

TRANSITIONS: MANAGING CHANGE DISRUPTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Transitions is designed to help people understand that change is always disruptive, upsets the status quo, and frequently results in new and innovative approaches to problem solving. Based on Bridge's three phases model for managing transitions, the simulation is designed to help participants conceptualize disruptions in anticipated schedules, emotions experienced by participants as a result of change, and the perceived need to adapt instantly to new paradigms

In teams, participants create initial structures with small blocks. Participants play assigned roles with associated responsibilities as their structure is "built." The teams are then mandated to make changes in their structures according to federal, state, and local guidelines. By adding blocks or removing blocks, new trials emerge. Challenged to look for creative solutions, participants navigate through a series of ordered changes including budget cuts, accrediting issues, and the need for student accessibility to learning resources.

Throughout the three-phase simulation, participants have the opportunity to debrief with their teammates. At the conclusion, the teams debrief one more time in their small groups. Finally, the teams come together for a debrief conducted by the facilitators. The final formal large-group facilitated debrief serves as an opportunity to reflect on the activities, making it meaningful by identifying what was learned on both an individual and organizational level.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The target audience is any organization that finds itself in a transition period between the initiation of change and its successful implementation. Currently, it is customized for community colleges, colleges, and universities. However, it can easily be tailored to community service agencies, faith-based organizations, K-12 schools, and even businesses.

RATIONALE

A number of experts in organizational change note that the pressure for organizations to change is increasing daily. Harvard Business School professor John P. Kotter in his book entitled *Leading Change* remarks, "Powerful macroeconomic forces are at work here, and these forces may grow even stronger over the next few decades. As a result more and more organizations will be pushed to reduce costs, improve the quality of products and services, locate new opportunities for growth, and increase productivity." (p. 3). Higher education is no exception.

Jeffery J. Selingo, Editor at Large, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, in his book entitled *College Unbound: The Future of Higher Education and What It Means for Students* reports, "Talk of a coming disruption to the traditional college model has reached fever pitch in some corners of higher education—each day seems to bring news of innovations with the potential to transform how we get a college degree...." (p. xii). *Transitions* is designed to help college leaders understand on a conceptual basis the issues involved in implementing change—human, financial, and physical.

"The value of simulations is underpinned by learning theories such as social constructivism, which considers each learner an individual with unique needs. According to social constructivists, learners are complex and multidimensional. Social constructivists argue that learners must be actively involved in the learning process and believe that knowledge must first be constructed in a social context and before being appropriated by individuals" (Beckem & Watkins, 2012). *TRANSITIONS* allows college leaders to be immersed in a non-threatening, yet realistic learning experience.