

forum interactive

Background information

Characters:

Sir Duncan King	Dean of School of Drama
Rick MacDonwald	Head of Theatre, School of Drama
Malcolm McKay	Head of Technical Theatre, School of Drama
Paul MacBeth	Senior Lecturer, Theatre Dept.
Karen McDuff	Lecturer, Theatre Dept.
Eck	Janitor, School of Drama
Alison Banks	Change Co-ordinator (HR & Administration)
John Lennox	Head of Movement, School of Dance
Mrs MacBeth	Wife of Paul MacBeth

Backdrop

The Central College of Music and Performing Arts, founded in 1910, is a successful conservatoire offering vocational training in music, drama and dance. Its degree courses are ratified by Central University with whom CCOMPA has had a longstanding relationship.

CCOMPA, like all conservatoires, is in competition with Universities who can arguably offer creative arts students a more academic and flexible learning experience. In a drive to attract more students, the School of Dance and Movement was opened five years ago. This caused some consternation, particularly among the traditionalists in Drama and Music who had enjoyed a lengthy, and at times bloody, rivalry and now found themselves allies in the fight against change.

You might have thought that its location (on a wild, wet and windswept Scottish hillside) would lead to staff recruitment problems. However, staff surveys suggest that morale is high and people tend to stay until retirement (and beyond).

The Executive Directorate, headed up by the Principal and Chief Executive Dr Philip Porter, decided that the College needed a revamp. Twelve months ago, Alison Banks was recruited as Change Co-ordinator to oversee this process. With 15 years experience in the private sector, they thought she would have the vision, ideas and skills to challenge entrenched views and inspire collective action.

For her part, Alison sought a peaceful environment in a compact organization where cultural change was more likely to succeed and where her wounds might heal.

The first thing she did was to organize a consultation exercise with all staff which resulted in a new mission for the College:

Our mission is to create the international centre of excellence and innovation for learning, teaching and research in performance, in which the quality of the student experience is paramount.

The mission and strategy document was circulated two months ago and the next stage of the process is for Alison to oversee a re-culturing that will enable and embed the changes required to create a sustainable 'New College'. The priorities of this 'New College' are:

- The continued development of an inter-disciplinary research culture.
- The continued development of flexibility in delivery of teaching and learning.
- Developing and promoting partnership working with both internal and external partners in delivery and research.
- Adopting inter-disciplinary practice in usage of space across the College.

Her plan is to introduce a performance management system with annual appraisal. However, she's spent the last year in arguments over the use of the term 'appraisal'. She hasn't been put off, however, and believes that the re-culturing will finally demonstrate to the Deans the value of performance management.

The HR Director agreed with Alison that the College would benefit from the introduction of a coaching culture. She has attempted to do this by offering a coaching service and talking to staff of its benefits. So far, the only person to take up the offer has been Paul MacBeth.

Quietly, with only the Executive Directorate's knowledge, she's developed a behaviour-based competency framework that describes the attitudes and behaviours required in the "New College". Despite her own "glass half full" attitude, she's become irritated by what she describes as "the silo-thinking, self-promoting, defensive and conflict ridden practices" that remain active in small pockets of the College.

She sees Paul MacBeth as just the kind of strong, flexible, forward-looking, enlightened person the "New College" needs.

(Esther Walker, Forum Interactive, esther@foruminteractive.co.uk)