

Session 3

THE RUBIK'S™ CUBE CHALLENGE - ALIGNING THE COLOURS

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La Trobe University embarked on a significant change initiative in 2008, aimed at improving the quality of administrative services whilst reducing costs. As an organisation, it had been operating with an inefficient and decentralised organisational structure which challenged the core objectives of the University's Administrative Change Program.

Consolidating services, streamlining processes and improving the client experience at a university with such an entrenched organisational structure is complex; much like aligning the colours on a Rubik's™ cube. At times, you consider just peeling off the stickers or pulling it completely apart to create the perfect image; however to do so would weaken the entire object. What is important to realise, is that each turn of the puzzle is an important step in the journey of organisational change. The transformation required **in student administration and student services** was significant. Routine over the past twenty years had created a culture of complacency and an organisation which had lost focus on the client centred approach. An approach vital to the university's success in a looming deregulated higher education environment.

This presentation will explore the journey of reviewing the most complex portfolio in universities – student administration and student services. It examines the lessons learned in attempting to move from the entrenched culture within a decentralised organisational structure, to one which consolidates functions but maintains a level of collaboration and interaction with faculties and schools.

This presentation will argue that, in order to operate in a competitive market environment, the level of centralisation required in student administration and student services is high. To achieve this in an organisation where the decentralised structure is so entrenched invites risks. If not managed effectively, the process could destabilise the organisation; if managed well, the outcome could transform the way services are delivered and create the perfect Rubik's™ cube.

This abstract is submitted in collaboration with the abstract from Ian Smith, Manager, and Administrative Change Program. While the two submissions/presentations standalone they are intended to form a complimentary pair. This presentation will focus on the experience and challenges of reshaping the student administration and student services portfolio and the benefits of consolidating services at La Trobe University. The other submission will focus on the broad dynamics of achieving change in higher education - with particular reference to the empirical evidence and experiences of La Trobe University and Yale University.

Presenters Biography:

Peter Barton has worked in the higher education sector for almost 20 years and at La Trobe since 1995. Before taking on his current role as Project Director, Student Services and Student Administration Review, Peter worked as the Director, Faculty Operations and Planning in the Faculty of Education. Peter has extensive experience from both Victoria University and La Trobe University across a range of positions focused around faculty and university student administration.

Peter has particular interests in business process redesign and the role this has in creating organisational efficiency and effectiveness. Peter also has a strong interest in continuous

improvement, organisational development and change management, including the impact of change on individual's performance and morale.

Peter has an undergraduate degree in human resource and administrative management and a postgraduate degree in management.