# How the City of Tempe is Aligning Top Priorities through People, Strategy and Operations



by Gretchen Maynard, OD Administrator, Tempe Learning Center, Tempe, AZ

Recently Karen Thoreson, President/Chief Operating Officer for the Alliance for Innovation, posed this question to the City of Tempe: how far along is the staff in aligning the (City Council's) priorities with the staff work and ultimate performance?

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# We'll step back to answer Karen's question:

During 2007 the City of Tempe began developing a process to align the work that we do to fulfill our purpose of *creating outstanding value for those we serve through shared visioning, superior service and sustainable practices.* This meant finding ways to transform our well-intended strategic priorities into team-focused high performance in getting the most important things done.

To achieve high performance requires learning how to convert organizational strategy from a static record into disciplined action that achieves "wildly important" goals. The intrinsic benefit of high performance accelerates team leadership behaviors which, over time, become "hard-wired" into the very DNA of our organizational culture. Tempe has branded this process of socializing high performance as LDP, for Leadership Development Program. LDP is laying the necessary groundwork for where we are today – poised to execute the Tempe City Council's 11 Strategic Priorities, with excellence!

### **STRATEGY: Clarify Organizational Purpose:**

Tempe City Manager Charlie Meyer kicked off the LDP process by inviting the workforce to help crystallize our organizational purpose by crafting a purpose statement that defines why we exist in clear, concise language. *Tempe creates outstanding value for those we serve through shared vision, superior service and sustainable practices*. Organizational alignment began to take shape as departments, offices, divisions and individual teams created purpose statements that directly link to our organizational purpose.

# PEOPLE: Building Knowledge-age Leadership:

The formal learning component of LDP focuses on developing a knowledge-age leadership and continuous improvement. Knowledge-age organizations value people as their most valued resources. They know that only people can unlock innovation, continuous learning and improvement.

### **Paradigm Shift**

Our leaders are adopting the knowledge-age leadership approach by engaging workers in strategic dialogue and unleashing their unique strengths, contributions and talents in achieving top priorities. Teams are being unleashed to become the solution through positive, team-

oriented management and proactive accountability. That's the behavioral "secret sauce" in the Leadership Development Program. Another secret is the ongoing design and implementation of <u>simple, elegant processes</u> that are being developed throughout the organization, pushing positive accountability and continuous, creative improvement.

#### **OPERATION:**

# **Building Strategic Awareness and the Ability to Execute:**

Tempe teams are learning the Four Disciplines of Execution operating system that teaches them how to develop measurable goals, act on lead measures, create scoreboards to track and measure their performance, and conduct weekly team accountability sessions that keep everyone focused on what's most important. Some team successes so far include:

# **Public Works, Water Utilities Division**

Water Utilities was our pilot group. During a four-month implementation process in 2010, the Water team reduced water utility rates by 9.7 percent and achieved their wildly important goal of *Achieving the lowest median-customer combine water/sewer bill of the seven metro-area cities Tempe compares with by FY 11/12*. This year, Water Utilities achieved the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies' 2011 Platinum Award for Utility Excellence.

# **Community Relations / Customer Relations Center (311)**

Tempe's Customer Relations Center (CRC) began initial operations in November 2010. Their wildly important goal was *To exceed industry standards by increasing single point of contact resolution from 68 percent to 85 percent by May 31, 2011*. This was a courageous challenge for a start-up service. Within the year, this high-performance team of five achieved a 75 percent single point of contact resolution for inbound Public Works calls. During 2011, the inbound call volumes exceeded 13,000 and 45,000 for Public Works and total calls, respectively. With inbound calls exceeding 1,500 weekly and new service areas added for customer contact, the Customer Relations Center is on track to exceed 75,000 calls in 2012. The team keeps on target to achieve its goal by tracking team performance weekly and planning for performance individually.

### **Public Works, Field Operations – Fleet Services:**

In pursuit of a wildly important goal of Achieving the status of "The 100 Best Fleets in North America" and lead other Valley cities by April 1, 2012, Tempe's Fleet Services team is focusing on 12 key performance indicators. Their initial efforts produced excellence in three areas of focus 1) Increasing Direct Labor Hours to exceed the national average of 70 percent, which resulted in reducing fleet downtime for user departments and achieving an equipment readiness level of above 85 percent; 2) Achieving Turnaround Time of less than 1.5 hours for scheduled preventative maintenance from under 65 percent to over 85 percent in a year's time, which translates into improved vehicle availability for departments; and 3) Reducing the comeback rate from 5 percent to fewer than 2 percent of total scheduled preventative maintenance monthly, resulting in a team culture of Doing it Right the First Time.

The 100 Best Fleets Award Program recognizes and rewards peak performing public sector fleet operations throughout North America. The program also identifies and encourages continuous improvement within the fleet industry. The Four Disciplines approach creates the foundation as Tempe's Fleet Services strives to join the winner's circle by moving from their current position of 73 to the Top 20.

# What Tempe is doing differently - Some Key Elements

Keeping it Simple!

There is a focus on keeping all aspects of the LDP process simple – including strategic planning. If it gets too complex, people quit listening and besides (like most city governments) we are busy! So we continually strive to limit redundancy and unnecessary complexities that slow down execution.

## Measuring the Right Things!

We don't have to measure everything – just those things that will show us how we are producing value. We start with the end in mind, where accomplishments and results are the main focus. This approach is based on good strategy that's executed well.

### Creating Greater Transparency and Accountability!

For the first time, Tempe is working on implementing an electronic organizational dashboard that will illustrate our unified model of integrated management. The dashboard must be easily accessible to every member of the workforce and the general public who should be able to see, within seconds, how the organization is performing in achieving the City Council's top priorities.

For more information on the City of Tempe's Leadership Development Program, call Tempe Learning Center (480) 350-5310.