Director of Training Services designed and facilitated skill-building workshops to teach key technical skills needed to complete the design portion of the project. These key skills included Instructional Systems Design (ISD) methodology, Adult Learning Theory, and Bloom's Taxonomy. In addition, the staff learned key business concepts related to the marketing and selling of training and educational products in order to communicate and market The Compass to our customer base.

First, we had to design 11 new classes. We decided the designer of the course would also become the facilitator of the course. Having designers facilitate the courses they designed would save valuable time for other facilitators to prepare to teach the courses.

In order to determine the most appropriate staff member to design the course, the Assistant Director interviewed the staff to identify:

- Areas of subject-matter expertise and experience.
- Course currently in their repertoire and their comfort level in teaching those courses.
- Areas of personal interest for individual and career development.

Once the most appropriate staff member was determined, design assignments were made to the Assistant Director and each of the Staff Development Specialists. Then, to manage the workload, we determined when the new classes would be introduced into the

curriculum. Some new courses were scheduled for introduction in Fall semester, and others were scheduled for Spring semester.

Because many people were involved, criteria were set for the design and redesign work, in order to ensure consistency in the work. These criteria included:

- Writing behavioral-based and measurable learning objectives.
- Creating a business case as part of the learning objectives.
- Determining course length needed to teach skill.
- Identifying instructional methodologies to support training back on the job.
- Identifying necessary prerequisites for each course or program.
- Identifying target audience for the course.
- Writing a course description with which to market the course to campus.
- Creating a resource list for participants to “learn more about it” and ensure all resources are available through University Libraries or via the World Wide Web.

Peer reviews were used to write and edit the final course descriptions and learning objectives. Once all course descriptions and learning objectives were written, they were given to the Program Coordinator for formatting into The Compass document.

While design work was being completed, there was much concurrent work being completed. This included:

- Creating a “Customer/Product Matrix.” The matrix would be a key tool with which customers would make buying decisions. The matrix shows which courses are targeted for which of the four customer segments we identified for our business.
- Designing, at a high level, a new certification program targeted to senior managers and administrators. This high-level design was presented to Human Resources’ Director and Vice-Chancellor for consideration and approval.

- Creating six “pillars” or competencies, upon which the curriculum would be based. Each pillar was defined, and the courses that supported the pillar were listed. This approach allows managers and staff to identify in-depth expertise in a particular area of knowledge and skill.
- Facilitating adjunct faculty meetings to announce The Compass, the new curriculum and to revise course descriptions and learning objectives for policy and administrative courses.
- Translating course descriptions related to English as a Second Language courses into Spanish.
- Partnering with faculty of College of Adult and Community College Education to recruit Training and Development graduate students for help with course design and delivery. Graduate students had the subject matter expertise to complete the work and after negotiating with faculty, graduate students were given course credits for their project work.
- Designing and implementing “Compass Road Shows” with which to meet with key customer groups and communicate changes. Road Shows and other communications were targeted to the following groups:
 - Deans, Department Heads, and Administrators of key customer segments and markets
 - Staff Senate
 - Personnel Connections
 - Loyal customers including participants of leadership and supervisory certification programs

If other Training functions were to implement this best practice, they would want to ensure their staff had a level of technical expertise in instructional design to complete this project. In addition, their staff would need project management skills, analysis skills, decision-making skills, and marketing knowledge. Finally, depending upon the scope of their portfolio, other Training functions would need to ensure they had enough human

resources available to complete the project internally or the option to hire external consultants to complete the work.

Benefits

One of key strategies for University is to create internal and external partnerships. In the course of this project, we created some important relationships including:

- Partnering with faculty of College of Adult and Community College Education to solicit help of Training and Development graduate students for help with course delivery/design.
- Partnering with 21 adjunct faculty members from offices and departments within the University to create learning objectives, strengthen content of courses, and enhance facilitation techniques.
- Partnering with Industrial Extension Service for course materials to support courses within the Business Acumen pillar.
- Partnering with private industry to supply subject-matter experts to facilitate training.

Once first edition of The Compass was published, we were approached by other Universities and state agencies that wanted to benchmark our work, including:

- Office of State Personnel
- Winston Salem State University
- University of Cincinnati
- Washington State University

Due to the creation of measurable learning objectives, Training Services is able to measure the effectiveness of our classes at level two, skills and knowledge learned, and level three, transfer of learning to the job. This data is important to our customers because they are able to determine an individual's or a team's effectiveness in the workplace. However, the data is important to Training Services as we can assess our effectiveness in supporting departmental and organizational effectiveness.

The creation of the certification program, “Performance Leadership,” has created a new customer market for Training Services. Formerly, our primary customer was a first line supervisor. However, in Spring 2003, we will offer our new certification program to 18 Program Directors, Directors, and Assistant Directors.

From the analysis of our curriculum, we determined the program, “Supervisory Development Series,” must be a pre-requisite to the Performance Leadership program as managers need to learn federal, state, and University policies integral to their jobs. For Spring 2003, we have filled the available seats for the supervisory series with Directors, and Assistant Directors. This tells us that customers understand, and agree with, the development “tracks” we have created to enhance their learning.

Finally, we have received numerous letters, e-mail messages, and face-to-face comments from our customers regarding The Compass and our new curriculum. Customers told us the format of our curriculum was positively improved and tools such as the Product/Customer Matrix and the Pillars, allowed them to make better decisions about what classes mapped to their development needs.

In addition, customers have been delighted with two courses within the Business Acumen pillar, “Process Flowcharting,” and “Management and Planning Tools” and one course within the Managing People pillar, “Interpersonal Communication.” Customers believe the skills and knowledge offered in these courses are integral to meeting the University strategic goal of efficiency and accountability.

Customers have also commented positively on the professionalism of the Training Services unit. Customers’ perceptions tell us the business model with which we operate is a welcome change. In addition, this business model has created a positive shift in the morale of the Training Services staff. The staff perceives the work they are doing and the portfolio of products and services featured in The Compass is forward looking, dynamic, and complements the overall University strategy.