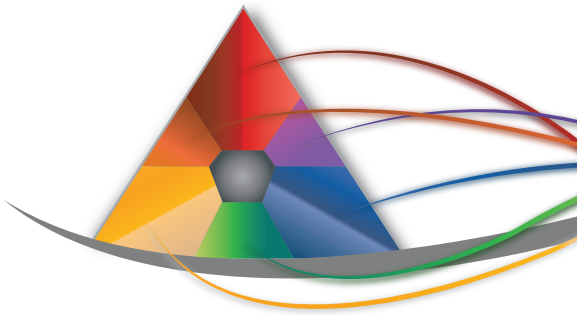
Change Catalysts

Case Study



A Community College Finds New Power and Direction in the CQ® System

Warren County Community College (WCCC) ranks as one of the top community colleges in the US—and its Board of Trustees has been a major driver in its high reputation for academics and innovation. Why would a Board that has helped transform community college education nationwide need a workshop in Change Intelligence®?

Dr. Phil Linfante, the Board Chair, was instrumental in asking Barbara Trautlein, founder of the CQ® System for Developing Change Intelligence®, to speak to the Board. He states, "Our Board of Trustees is a very diverse group that works closely together. We wanted to understand what everyone brings to the group. How can we improve ourselves to improve the Board?"

The WCCC Board of Trustees looked to the CQ System for a way to:

- **More fully appreciate their individual strengths**
- **Harness the full power of group diversity**
- **Move forward with confidence in the long term.**

"The changes we've made are beneficial to the students," adds Dr. William Austin, the college's President, "but what is the cost for employees? Are people buying in or going along or just trusting that it will all work out? I wanted to embrace the opportunity to move the organization into areas where we wouldn't go otherwise."

"Change can create both exhilarating opportunity and a feeling of danger," Trautlein explains. "In the midst of crisis or change, our body may react with fear—we brace for the worst, we cling to the familiar, we stop thinking critically. I define Change Intelligence as an awareness of one's own change leadership style and the ability to adapt it to be optimally effective across a variety of situations and people. That's why I begin CQ workshops with an assessment and appreciation of the group's individual strengths, then discuss how to close up any gaps to improve the group as a whole, and finally delve into techniques for analyzing any challenging situation, assessing progress, identifying next steps, and planning action."

Appreciating Individual Strengths

Each member of the WCCC Board took the CQ Assessment, which identifies individual strengths within the triangle of Heart, Head, and Hands. The resulting scores placed each person in one of seven Change Leader Styles (Coach, Facilitator, Executer, Driver, Visionary, Champion, or Adapter). As Trautlein explains, "The CQ Assessment showed that the Board included many individuals who were strong Coaches. So their warm support of each other, the college, and the students was not at all surprising. However, Dr. Linfante's and Dr. Austin's instincts were also correct because the Board was lacking in both Facilitators and Drivers. While a team can be effective with any combination of styles, it cannot reach its full potential unless it takes into account all these critical aspects of leading change. You need not only Heart, but also Head and Hands to drive change and to lead through crisis."

The information from the assessments prompted the Board to consider ways in which it could fill the gaps in roles without necessarily expanding to the point where decision making would become difficult. Board member Maria Maier, a business owner who holds dual MBAs, says, "The assessment made me aware of more things I could do to help the Board. We didn't have any Facilitators and it was easy for me as an Adapter to add that missing piece. I'm a listener and observer, and I can cut to the chase. All I needed to do was speak up rather than keep my ideas to myself."

Board member Yvonne Reitemeyer, a Chartered Financial Accountant, appreciated the moment during the discussion when Trautlein asked the Board members to say something positive about each other. "It was great positive reinforcement. She showed us what the group can do together as opposed to an individual alone. I bring a corporate perspective to a Board that's primarily academics and I appreciate what people said about me. I would have thought I was entirely Head, but I was also Heart and Hands."

"The more we know about ourselves and others, the more we know where people are coming from," asserts Linfante. "I'm a strong Coach but I want to be more of a Champion—becoming more Visionary. Some Executors want to be more Driver-like. No one is put in a box. It's all about awareness of our strengths, and adapting our style when that's important for the team. We discovered how we can improve ourselves to improve the Board."

Harnessing the Power of the Group

"Our Board is diverse and cohesive," says Austin, "but we weren't always listening to each other. We talk about shared governance and collective decision making, but what we're really doing is taking a vote and settling instead of engaging the person where they are. I can look at Barbara's model and see where I am lacking and others can help, rather than trying to move everyone to be like me. CQ is leading us to an authentic change process."

Trautlein presented a CQ Analysis and Action Planning exercise that is a variant of a technique known as the Six Hats. In the CQ exercise, a group reviews what they have done well so far in relation to a particular challenge and then discusses next steps by shifting perspective as a group: first considering the Heart (people, teams, culture) viewpoint, then the Head (mission, strategy, metrics), and then the Hands (process, tools, training). "Everyone switches an imaginary hat as they concentrate on each perspective in turn," Trautlein explains. "A red that stands for Heart, a blue for Head, and a yellow for Hands. That allows the group to discuss change in a sequential manner that respects every individual's chief concern—and it systematically covers engagement, alignment, and implementation, all the critical components for leading change that sticks."

Dr. Frank Gilly, a physician and Vice-Chair of the Board, found immediate value in this method. "We recently had a lot of discussion and conflict over a situation but this time we listened to the viewpoints of Heart, Hands, and Heads. We talked it out. There is a point in your life where you repeat the same patterns, but this is a way to break the pattern." He concluded, "Diversity makes us strong."

Moving Forward with Confidence

Among the WCCC Board of Trustees are individuals who have experienced many types of change management, leadership, team building, and organizational workshops. Linfante himself approached the CQ System with some skepticism. "How many times do we bring people in and you can't even understand the concept? The workshop leader leaves and we can't implement it. The Change Quotient® makes a lot of sense and people buy into it easily."

Austin adds, "I've seen a lot of self-helpers and you feel you're in a sales pitch. CQ isn't a fad. It makes an organization better. During Covid-19 we had the opportunity to demonstrate heart-based leadership through action and come together. We were ready for Barbara's message. Barbara's model deals with leadership and the complexity of the world." Remembering the difficulties of leading physicians during his tenure as a Chief Medical Officer ("it's like herding cats"), Gilly believes that the CQ method would help his medical peers overcome a tendency to think they are each "perfect and right." Similarly, Maier believes that "everyone should go through CQ because it makes you realize there are avenues you haven't explored and makes you communicate better. It opens up discussion and is a great strategy for navigating change."

In fact, the approach made so much sense to Linfante that he is currently studying the CQ System in more depth with Trautlein through the Change Intelligence Certification Program and has asked her to present to another college where he serves as a Dean and Professor. "We have a new President and many new people and this is an opportunity for everyone to get to know and better understand each other. It's important. Every group needs Visionaries, Coaches, and Drivers—we need them all."

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