

## SLOUCHING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY

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### **What I did:**

NorthPointe Christian Schools provides free tuition for all children of faculty. This benefit equated to a \$500,000.00 hit on our net enrollment numbers. My goal was to change the benefit structure while still providing a 50% benefit in an effort to gain some net revenue. I surveyed multiple schools in CSI and determined that 50% remission figure was still better than the vast majority of schools. Using a three year implementation plan, I examined the cost and effect of requiring faculty to pay 10% the first year, 25% the second year and 50% the final year of implementation. The plan would include an increase in salary to offset this cost, and would also deal with the cultural issues that would follow a change of this magnitude. This project developed a comprehensive plan to incrementally do away with full tuition remission while retaining our faculty and improving the long term sustainability of the school.

### **What did I learn?**

First, I relearned that culture is a hard thing to change. Despite my best efforts at presenting the data, educating the Board and administrators on the unsustainability of our school under our current model of 100% faculty tuition remission and reliance on tuition and giving as sole sources of income, at the end of the day, *culture* won.

Second, I learned that compromise can at least start the ball rolling toward strategic change.

Third, don't mess with people's paycheck! This is seen as a "third rail" issue no matter how well it is communicated.

Fourth, not everyone thinks our teachers are underpaid, and many still view teaching as a 9 month job. Can't they just get another job in the summer?

Lastly, even in the face of the best data, the reality of schools closing around you, it is difficult to overcome the inertia and make significant changes to a group fearful of change.

### **What difference did it make?**

It opened some eyes to the idea that changes do need to be made. We compromised and grandfathered existing teachers keeping the 100% tuition benefit for them, and all new hires would enter on a higher pay scale and receive 50% tuition remission (still the best out there!). Instead of making a 250K difference over a three year period, it has become a very long strategic shift and it will generate modest returns over the next ten years.