

Walkerton Clean Water Centre

Distance Education Enterprise

2008 Communication Plan and Performance Management Plan



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The Walkerton Clean Water Centre, an Ontario crown agency, was established in October 2004 to address critical gaps identified by the O'Connor Commission as a result of the tragedy in the Town of Walkerton —its main objectives to:

- Ensure that training courses are accessible and tailored to meet the needs of drinking water operators in small and remote communities
- Ensure the availability of courses on the subjects required to train drinking water operators
- Offer training facilities and curriculum to First Nations water system operators.

As such the Centre is becoming a premiere training facilitator for Ontario's drinking water system operators. This business case proposes a distance education enterprise model that would facilitate proper training and sustained competency for operators, not only in the more densely populated areas of southern Ontario, but also in more remote locations in northern Ontario.

The Communication Plan and the Performance Management Plan will enable change, engage stakeholders, provide goal achievement, monitor progress and allow for adjustments during execution.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
WCWC Distance Education Enterprise Strategic Objectives and Goals	1
Change Management Plan.....	4
Performance Management Plan	6
Performance Indicators	8
Performance Measurement Sources and Tools	10
Tracking and Reporting Performance Data.....	10
Concluding Remarks	11
References	12
Table 1 - WCWC Objectives and Goals	2
Table 2 - Multi-Year Strategic Goals.....	3
Table 3 - Strategy and Balanced Scorecard Perspectives	8
Table 4 - Performance Indicators and Targets.....	9
Figure 1 – Balanced Scorecard – adopted from Kaplan and Norton (2004)	6

Introduction

The Walkerton Clean Water Centre's (WCWC) Distance Education Enterprise will conduct activities that align with its strategic objectives and goals. This section of the business plan describes the Communication Plan and the Performance Management Plan which will enable change, engage stakeholders, provide goal achievement, monitor progress and allow for adjustments during execution.

A Communication Plan will be included and will discuss the change management plan used to assist in the transformation of the WCWC into a distance education enterprise; and the various communication strategies used with potential and current business customers, investors, employees, faculty and others impacted by the new enterprise.

The Performance Management Plan will utilize the Balance Scorecard approach (Kaplan and Norton 2004), to describe the qualitative perspectives that will be used to supplement typical financial measures, and to describe the performance indicators and the methods used to track and report on performance. A multi-year enterprise evaluation and performance measurement plan will ensure that these indicators and measures tracked to strategic goals and values of the WCWC Distance Education Enterprise.

In summary, an organization needs to utilize effective communication plan and a performance management plan to rationally identify future risks, intentionally eliminate undesirable effects associated with proposed change and design a rigorous transition plan which can be sustained.

WCWC Distance Education Enterprise Strategic Objectives and Goals

The business plan proposes a distance education enterprise within the Walkerton Clean Water Centre (WCWC) that would facilitate proper training and sustained competency for drinking water operators across Ontario. The enterprise would develop the necessary content for the distance education programming by building links to distance education specialists, such as website designers and application specialists and also act as an incubator for trainers and course content specialists. Finally

would provide an environment within which experienced and knowledgeable operations staff would work with distance education specialists to develop distance education applications.

The Distance Education Enterprise strategy aligns with the mandate goals 1, 2, 3 and 7 of the WCWC’s Mission Vision-Mandate-Objectives statements. It generally follows the theme of provision of accessible and appropriate education and training to operators, in a collaborative manner with other like-minded organizations or agencies.

Table 1 - WCWC Objectives and Goals

Objective	Objective Description
1	To deliver drinking water education and training for owners, operators and operating authorities of drinking water systems.
2	In collaboration with other training organizations, to coordinate the accessibility and availability of education and training for owners and operators.
3	To provide support to owners, operators and operating authorities with a primary focus on small, remote and older systems by providing information and advice.
7	To provide, both directly and through partnerships with other organizations and in coordination with the Ministry, public outreach and education relating to the Centre's mandate and to make technical, scientific and regulatory information more readily available.

It is not likely that distance education will dominate the drinking water operator’s educational landscape. Not surprisingly, drinking water and wastewater industry stakeholders see the value of technology in solving the *some* of the challenges of operator continuing education but, based on their experience, indicate that online computer training cannot provide a collaborative learning environment but that hands-on training does. Complimenting existing programming is very important and building linkages is critical to the ultimate success of the WCWC Distance Education Enterprise.

WCWC management must seek input from those that would be affected by the proposed business solution, determine the need for distance education applications, plan for sustaining the initiative by

developing other peer leaders in this venture and assess the industry readiness for change. The environmental scan performed as part of the SWOT analysis identified several issues for concern and these need to be accommodated in the change management strategy plan.

Table 2 - Multi-Year Strategic Goals

SWOT Issue/Risk	Strategic Goal
Very few trainers have formal adult education certification and even fewer still have a distance education bias.	Align with industry organizations that have influence to change the perception with trainers.
Only 16% of training organizations offer any form of distance education training, including correspondence, online training modules and only 8% offer asynchronous distance education.	Assess the training and education needs of drinking water operators with a specific bias towards distance education. Look for opportunities to expand this mode within the province. Make the WCWC a distance education specialist... or a change agent.
Both large and small communities across Ontario are facing increased operator training costs, and this pressure will continue to grow.	Develop core course material around reaching out to remote communities and help support the necessary infrastructure to overcome technological barriers.
Overcome perception that distance education cannot provide a collaborative learning environment like face to face education does.	Demonstrate to industry training consultants the potential of distance education modes and pedagogy.
Significant bias in the drinking water industry towards face-to-face training.	Encourage training companies to develop course material that aligns with the WCWC's distance education objective. These courses would be deemed Director Approved in a similar fashion as face to face course material.

Overall, a significant paradigm shift will be necessary for the drinking water and wastewater industry to adopt extensive use of distance education programming and carefully implemented communication and change management plans are required.

Communication Plan

The Communication Plan will be a multi-faceted approach, stakeholder engagement, involving them in solution development, sharing the vision, breaking down resistance and finally monitoring goal achievement.

By utilizing a structured approach to identifying undesirable effects and then constructing solutions to overcome them, this logic can be expressed to a variety of stakeholders. Further the stakeholders would be engaged in the development of transition plans. Currently, the Ontario Water Works Association (OWWA) and Water Environment Association of Ontario (WEAO), along with several other volunteer industry associations, are involved with development and review of Ontario water system regulations, guidelines, and procedures. This peer reviewer approach has been effective to date and could be capitalized upon, during the development of transition plans.

Fahy (1998) states that “often the purpose or vision associated with them innovation has not been communicated properly, or other elements of the organization’s history and culture have not been addressed” (p.69). The approach is rigorous and thorough, and effectively deals with the issue of overcoming organizational resistance and other environmental constraints. But it is acknowledged that method is very time consuming and requires a significant corporate discipline to implement it.

A part of the Communication Plan will be the gathering of quantitative and qualitative data related to the performance indicators, which will be discussed later in the paper.

Change Management Plan

Assessing what is needed, and constructing solutions that overcome obstacles to achieving the goals of an organization is vital for the long term success of the “solution”. Why are there barriers in the first place, why don’t organizations embrace change and move onto the most recent technology? Is it possible that what is in place actually works and there is no need to move to the “coolest black box”? Even

accepting the premise that an organization is ready to move in a new technology direction, the existing processes or logistics in place to support the organization's business lines and how it might affect the supply chain (Kaplan and Norton, 2004; Kendall, 1998).

What are some of the barriers to implementing the distance education enterprise? Corporate or institutional momentum, added workload, inexperience with the technology, loss of knowledge leverage by senior employees, protecting turf, employee fear related to job loss, comfort with existing methods or technologies, lack of proven track record, significant investment in existing technology modes (Kaplan and Norton, 2004; Kendall, 1998; Murgatroyd, 1992).

In reviewing literature related to strategic management, reference is made to the work by Eliyahu Goldratt (1990). Knowing what to change to and then developing a plan to implement it is vital. Most organizations struggle with the issue of developing what Goldratt describes as "half-baked ideas". Applying a new gadget, tool, process or form to a problem does not guarantee success as no thought was given to how "it" changes the corporate reality.

In Goldratt's (1990) assessment of what is important to stimulate effective change and how this determines organizational readiness for change, three important questions are cited, which will be integrated with the cost analysis:

- 1 What to change?
- 2 What to change to?
- 3 How to cause the change?

The first two questions are technical in nature, while the third is a psychological aspect that focuses on organizational culture, which is value-based and may be different for each person involved in the change. In the context of distance education, Fahy (2005) supports Goldratt's (1990) approach to overcoming barriers and strategic management by his statement "the needs analysis stage of planning is the best place to assure that cultural issues like these are recognized and evaluated in advance" (p. 16).

Kendall (1998) summarizes Goldratt's (1990) approach in that the goal is to identify a system's constraint(s), determine how to exploit the constraint, subordinate everything else to solving the constraint, elevate the constraint and then continue the cycle of review, looking for new constraints. Utilizing this process, several "effect-cause-effect" tools are implemented to resolve conflict, identify "undesirable effects", develop a "future reality" and implement a plan for action that provides clear rationale for every step in the transition.

The WCWC will utilize the Goldratt Theory of Constraints Method to implement effective change management methods in implementing the Distance Education Enterprise. This will help to rationally identify future risks, intentionally eliminate undesirable effects, and prepare the system for rigorous transition that will increase the likelihood of the change being successful, meaningful, and sustained.

Performance Management Plan

The WCWC will adopt the Balanced Scorecard approach (Kaplan and Norton (2004)) to measure how well the Distance Education Enterprise is doing, and where improvement can be made. By developing clear performance targets in a broad range of areas, greater accountability and transparency will be achieved, quantifiable results produced, and more effective communication with each of the stakeholder groups served by the WCWC.

The balanced scorecard requires the WCWC to measure its performance in both financial and non-financial areas. The scorecard requires that the WCWC develop measures that deal with inputs to the operations (i.e. how fast is training deployed) versus the outputs of the operations (i.e. how satisfied are customers). Four perspectives are considered; customer, internal business process, learning and growth, and financial.

The internal business process perspective requires the WCWC to focus on those critical internal operations that enable them to satisfy customer needs and determine what needs to be excelled at. The learning and growth perspective considers the WCWC's ability to innovate, improve, and learn, which

ties directly to its ability to create value-added services. The financial perspective will include measures that focus on profit and market share. Finally the WCWC must know if their organization is satisfying customer needs and how do customers see the Distance Education Enterprise.

Table 3 describes how the WCWC strategic goals are viewed from these four perspectives and ultimately how indicators and targets can be developed for each of the goals. The intent is to demonstrate some of the strategic goals will be better measured for one or two of these other perspectives, rather than from just the myopic viewpoint of financial indicators. To summarize, Murgatroyd (1992) emphasizes the importance for WCWC to measure these perspectives which will help WCWC understand the influence and dynamics of six (6) competitive forces, namely power of buyers, suppliers, new entrants, new technology, existing competition and government regulation. The Balanced Scorecard approach will assess goal achievement the WCWC on track in order to achieve its goals while contending with a competitive and dynamic business environment.

Figure 1 - Balanced Scorecard - adopted from Kaplan & Norton (2004)

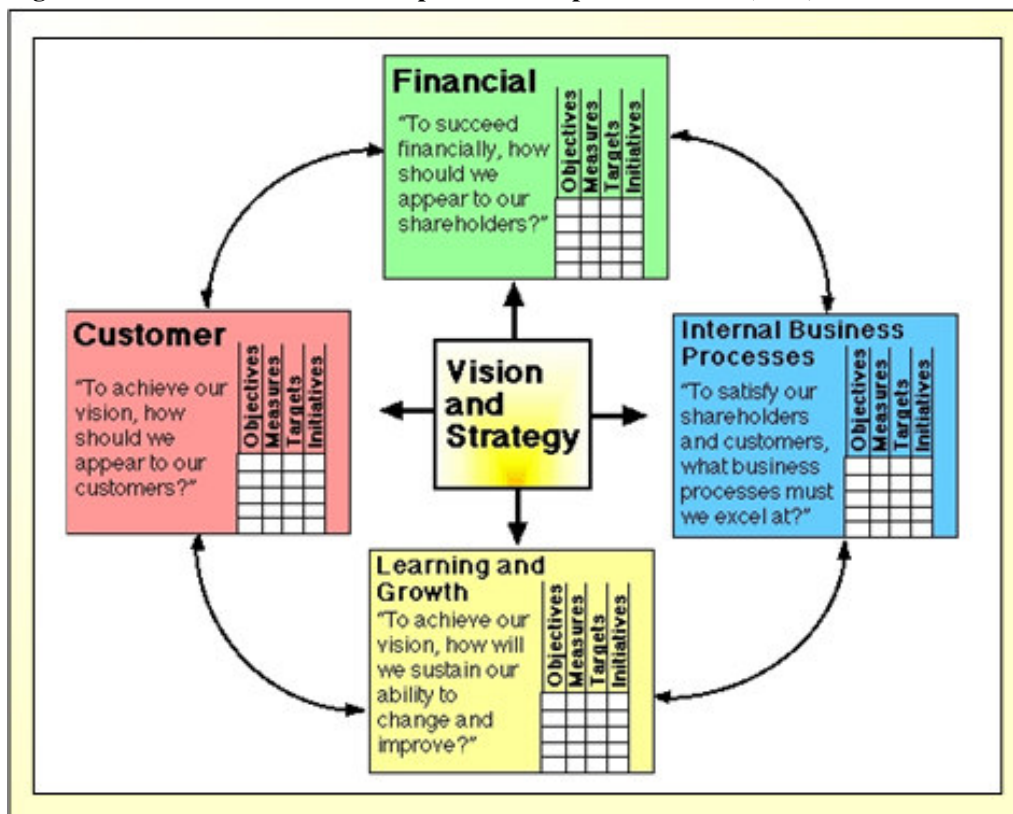


Table 3 - Strategy and Balanced Scorecard Perspectives

Strategic Goal	Financial	Customer	Internal Business Process	Learning & Growth
Align with industry organizations that have influence to change the perception with trainers.		●	●	●
Assess the training and education needs of drinking water operators with a specific bias towards distance education. Look for opportunities to expand this mode within the province. Make the WCWC a distance education specialist... or a change agent.	●	●		
Develop core course material around reaching out to remote communities and help support the necessary infrastructure to overcome technological barriers.		●		
Demonstrate to industry training consultants the potential of distance education modes and pedagogy.		●		●
Encourage training companies to develop course material that aligns with the WCWC's distance education objective. These courses would be deemed Director Approved in a similar fashion as face to face course material.	●	●		

Performance Indicators

The performance management plan will utilize a variety of performance measures or indicators that will assist in monitoring past performance (lag indicators) as well as attempting to forecast how well the WCWC is achieving its goals and objectives (lead indicators). Some of the indicators look back into the past, while others are used to predict whether the organization is heading in the right direction, precursors. Targets are then assigned to the performance indicators, and are used to track success at achieving the stated goals.

Table 4 - Performance Indicators and Targets

Balanced Scorecard Perspective	Indicators (Strategic Measures)	Target	Source/Tools
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excess Revenue (Profit) as a Percent of Net Revenue Accumulated Earnings Total Assets Turnover Total Debt to Total Assets Percentage of revenue by course categories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversify revenues Increase revenue growth Debt Equity Ratio 1.3 to 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Profit/Loss Statement Balance Sheet
Customer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student learning experience: How effectively do we transfer knowledge to our students? Outreach and engagement: How effectively do we transfer knowledge our communities? Retention and graduation rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase student satisfaction Increase outreach to community Increase retention student rates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student satisfaction survey Industry satisfaction survey Student enrollment statistics
Internal Business Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inventory program needs as baseline; improvement over time Number of programs and services; number of people served. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase course offerings within niche market by 20% annually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Course catalogue Student enrollment statistics Cash flow analysis
Learning & Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand distance education research Heighten national reputation Increase technology transfer activity Number of private/public partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare and present two (2) papers related to distance education to industry or academia. Award annual bursary to Distance Education graduate students Cultivate two (2) major business partnerships to develop new courses or software applications, annually. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepared papers and conference proceedings Annual report Customer relationship database

Performance Measurement Sources and Tools

The WCWC will use a suite of measurement tools in its performance measurement system. Generally these will involve both qualitative and quantitative sources of data. Quantitative data could be obtained from internal sources such as student enrollment statistics, prepared papers and conference proceedings, annual reports, data from the customer relationship database or a balance sheet.

Other tools typically used will be in the form of a customer surveys for both students and the drinking water industry as a whole. Website links for on-line surveys will be electronically mailed to students and other stakeholders. They will be asked to participate in completing them and the data assimilated into the annual report. This type of data could be either quantitative or qualitative in nature.

Tracking and Reporting Performance Data

Annual reporting will take place and the data shall be utilized from one to another this provides the ability to establish a baseline and track progress over time. It is important to deploy measurement instruments that stay consistent from year-to-year. The information that is gathered becomes more powerful each year because it is consistent in its pattern. The information gathered from the balanced scorecard perspective will allow the WCWC to assess its strengths and weaknesses in its operations.

An annual performance measurement report will be compiled listing the performance indicators with an interpretation of the results. The annual performance report will include the following:

- Historic survey and benchmark performance in the Balanced Scorecard perspectives
- Annual Overall scores
- Goal for last year
- Change in score over the previous year
- Assessment of the opportunity to improve performance
- Goal for the next year
- Action Plan(s) to improve performance measurements

The WCWC will be taking a simplified approach to measuring its performance, primarily because it wants to ensure that the measurement system is easily understood throughout the drinking water

industry. The more complex the measures or the number of measures the more difficult to communicate the results and the meaning to others. The reports will present information about the measures in a straight-forward graphical format and shared with stakeholders and customers alike.

Concluding Remarks

An opportunity exists to develop a distance education enterprise within the newly emerging WCWC to change the manner in which drinking water operator training is delivered in Ontario. With a focus on developing partnerships and sharing ideas with agencies with previous distance education experience, there is the opportunity to make distance education the norm and not the exception in the drinking water industry.

Distance education has merits for discussion, based on the educational content that operators are expected to learn and apply, and particularly related to knowledge and attitude issues. It must be recognized that there is a significant bias in the drinking water industry towards face-to-face training as there has been limited efforts to develop distance education courses. Therefore this poses a significant shift in thinking about how distance education can make a difference in the provision of operator training.

In conclusion, the WCWC needs to continue to act as a catalyst for change within the drinking water industry, but with a specific focus on the utilization of distance education as the primary mode for delivery of drinking water education and training within the province of Ontario.

Note: These abovementioned performance management and change management aspects were considered during the development of the original business plan. As such no changes were made to the cost analysis.

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