“What Are You Going To Do, Fire Me?”

Identifying and Re-Energizing SI Leaders Who Aren’t Effectively Doing Their Job

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Agenda: Today We Will Discuss...

- Background
  - MWSU's program and our experiences
  - Theory and research
- Situations that can cause difficulty for SI Leaders
- Intervention and improvement methods
Background: About Our SI Services

- Missouri Western State University
  - Located in St. Joseph, MO
  - Enrollment of roughly 5,500 students
  - Open-admissions university

- Center for Academic Support
  - Part of the Division of Enrollment Management
  - Free tutoring in math, writing, and content
  - Supports roughly 100 courses with tutors per semester
  - SI for 7 to 9 courses per semester
Issues We’ve Faced

- Our tutors and SI Leaders always have great potential and the majority of them are great at their jobs, but some of them hold back for one reason or other.

- One reason for this: Schlossberg’s Transition Theory
  - Transition: “Any event or non-event that results in changed relationships, routines, assumptions, and roles” (Evans et al., 2010). Individuals cope with transitions using four Ss
  - Situation: factors such as the cause of transition, role change, control over transition, etc.
  - Self: Personal and demographic characteristics
  - Support: family, friends, employers, etc.
  - Strategies: How an individual will go about managing a transition
Four Types of “Problem” Leaders

- The “Burnout” – Leaders suffering from senioritis who have been SI leaders for several years. These students are burned out on their jobs, their classes, and sometimes even life in general.

- The “Collector” – Leaders who either doesn’t understand the SI model or don’t care. They may only be in the position because they think it will look good on their resumes.

- The “Teacher’s Pet” – Leaders who excelled in their positions and received positive feedback, who now feel like they can slack off because they are on the supervisor’s “good side.”

- The “Not-So-People Person” – Leaders who excel with the course material but struggle with customer service due to nerves, attitude, disorganization, etc.
So How Do We Handle This?

- Have a discussion. Don’t wait and assume the problem will fix itself!
- Intervene from a place of concern
  - Are there other issues the leader is struggling with? These can be personal, academic, etc.
  - Are there places where training is lacking?
- Follow a consistent procedure for student employee corrections
  - Refer to your institution’s student employment office or policy manual
- Make note of your observations
- Highlight their successes
The “Teacher’s Pet”

- Gentle but clear discussion.
- These students tend to strive for excellence and want to do well. Oftentimes, they don’t realize they are slacking.
- Highlight previous success—what did they do that stood out. What can they do to return to that point?
The “Collector” and the “Not-So-People Person”

- The “Collector”
  - Assess what they know: Are they struggling to grasp the fundamental concepts of the position, or are they simply neglecting it?
  - If they are neglecting it, a frank discussion is needed.
  - Otherwise, use the “not-so-people person” approach

- The “Not-So-People Person”
  - Focused training in problem areas
  - Work together to establish goals
  - Utilize shadowing, mentoring, and regular check-ins
The “Burnout”

- Express appreciation and utilize motivational tactics
  - Show them previous positive evaluations and positive comments from SI attendees
  - Stress the importance of their work
- Be their cheerleader
- If necessary, refer them to other campus resources (counseling, biofeedback, advisor, etc.)
Items to Keep in Mind

- Drastic measures are not always needed. Sometimes a simple check-in will do.
- Generally, tutors and SI Leaders are high achieving students who want to do well. They may not realize they are doing anything wrong.
- If multiple leaders are struggling with a similar issue, it may be necessary to address that in general training.
- If a leader is struggling with something that you had difficulty with as a student, let them know! This can build your connection and make the leader feel more comfortable.
- See improvement? Celebrate!
Group Discussion Questions

- Which issues do you see SI Leaders struggle with most often in your program? Are there any common ones at your campus that we did not address?

- Which intervention strategies work best for you? Have you utilized any successful ones that we did not address?
