

Personnel Management in Libraries

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Why become a Manager?

- Personal /professional growth
- Bigger challenges – bigger impact
- Higher salary
- Leading/developing staff
- Expanded influence on the direction of the library
- Increased incidence of change – not boring!



Becoming a Library Manager

Effective managers:

- Collect and analyze information
- Share information
- Organize knowledge
- Build networks
- Believe in fair and equal treatment



An ability to *collect and analyze information* is a crucial skill utilized in activities ranging from creating a budget to strategic planning to writing a marketing plan.

Any organization benefits from the free flow of information through all levels; silent managers foster rumors and resentment.

An ability to organize knowledge is a crucial skill in large (strategic planning) as well as small (organized personnel files) activities.

Building networks is essential to setting up a support infrastructure to which you can go to share information, experiences, stories and acquired knowledge.

Fair and equal treatment in all dealings – staff or library customers – is the hallmark of a strong manager.

Becoming a Library Manager

Ineffective managers:

- Do not push their staff
- Avoid conflict
- Emphasize the philosophical over the practical
- Do not remember they are also librarians



Creating an environment where staff is satisfied with the status quo soon turns work into boring routine.

Without stepping in to manage conflicts among employees and patrons, a manager is fostering chaos, resentment and charges of lack of leadership – with justification!

Seeking the comprise between theory and practical application fosters confidence that management is flexible and able to “do the right thing”.

Drawing on one’s background as a librarian to more effectively manage in the library setting, builds credibility with staff.

Laws of Library Management

- Library resources are for use
- Every staff member his/her work
- Every task its doer
- Save the time of your staff
- A library is a growing organism



Source: The Accidental Library Manager – Rachel Singer

Author Rachel Singer, with a bow to Ranganathan, lists her laws of library management. Overall the ways in which a library manager manages the people and library must adhere to the principles and practices of librarianship.

Library resources are for use: Every library manager's job is to connect resources with users, achieving the library's goals.

Every staff member his/her work: A manager should learn staff's strengths and skills and deploy the staff accordingly.

Every task its doer: Managers must encourage responsibility and ownership of work giving credit for a job well done.

Save the time of your staff: Managers ensure staff have the tools, support and encouragement needed to do their jobs effectively (doing the right thing) and efficiently (doing the right thing well).

A library is a growing organism: Managers must ensure the library evolves to meet the changing needs of its patrons/customers.

Know Thyself

Create self-awareness through:

- Emotional intelligence
- Personality type
- Learning style
- Communication style



Checking out your self-awareness will help you develop strategies for working with people. People who have the ability to recognize their emotions and the effect these can have on their own performance and that of their colleagues are said to have a high EQ or Emotional Quotient. Knowing their key strengths and weaknesses makes them self-assured about their capabilities.

Emotional intelligence is defined as “the ability to be able to perceive one’s own feelings and those of others. (Goleman, 1995:43) Research suggests the emotional intelligence can be split into three categories: the enablers (sensitivity, influences and self-awareness); the drivers (motivation and decisiveness and the constrainers (emotional resilience, conscientiousness and integrity). Drivers and constrainers form elements of an individual’s personality that are difficult to change. Enablers can be developed. Drivers and constrainers are best handled with coping strategies: for example those with low emotional resilience should avoid highly stressful situations.

Try learning your personality type by taking the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II – <http://www.keirsey.com> test. The test is based on the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory which identifies four personality types: Artisans, Guardians, Idealists, and Rationals. A description of the types is included on the website. You might also try the Myers-Briggs personality test which has slightly different types or some other test to learn more about your personality traits.

What Does a Library Manager Do?

The basic job of a manager is to accomplish strategic goals by motivating and managing people and appropriate allocation of resources.

- Hire, train, supervise & evaluate staff
- Maintain facilities & technology
- Create a customer service culture
- Make decisions such as ranking goals & activities supporting the goals



Personnel Management

- Determining the department's organizational design
- Establishing job description and salary level
- Recruiting / Interviewing
- Hiring
- Retention / Training
- Performance Evaluations
- Firing



Organizational Design

- Sponsoring or parent organization may dictate structure
- Determine hierarchy based on selected criteria
 - Size, skills, interests of staff
 - Efficient & effective work flow
 - Services offered
 - Resources to be managed
- Strive for clarity in allocation of work and reporting structure



To Team or Not to Team?

- Drivers for adoption of a team model
 - Budget cuts
 - Technology
 - Constant, relentless change



Budget cuts have hit libraries hard. Public libraries are facing threats to shut down branches, shorten hours of operation, and a hiring freeze. All libraries are facing reduction in services at a time when they are needed more than ever!

Patron/customers routinely expect libraries to provide access, remote access and technology related services to which the individual might not otherwise have access...and, early adoption of new technologies.

Libraries are subject to all kinds of relentless change, at a faster pace. Customer/patron demographics, lines of business, new curriculums, support for new standardized testing are all precipitating change.

To Team or Not to Team?

- Teaming began in businesses
- Enables a user focus
- Demands continual change
- Empowers frontline staff decision-making
- Requires staff training/cross training
 - How to hold meetings
 - Respectful of team members & diverse opinions/views
 - Putting a team together
 - Equality of workloads across the team



One of the strongest by-products of teaming is the “flattening” of the organization which, in turn, pushes decision making down to the lowest levels in the organization. The University of Arizona (see the Phipps article on the bibliography – Organizational Design section) was a leader in adopting the teaming model though the University of Texas Southwest Medical Center Library (M. L. Higa article on bibliography – Organizational Design section) has also tried a teaming model. University of Arizona is now widely recognized as a prototype for organizational restructuring among academic libraries. Both movements were precipitated by the arrival of a new Director facing some dramatic issues.

The North Suburban Library System in Chicago is an example of a Public Library system who has developed a team-based organizational structure. Corporate Special Libraries are frequently structured on a team-based model. This is especially true if their parent organization utilized a team-based model.

Teaming requires skills staff may not have so migration to a teaming model does require training.

Job Descriptions / Salary Levels

- Seek organizational guidelines from the human resources department
- Obtain sample job descriptions and average local salaries or recommendations from other libraries of similar size, library professional organizations, or through networking with peers in the area



While you may not be able to obtain actual job descriptions or specific salaries from other sources (considered confidential to the organization), you are likely to get principle tasks assigned to a position and a salary range for the region. This information when viewed in tandem with the tasks for which you are hiring should give you enough to draft a description which you can then take to human resources for assistance in building the final version. Once the job description is finalized and resulting qualifications, skills and competencies identified, a salary level (a salary range based on education, required skill levels, amount of experience, and an “importance to the organization” factor) can be assigned by Human Resources. You might or might not agree. If not, then you will have to gather data to make a case for a different salary range. This is where salary survey data for library staff comes in handy! Most professional organizations routinely conduct salary surveys and publish their findings.

Recruiting

- A well written job posting produces qualified candidates!
- Ask for everything you want but decide what you *must* have – 100% of the required and 75% of the desired qualifications?
- Know who you can hire – does it have to be a US citizen, someone with a green card or do you have an H1-B visa allocation?
- Will you pay for out of town candidates to come for an interview?
- Will you pay relocation costs?



Each type of library has numerous recruiting sources unique to that particular field of librarianship. You will be more likely to find a candidate (or an opportunity if a candidate) for your organization by working with the sources dedicated to your kind of library. Professional organizations, their job lines/postings, publications, and conferences, listservs for/by specific librarians, for profit job placement firms, offer pro-active ways to search for candidates.

Contact with Human Resources is critical when recruiting. They are an excellent source for guidance on writing “legal” job postings – what you can and cannot demand in the way of skills, experience, and education. Can you even interview candidates outside of the organization unless you’ve not found any viable candidates within the organization? You don’t want to find out you’ve wasted your time with candidates who are unemployable, who are asking for a salary you cannot afford, or who can only take the job if relocation costs are not included. If you work in a small library without a human resources department, try contacting one of your colleagues at another local library or your professional association for help.

Interviewing

- HR may do the first interview of applicants by phone to determine organizational fit, and verify experience /salary requirements
- Subsequent interviews are driven by number of interviewers and setting (phone, in person, committee)
- Will it be the final four, final two or ?
- Ask some consistent questions of all candidates for comparison
- Use scenario based questioning to elicit details of actual experiences
- Check all references
- Hire for attitude – Train for skills



HR can assist in the interview process in several ways:

- Advice on appropriate (read legal) interview questions – cannot ask age, ethnicity, marital status, no. of children or even if you have child care arrangements among other things.
- Act as a clearinghouse for receiving resumes and inquiries about a job
- Conduct prescreening determining the organizational fit
- Qualify candidates salary requirements

Hiring

A good manager excels at matching the right person with the right job. It requires considering a candidate's:

- Capacity to learn
- Organizational fit
- Ability to adapt to change
- Commitment to work towards organizational goals
- Ability to grow with the rest of the staff



Take hiring decisions seriously because the individual could be on staff for many years. The best way to avoid problem employees is to never hire them in the first place!

Yet hiring is a great opportunity to add new skills and perspectives to the team. Each new member brings a unique background – new graduates may have technical skills current staff lacks, younger hires bring energy and ideas while veterans bring a wealth of experience and knowledge about what has or has not worked in the past.

When you have an opportunity to hire, also take the time to review existing job descriptions and modify them as necessary to meet changing needs of the library or to reassign work to offer growth opportunities for existing staff. You may also find that you will modify a job based on the qualifications of a desirable candidate. These kinds of changes may require a higher level of approval and you will most likely need to work with Human Resources to ensure compliance with company guidelines in descriptions as well as pay scales. Union agreements can also affect job descriptions and pay ranges.

Retention

- Hiring and training new staff is expensive
- Openings burden and stress the rest of the staff
- Great people create a great organization, attracting more great people
- Great and competent people reinforce a great customer service culture



Minimizing turnover is highly desirable. There is a definite (and not inexpensive) cost associated with the hiring process – advertising the position, candidate travel costs, relocation costs for the selected candidate, salaries for temporary workers to do the work or overtime pay for existing staff. There is also the stress on remaining staff who must perform their regular work as well as the work for the open position until it is filled – sometimes for several months!

Generally a high turnover is associated with an undesirable work place – because of working conditions, poor pay, poor management philosophy. Conversely, word gets around about a great place to work which in turn attracts top quality candidates for openings. Jobs are often filled through employee referrals thereby reducing costs such as advertising, relocation costs are eliminated because of quality local applicants, etc.

It shows when people are happy and passionate about their work. Effective and happy staff create happy patrons and customers.

Managing Performance I

- Never assume you know why an employee is having performance problems
- You can make suggestions but an employee is responsible for following through
- Increase awareness and use preventive coaching to forestall an employee's recurring problems
- Be willing to take disciplinary action if an employee does not improve performance as agreed



Managing Performance II

- You cannot manage it if it cannot be measured – Staff needs SMART goals – minimize subjective measures
- Conduct frequent, periodic checks against goals
- Take corrective action in a timely manner – but don't be too hasty!
- Success can be recognizing a lost cause



Never let a performance evaluation be a surprise! Make sure staff has **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reasonable/realistic, Time bound** goals, you've agreement on how the results against goals will be measured, and you agree on what success looks like – how will you know when you've accomplished a goal. Generally formal evaluations are held on an annual basis and may be tied to salary reviews if salary increases are performance based rather than cost-of-living or tenure based. A manager may write the review, the staff person may write their review with the manager adding comments, peers and customers may be invited to comment on a staff persons performance (360 degree reviews), or the review process may be some combination of any or all of these approaches.

Meet frequently with staff to stay up-to-date on progress toward goals. A good employee definitely has an idea of how they are doing and even ideas of how they can improve, or what barriers are preventing them the expected level of performance. At Microsoft, I talked with my manager every week for 30 minutes to let her know on what I was working.

You are doing no one a favor by not addressing a worsening situation. The employee is getting further behind. His colleagues become resentful that no action is taken. You do not want the situation to get to the point where it is not salvageable.

Success can be recognizing failure and moving on.

Conflict Resolution

- Don't procrastinate - address conflict in a timely manner
- Don't act in the heat of the moment either
- Differences in personality and outlook generate most conflict
- Ensure conflict does not interfere with goals, poison the environment for others or stop work



Terminating Staff

- GO TO HUMAN RESOURCES FOR ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE!
- Learn the accepted legal basis for terminating employment in your state and organizational policies around terminations
- BUT FIRST notify employee that performance is unacceptable, jointly develop an improvement plan, and work with the employee to execute
- Monitor performance to justify any action
- Document, document, document
- Have HR or security attend termination
- Be specific about employment verification and recommendations you can offer
- Be honest about reasons for termination. Try to part on good terms!



You really are not a seasoned manager until you fire your first person. It is one of the hardest things you will ever do. It is a failure—on the staff person's part, your part as the manager, and the institution too. Sometimes it is really nothing over which you or the employee have control, e.g., staff reductions. Sometimes it is a mismatch in personalities – the person is not a good cultural fit. But you learn from these experiences and the key is to learn from the experience so that you do not replicate the situation.

New Hire Orientation

- Communication is key to rapid assimilation of a new employee
- Familiarize employee with organizational culture
 - The older & larger an organization, the more formalized its behavior
 - The larger the organization, the more elaborate the structure
 - The atmosphere reflects the organization's industry
- Assign a mentor
- A training roadmap is essential



Assigning a mentor to a new employee is an excellent way to get the new employee rapidly introduced to the workplace. The mentor can introduce the organizational culture as well as conduct training. Using a training roadmap as a “checklist” to ensure all critical areas are covered is most effective. A useful by-product of this approach is that the new employee often feels more comfortable asking questions of a “mentor” than of their direct supervisor so they actually learn more and more quickly.

Training is necessary for both new hires and an ongoing professional development issue and necessity for maintaining high levels of service and productivity in the library. Cross training is critical in a teaming environment. Because a teaming environment tends to have a “lean” staff (generally the required number of workers less 1), without cross training, a function or service becomes unavailable if the person routinely handling that work is out.

Training / Professional Development

- Training must be offered to ensure success in new assignments
- Professional development should be encouraged, ongoing, and may even be required (continuing education credit)
- Assign a mentor from among peers even if in a different location



Don't skimp on training or support for professional development because of a fear you'll grow overqualified individuals who will then become dissatisfied and leave. Employees need a strong signal that their organization is willing to invest in them and there are few stronger signals than training. Training also increases the likelihood of success when adopting a new process, technology or instituting a new service. More importantly, training can alleviate boredom and stagnation while professional development activities make it possible for individuals to acquire new skills so they can move up in the organization. It is can be better to grow your own "new hires" than to have to go out into the job market...and ensuring career growth opportunities exist is a great retention tool.

Diversity

- *Value diversity* because it is now an integral part of:
 - the workplace
 - the customer base
- The sum is greater than the parts
- Differences increase adaptability
- Stay within the laws
- It's not easy – but it's essential



Diversity *demands respect* for a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints within the framework of what is best for the organization and patrons/customers. The most important thing about diversity is that people of different backgrounds each bring their particular strengths to an organization and the blending and interactions of the strengths and perspectives create an inherently stronger organization. This, in turn, fosters adaptability to changing circumstances since there is not one common perspective.

Committing to the value of diversity requires:

- acknowledgement of your own biases
- helping library staff recognize and overcome their biases
- understanding that people are influenced by their heritage but not necessarily defined by it
- expectation that all your staff will work up to their potential irrespective of their backgrounds, education or job level...and your work to bring out that potential in everyone
- willingness to work on identifying instances where differences are pertinent and when they are irrelevant
- recognition that every staff is a member of multiple groups and cannot be defined by membership in one
- stepping in when staff member behaves in ways that makes others uncomfortable
- Understanding that homogeneity can be unhealthy to the organization
- Commitment to incorporating diverse perspectives

Managing Differences

- Generational differences
- Professionals & paraprofessionals
- Contractors & temps
- Students & interns
- Volunteers
- Customers



Generational differences: Acknowledging the differences in communication styles and gaps is the best way to manage this “difference”. Generational issues can also affect attitudes toward technology, change and employer loyalty – or lack thereof. Successfully managing across generations requires respecting the talents and contributions of *every* individual.

Professionals & paraprofessionals: Managing professionals is like managing managers. Managing professionals who themselves have management responsibilities requires allowing more staff input and autonomy. On the other hand, turnover among paraprofessionals tends to be lower so can offer the greatest assistance in assimilating into the organizational culture, learning about process and procedures and getting a view of customers. Stamp out condescension toward non-MLS staff by the professionals. Treat people the way you would want to be treated. It is *your* responsibility to avoid fostering divisiveness among library staff members.

Contractors & temps: Legal and union rules may significantly influence how you interact with contractors and temporary staff. Understandably they lack the same level of commitment of a permanent employee. They may have very different ideas or values about what library service or their particular job should entail. They seldom suggest ways to improve workflow processes unless specifically asked. You cannot discipline, but only hire or fire.

Students & interns: They, too, may have very different ideas or values about what library service or their particular job should entail but most likely generational differences also exist for this group. Again there may be the lack of commitment to organizational goals by students, but interns from MLS or MIS programs tend to be quite motivated. Mentoring interns is very rewarding too.

Volunteers: They have a totally different motivation to work than any other group. There is no accountability so discipline is difficult. Dependability may suffer. Union rules may prohibit the use of volunteers too. Determining the size of a volunteer program and tasks to be entrusted to volunteers can be also be a challenge.

Customers: Managing customers in some ways is similar to managing staff. You want to encourage them to attend programs, use services and support the organization. Satisfied clients can be important advocates for the library, reaching populations the organization may not otherwise reach.

Communication

- Communication skills can be learned – become *great*
- Communication is an integral part of leadership
- Communicate up as well as down *and* across the organization
- Good communication offers clarity and motivation to staff



Communication Guidelines

- Don't fake it -- be truthful
- Explain reason for decisions and elicit feedback
- Be a good listener and open to receiving information (not gossip!)
- Have a *realistic* "open door" policy
- Check for the hidden meaning in body language and other non-verbal clues
- Give credit where credit is due
- Put yourself in your staff's place
- Communicate important things in multiple ways



Leadership

- Skills can be learned -- *desire* to lead cannot
- Lead by example
- Serve as a catalyst for others to do their best work
- Motivate, motivate, motivate
- Communicate a shared vision
- Delegate well and often



While leaders are not necessarily managers, the best managers are leaders. Effective leadership can be learned. The most effective leaders are those who encourage and guide their employees to learn, grow and help the organization achieve its goals.

The easiest way to become a leader is to become a manager that others will want to follow and to emulate – to lead by example. Positive motivation is often more effective than a reprimand.

Rules to Motivating Staff

- Staff appreciates and is motivated by recognition
- Staff is more motivated and happier when open communication exists
- Staff is motivated by finding meaning in their work
- Staff strives harder when trusted to do a good job
- Challenging work motivates staff
- Staff is more motivated when they believe they are treated fairly
- Staff is more motivated when they believe their manager backs them



Positive motivation is often more effective than a reprimand. Your ideal employee will be largely self-motivated which essentially makes them self-managing! Your role then is that of a guide or coach.

Different employees will be more or less motivated by different factors. Above all, avoid the temptation to micromanage which inherently demotivates staff.

Reasonable Expectations

- Set reasonable *self*-expectations
- Realize you are part of a management *team* which limits your sphere of control
- Strive for small continuous improvements
- Tackle the grand plan when you have sufficient support and resources



As a manager, it is essential, both for yourself and your staff, that you maintain balance. Begin by setting reasonable self-expectations. How? Meet with your manager to understand what is expected of you!

Accept that you are not in a position to make everyone happy and cannot solve all problems that come your way.

Set yourself up for success in every possible way. Fully understand the situation before making any changes. Strive for small improvements.

Lastly, ensure you have the resources (even if you just need management's support!) necessary to implement the *grand plan*!

Post comments or
questions in the class
Personnel Management
discussion forum.

