THE CHALLENGE OF LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

Leading with Emotional Engagement

WYOMA VANDUINKERKEN & PIXEY ANNE MOSLEY

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PREFACE

CONTINUOUS CHANGE IN libraries: one sees it emphasized time after time in conference programs and in the scholarly and popular literature of librarianship. Changes in service delivery models, organizational structure and staffing, workflows and processes, and facilities are happening across the entire world of libraries. But have you ever thought about why some changes are more successful than others? Or asked why some organizations seem more resilient when faced with continuous change while others seem to struggle with every new change endeavor? This book offers some possible answers to these questions as it looks at the softer skills of change leadership in the context of the literature from the business and social science disciplines. How a change is communicated and the manner in which employees are engaged or isolated from the decision-making process during the planning and implementation stages of a change can play a key role in the future long-term success of the change.

The chapters of this book are arranged around several themes, and each chapter ends with some exercises that a reader can use as a reflective or discussion tool in thinking about leading change effectively. Chapters 1 through 3 help readers understand some of the psychological, sociological, and organizational culture aspects of the change experience in libraries. These chapters also give insights into the particular skills needed to be an effective change leader and why some highly effective managers or team leaders can run into difficulties when faced with leading a major change initiative. Chapters 4 and 5 lay out the chronology of initiating, planning, and implementing a change. In evaluating failed change initiatives, one common problem

comes from having skipped a key phase of the planning or implementation process in trying to meet an overly optimistic deadline. These chapters emphasize that truly successful change initiatives cannot be rushed as a leader is developing individual buy-in and building an organizational culture that will sustain the change. Chapters 6 and 7 address specific challenges that can undermine or reinforce participation in the change, and its ultimate success. These chapters also give tips and advice on how one effectively addresses unanticipated delays or conflicts that can arise during any major change initiative. Often change leaders need effective crisis management leadership skills when dealing with disruptions to the planning and implementation process. Chapter 8 explains how one can objectively assess one's own performance as a change leader and evaluate the overall success of the change for lessons learned in leading a subsequent change in the future. Finally, chapter 9 discusses the specific issues one can face for different types of changes, such as organizational structure, construction/renovation changes, and personnel/workflow changes. The chapter also presents information on the impact of major changes to help one understand what the culture can adjust to more easily, ongoing medium-level changes or huge "turn everything on its head" changes.

The material for this book is gathered from literature across the disciplines of management, human resources, psychology, organizational theory, and librarianship and the authors' own experiences from having been leaders, participants, or observers in many change initiatives in different fields and institutions. Any examples are fictional in nature and are developed as composites based on trends seen in libraries across the country. Ironically, during the course of writing this book, the authors themselves were swept up in major organizational changes, with Wyoma moving from her coordinator role in acquisitions to a similar management and change leader role for catalog record support, and Pixey changing managerial responsibilities from access services to cataloging and shelving operations and serving in a university-level administrative role during a budgetary realignment. Along with this, they went through several changes in organizational visioning and renovations of the public spaces and collection stacks.

Finally, the authors would like to thank those individuals who provided us with encouragement and support during the course of writing this book and without whom this book would probably not have been completed. This includes Wyoma's husband, Desmond Ng, and children Gabriel and Logan, and Pixey's husband, Joel Kitchens. We would also like to thank our friend and colleague Wendi Kaspar for her support in helping us to keep things in perspective and stay focused on what was professionally important. Finally, a thanks to our ALA editor, Chris Rhodes, for his support and flexibility in getting contract details ironed out, providing feedback on chapter drafts, and extending deadlines while we settled into our new jobs.

CHANGE IN LIBRARIES

Common sense is not so common.

—Voltaire

ALTHOUGH THE QUOTE above is almost 250 years old, Voltaire's statement seems particularly true in today's constantly changing library environment. Common sense is based on a collective consciousness of shared ideas, knowledge, and understanding. However, when change occurs, the knowledge underpinning that common sense is altered and it seems that common sense gets thrown out the window. Leaders feel their decisions are based on obvious common sense, so of course everyone should embrace those decisions enthusiastically. Secure in this knowledge, they marginalize apparent resistance and are perpetually surprised when a planned change stalls or even fails. Similarly, when changes are thrust upon individuals and stress over job security blinds them, it is difficult for them to plug into that shared understanding and find the commonsense grounding for having confidence in their work and positive engagement with others.

National estimates indicate that one third of all workers in the United States report that their jobs are "often" or "always" stressful.[1] Today's fast-paced, ever-changing lifestyle is taking a toll on employees, and as a result common sense is being replaced by work-related stress reactions. Although there are common and predictable stressors related to change, how a person reacts to those stressors can differ. Given a high degree of uncertainty over organizational change, employees and managers can feel anxiety and confusion about the unknown and as a consequence utilize basic defenses such as distrust in leadership, withdrawal from the organization, and self-protection, causing even positive changes to stumble and falter. Change, however, is a natural

part of life and of contemporary organizations if they hope to be successful in the future. In libraries, the greatest challenge we face in this new technological era is the recognition that our past strengths will become our liabilities if we do not change to meet the needs of the changing society.[2]

DEFINING HOW LIBRARIES ARE DIFFERENT

Libraries, like all organizations, are facing a period of rapid technological growth that is changing societies around the world. Patrons are developing higher expectations of library services and often end up using these services differently than the way they were used in the past. Though it was ten years ago as the opening speaker at the 2000 American Library Association's Second Congress on Professional Education, Wendy Schultz was particularly visionary as she pointed to a number of societal issues that are affecting our profession.[3] The items she noted are even more valid today and are impacting all types of libraries at significant levels:

- the acceleration of the pace of change
- the ubiquity of technological innovation
- rapid globalization
- economic issues
- expanding educational formats and opportunities
- demographic shifts
- population diversity
- changing workplace structures and ethics
- altered worker demands
- changes in customer expectations and lifestyles

As a result of these factors, libraries and librarians need to redefine collections and services to keep up with the changing environment in order to meet the needs of their customers and remain relevant. However, according to Stephens and Russell, although librarians are aware of these issues that impact our profession, it does not necessarily mean librarians understand the issues and, more important, whether they believe that knowledge of these issues is used by management when they are planning and implementing change in library organizations.[4] It is because of this misunderstanding that resistance to change occurs.

In addition, it is important for managers to remember that they view change differently than employees. According to Strebel, both managers and employees

recognize that vision and leadership promote successful change, but not all managers recognize the ways in which employees commit to the advancement of successful change.[5] Strebel believes that top-level administrators see "change as an opportunity to strengthen the business by aligning operations with strategy, to take on new professional challenges and risks, and to advance their careers. For many employees, however, including middle managers, change is neither sought after nor welcomed. It is disruptive and intrusive. It upsets the balance."[6]

While there is a plethora of change-management literature available from the business and human development fields, it can still be challenging to understand how to apply it in the library environment.[7] Libraries are not commercial retailers, though they do share some customer service objectives. Though they do have to worry about their budgets and look to the future, libraries are not private corporations, with profit as a bottom line and layoffs or downsizing of active employees as the regularly used tool to manage budgets or implement change initiatives. Similarly, few libraries are stand-alone nonprofit organizations, though they share some "public good" characteristics with this sector. Separate from the small business sector, libraries are usually part of a larger educational or civic-based entity that will have a well-developed employee culture with established rules, policies, and procedures. According to Kreitz, adding to the problem are demographic changes in the workforce today, along with the increasing international competition caused by globalization of markets; these have increased the amount of diversity organizations must manage, both within the organization and outside of it.[8] Many argue that leaders who are interested in surviving and thriving in the world today must use their diverse workplace to their advantage, and in order to do this successfully, managers must redefine how they lead.[9] Because of this hybrid identity, successfully introducing change in this culture can introduce particular challenges. It takes a particular type of hybrid leader to successfully implement and manage ongoing organizational change in a library environment.

According to Stephens and Russell, there is very little research on organizational change in libraries and the necessary leadership characteristics needed to accomplish change.[10] Instead, the majority of literature on this topic is based largely on corporate enterprises, not libraries. This book will offer insights into developing the skills to be an effective change leader in libraries, both in the context of traditional leadership models still supported by many administrations and with the next generation of employees who expect a different workplace culture in terms of support and engagement than previous generations.

Although libraries are different, library managers and administrators know libraries and understand the culture, so one has to ask why it is still difficult for them to lead

change effectively. There are several contributing factors. The key is that libraries have a wider degree of cultural variation across the organization than one will find in the business world.[11] Generally, competitive companies mimic each other's style of operation in finding the most profitable management practices and establishing an employee and organizational culture. A lot of financial and personnel resources go into creating groupthink programs and mandating the desired employee culture and conduct. Corporate culture influences the manner in which employees act and work together and strongly impact how things get completed.[12] Perhaps from having professional roots in the concepts of free speech, freedom of information, and academic institutions where inquiry is encouraged, libraries have not pursued this management model with the fervor of the corporate world. A library's organizational culture with its task and operational departments, specialized professional staffing models, and generally stable employee base can have a significant impact on the success of change initiatives. Understanding organizational culture is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

While an administrator may establish priorities or set a general tone, there is usually a higher degree of employee freedom and less actual retaliation for speaking up or questioning authority. While open disapproval of an idea and a moderate degree of active or passive resistance may result in one being given less leadership responsibilities or even marginal evaluations, it seldom will actually result in the termination of an employee. This is unlike the corporate environment, where often standing out from the group makes one a target for the first round of any staff reduction activities. The difference in libraries is particularly pronounced in academic institutions, where librarians have some manner of faculty status that provides academic freedom protection to express their opinions.[13] This means that managerial engagement on the change becomes even more critical for overall success, but can still be extremely difficult for a manager to accomplish.

MANAGERIAL CHALLENGES

The first obvious challenge is that a manager may know one library or department, but what about when she is asked to lead change somewhere else? This could be as a formal transfer or newly hired manager or as a crossdepartmental team leader brought in for an "outsider" perspective. The new department or team may have a different organizational culture than the one the leader previously worked in.[14] This "outsider perspective" can exist to encourage library staff to exchange new ideas and to try new workflow processes in order to create an efficient work environment. By creating

this learning environment libraries will be able to meet the expectations of students, faculty, and staff.[15] This is discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

Most contemporary library departments are a mixture of different types of people. However, even within this mix, there will tend to be an organizational subculture based on the library's role or environment. An office with open architecture and a lot of teamwork or interaction in supporting a service, such as making sure a service desk is sufficiently staffed on the fly, will have a different culture than an office where most of the work is accomplished by individuals with explicitly defined tasks and less reason to develop a sense of inter-reliance. However, even if the basic functional support is the same, one cannot assume that a department subculture is the same at different institutions. Suppose in one library, a reference desk is staffed based on a rigid, mediated scheduling process with predefined backups to call if someone has a conflict or gets sick. The subculture in this reference department will be very different from one where a basic schedule is set up but individuals are expected to round up their own replacement coverage when they need to be out. In the latter environment, teamwork becomes a more critical cultural element, and individuals will be more likely to speak or act out publicly against someone whom they feel is not pulling their weight by always getting substitutes. In the former, there may be grumbles at having to cover for someone a lot, but the expectation will be that the scheduler will handle any performance-related reporting. For a manager walking into a new dynamic as a change agent, there is a high potential for misinterpretation based on the cultural symbolism attributed to a comment.

It does not hurt to ask if the culture can be changed to take advantage of positives from other models. But it is critical to recognize the difference between what can be changed and what cannot or should not. While a certain degree of firmness in commitment to an initiative is expected of administrators and managers, it is the author's observation that academic institutions are less likely to adopt the ultimatum approach that can lead to formal litigation or bring in institutional scrutiny of human resources practices. Additionally, many academic institutions are based on a model of shared governance to some degree. This can vary from institution to institution but serves to reiterate the value of stakeholder buy-in for major changes. In this respect, libraries should follow the institutional trend. For example, if you are a manager or administrator who does not believe in or support tenure-track status for librarians, going to an institution that is based on this model will turn into an exercise in frustration when you have much less flexibility in reassigning senior librarians or have to accept that a full-time librarian does not equal forty hours of focused work due to the need for release time to conduct research or professional service. It is important to

avoid trying to directly change situations that resemble the irresistible force and the immovable object. Chapters 3 and 6 delve more deeply into organizational culture impact on change initiatives.

Secondly, even though library managers have come up through the ranks, most have not had extensive formal training in change leadership. A basic management course might have been a part of the manager's MLS program some years ago, but management philosophies change, and it is sometimes more difficult to see this as one is immersed in the work environment. The library industry has always been focused on service to others, and as a result librarians often forget about service to themselves. We are passionate about developing our skills as librarians to support the needs of our users, but we've neglected developing ourselves as leaders.[16] Additionally, most librarian jobs, particularly in larger libraries, involve an expectation of one developing as a specialist with a narrow area of expertise. This is actually a deterrent to becoming a successful change leader, which requires one to become more of a generalist who looks at multiple ideas from a wide range of perspectives. Finally, depending on the organizational structure, the manager may or may not have access to effective mentoring and growth opportunities through a formal training program.[17] However, even with mentoring, workshops, and self-development, leading change can be one of the most difficult challenges a manager faces because it involves individual human beings who will react in an unpredictable manner when faced with specific changes. The authors have frequently heard peers describe leading in academia as a whole and libraries in particular as "attempting to herd cats."[18]

When the leadership activities involve significant change and introduce high levels of emotion into the situation, cats can quickly transform from independent but domesticated house cats into a group of wild mountain lions. This is because the same stresses associated with change trigger the classic fight-or-flight instincts.[19] To effectively lead change in this environment, leaders and managers must avoid responding to triggers that could lead to abuse of administrative power; they must understand what is motivating employees in their resistance, and actively work to counter it using positive engagement techniques that encourage the employee to come down from a highly emotional state and restore rational, thoughtful deliberation and empowerment to the process. According to Warnken, if change is to be successful, then the process to achieve this change needs to be well planned and communicated and it must be inclusive.[20] Unfortunately, this can be very difficult to accomplish for some managers, and they will often make predictable mistakes before learning to effectively lead change. In truth, some managers do not understand the role of emotions in employee motivation, find change leadership particularly challenging, and

never reach an effective understanding of the emotional underpinnings that can make one change highly successful and another a dismal failure.

APPLYING BUSINESS MODELS

Earlier in this chapter, it was pointed out that libraries do not fit precisely into the business model in the products they provide and in their personnel policies. However, this does not mean that there are not tools that can be applied from the business sector in developing one's leadership identity and to help with managing change.[21] The human resource development and management literature offers a multitude of articles that analyze and provide insights into factors that are important to leading change. They include areas such as employee empowerment and motivation, facilitating communication, team building, involvement, rewards and recognition, and training and development. Even though a library may not be able to implement an entire management philosophy, such as Total Quality Management, *Good to Great,* Nordstrom's or Disney's customer service models, or Tom Peters's leadership models, there may be room to adopt and apply some component pieces.[22]

One important element is for managers to realize that there is no magic formula for leading change that will automatically apply to every situation or promise success every time. Because an individual's acceptance or resistance to a change is based on an emotional and personal response, this response can change depending on the individual's perceptions of the proposed change and the personal impact. An employee who is the best cheerleader for one change can become the resistance leader for another.

For example, suppose Mike's department has a vacancy occur because Peter left. After discussing the departmental needs with the administration, Mike redefines the position to new organizational needs and plans to distribute the critical components of what Peter had been doing, such as processing patron requests, among other staff. Marci hears that the department is not going to be able to replace Peter. Given that Marci did not have a high opinion of Peter's level of productivity, she does not think this is a big deal and actually supports getting someone in for the new duties no one has time to do now. As her colleagues are reacting emotionally about the lost position, Marci speaks up in support of the administrative decision to redefine the focus of the position's responsibilities. Mike breathes a sigh of relief at having some grassroots support. Fast-forward six weeks: Mike meets with Marci and abruptly begins to discuss the need for her to take on some of the patron requests responsibilities. Marci did not see this coming and does not take the news well. Mike is shocked at

her resistance to being a team player in the reassigned responsibilities. From Marci's perspective, she was able to support the change earlier because it did not affect her personally. Now that she has learned it will impact her own workload, her emotional perspective has changed. Ultimately, because he did not anticipate that her response would differ from in the past, Mike has to now backtrack and rebuild buy-in at a personal level with Marci.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

In bringing together the introductory ideas about change in libraries, there are several points to keep in mind.

- Successful change does not happen in a vacuum or simply as a mandate, but requires the engagement of stakeholders at multiple levels.
- In looking at comparative models and management and leadership programs, it is important to consider what will and will not work for this particular library environment and organizational culture.
- Business models that can be adopted most effectively within libraries are those that focus on emotional leadership and communication-based engagement.
- Success in leading change requires that one adopt a broad perspective of situational and servant-based leadership that adapts to the different needs of different changes.[23]
- One must set aside one's ego and symbolic baggage in how an administrator, manager, or team leader should act and go the extra mile in being responsive to the needs of the individuals that are having change enacted upon them.

THINKING EXERCISES

1. What aspects of your library fit the various organizational models described in this chapter (corporate, commercial, nonprofit, civic, academic)?

2. How would you describe your organizational culture toward explaining decisions?

3. Does the organizational or administrative/managerial communica-
tion model satisfy or match the expectations for information from the
front lines? If not, where does it break down and what can you do to
improve it?

4. Think of three or four leaders who have had the biggest positive impact
on your professional or personal development. Write down what they did
that made them stand out (the characteristics you most admired or would
want to emulate). Now repeat the exercise for leaders who have had the
biggest negative impact on you. Examine the two lists for guidance in
traits to adopt and techniques to avoid as you continue to develop as a
leader. You can even make yourself a "reminder" pinup for those leader-
ship traits and techniques that are most important or most difficult.

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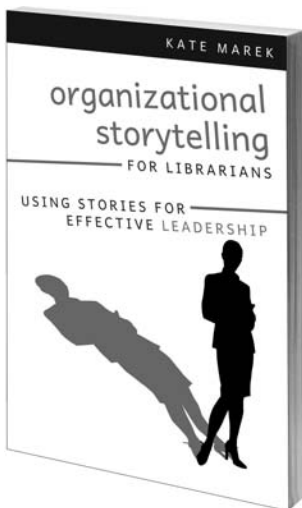
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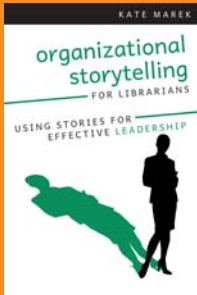
THE CHALLENGE OF LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

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