

A group of people, including men and women, are seated around a large, light-colored conference table. They appear to be in a meeting, with some looking at documents or laptops. The background is slightly blurred, showing a typical office or library setting.

# **TRANSFORMING LIBRARIES: THE REAL BARRIERS TO REINVENTING OURSELVES**

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# Background

- BA Social/Labor History (Anthropology minor studies), NIU
- MA in History and Archives, NCSU
- MLIS School of Information Resources & Library Science, UA
- Organizational behavior certificate (staff mgmt. training program)  
*Northwestern University*
- Certified Knowledge Manager Training  
*Knowledge Management Consortium, Int'l*
- Psychology and social psychology studies

# The “Transformed” Library

- **Transformed:** “To change the nature, function, or condition of; to convert.”
- **Factors impacting change in libraries:**
  - Technology (must “have faith”)
  - Business methods and approach (ROI, metrics, customer service impact, etc.)
  - Learning and knowledge flows (pedagogy, org. learning styles)
  - Information Industry changes  
(competition for libraries, “customer direct” services)



# Librarians in the New Paradigm

- ...As Observers of users / Teachers of information seeking, navigation, and use

(Partnerships to learn about users' information seeking and use behaviors. Apply new knowledge to improve instructional programs. Librarians out of "passive" role)

- ...As Builders of digital information systems and resources (integrating digital & physical collections into organizations' core activities, anytime, anywhere. Licensing/copyright mgmt.; metadata; databases, web portals, full-text/image digital libraries, consulting with "instructional partners")

- **...As Organizational Behaviorists**

(managers, leaders, org. designers, org. learning specialists, "knowledge environment engineers")

# Work Culture

- What is it?
- How do we change it?
- Why does it need to change?
- #1 Challenge to Change is:

*\*Work Culture!\**

# Culture

- Culture is:

“The totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, beliefs, values, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought”

- A “Culture of Work” is:

“The prevailing attitudes and behavior that characterize the functioning of a group or organization”

- My Definition:

“The ideas we hold about the ways we work”

# What Do We Need to Incorporate into our “Workselfs”?

- 1) Strive for flexibility / Thrive on uncertainty
- 2) Be opportunists (“library” vs. “information” and “knowledge”)
- 3) Thought Leadership
- 4) Reward Change
- 5) Read outside the profession
- 6) Committees for communication/thinking, project teams for “doing”
- 7) “Organizations are collections of people” (basic biology)
- 8) Knowledge sharers vs. Knowledge hoarders
- 9) Innovators and Risk takers



# Cultural / Org. Values

- Core Values:
- Provide leadership and have the ability to bring it out in others
- Being customer-centered; design business processes to meet their needs and wishes
- Practice the principle of “adding value” to your organization’s programs and services
- Take responsibility for the library’s performance
- Achieve high quality & excellence in what we do as a library



# Cultural / Org. Values

- Core Values cont'd:
- Work collaboratively with others
- Share knowledge and information to empower employees and improve library performance
- Encourage creative approaches to job performance
- Foster productive working relationships by conducting ourselves with honesty, integrity, and trust
- Embrace a diversity of thought and culture among our users and staff as we find solutions to challenges when meeting client information needs

# "The Manager / Leader's Role"

## *traits and skills needed*

1. Provide strategic direction
2. Leadership through change
3. Program assessment
4. Staff training and development / empowering staff
5. "Knowledge + record of achievement" vs. "years of experience"
6. Communication
7. Thought leadership
8. "Mistakes are ok"
9. Teacher/Coach/Guide/Listener (Know your people!)

# Hiring!

- If Work Culture is so important to positive change in organizations, then recruiting and retaining people who possess the desired cultural values are the MOST CRITICAL things we do.
- **A+A=A!**  
Ability + Attitude = a potentially Awesome organization
- An organization cannot rise above the level of its people [their ability and attitude]
- “Hire smart people and let them talk” (we put up barriers to this) – Larry Prusak



# Hiring

- Hire people with a record of success and who love to learn (change is a constant). Hire new people out of the field.
- It is not about hiring the person who has done it all before!
- Hire people who will be stretched some. Momentum, taking on more responsibility, continue learning more / growth throughout their career
- “A people” are smart, savvy, motivated, hard working - get the job done
- “A people” cost more, but they deliver more
  - More difficult to manage - they have more energy and move fast and don't wait for the organization to catch up.
  - Need to be challenged, so great bosses give them challenges

# Mediocrity

- *is a pernicious low grade fever that no organization can allow!*
- “is an insidious disease that saps the vitality, innovation, and energy of any organization. Once mediocrity infects an organization, it is extremely difficult to cure. Mediocrity becomes the performance standard. It becomes acceptable.”
- “If the mediocre get a real or perceived reward, the good people’s performances will drift down to the mediocrity level. Once mediocrity is the work pattern for the best people and is pervasive, it is VERY hard to rid from your organization.”
- “The cure for this disease? Usually requires a wholesale change in management. This is rare and hard to do in most organizations. So, to avoid the need for such a radical cure, use preventive medicine, and don’t let Mediocrity into your organization in the first place (Hire slow, fire fast)”

**Mediocrity is malevolent**

**Tolerating mediocrity is management malpractice!**

# “Library as customer service organization”

## Myth:

- “Libraries are unique”
- “Being a librarian is too different to learn from other non-librarians and non-library organizations”

## Problem:

- Librarians as “High Priests” of rarified information

## Who are we?

- Managers of a major customer service organization
  - look at businesses, their experiences



# Business & Their Experiences

- Airtran and Southwest Airlines – New business models  
Planes are in the air 90% of the time  
Employees performing multiple tasks
- “Self service” – Grocery stores, Banks, Drug store/ prescriptions, cell phone companies, etc.
- Innovation and 3M -- 60% of their revenues come from new ideas turned into products every 3 years

# "Where do we get this "other knowledge" we need to "transform?"

Fields to draw from... what we must become

- **Cultural Anthropology**

The scientific study of the behavioral, social, and cultural development of humans. Or, social science that studies social relationships of humans

- Areas studied by cultural anthropologists include social networks, diffusion, social behavior, kinship patterns, law, politics, ideology, religion, beliefs, patterns in production and consumption, exchange, socialization, gender, and other expressions of culture, with strong emphasis on the importance of fieldwork, i.e. living among the social group being studied for an extended period of time; beings.

- **Diffusion Theory -- Diffusion of innovations** is the social sciences theory for how and why new ideas spread through cultures.

*"(Innovation is) an idea, practice, or object that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption."* – Everett M. Rogers (1965,1995)

# "Other Knowledge:" Fields to Draw From

- **Knowledge Management:**

A cross disciplinary practice which enables organizations to improve the way they create, adopt, validate, diffuse, store and use knowledge in order to attain their goals faster and more effectively



# "Other Knowledge:" Fields to Draw From

- **Management Science**

(Leadership, Change Management, Project Management, Organization Development and Learning, Innovation Management)

## **On Leadership:**

- "Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality"  
--Warren G. Bennis
- "There are two ways of being creative. One can sing and dance. Or one can create an environment in which singers and dancers flourish" (WGB)

# “Other Knowledge:” Fields to Draw From

Dichotomy between managers and leaders was further described by W. Bennis (1989). He draws twelve distinctions between the two groups:

- Managers administer ; leaders innovate,
- Managers ask how and when, leaders ask what and why,
- Managers focus on systems ; leaders focus on people,
- Managers do things right ; leaders do the right things,
- Managers maintain ; leaders develop,
- Managers rely on control ; leaders inspire trust,
- Managers have a short-term perspective ; leaders have a longer-term perspective,
- Managers accept the status-quo ; leaders challenge the status-quo,
- Managers have an eye on the bottom line ; leaders have an eye on the horizon,
- Managers imitate ; leaders originate,
- Managers are the classic good soldier ; leaders are their own person,
- Managers are a copy ; leaders are original.

# "Other Knowledge:" Fields to Draw From

## ■ Change Management

...is the process of developing a planned approach to change in an organization. Typically the objective is to maximize the collective efforts of all people involved in the change. At its core, change management is primarily a human resource management issue. This is because implementing new procedures, technologies, and overcoming resistance to change fundamentally "people issues".

## ■ Organizational Learning

...is an area of knowledge within organizational theory that studies models and theories about the way an organization learns and adapts.

In Organizational Development (OD), learning is a characteristic of an *adaptive* organization, i.e., an organization that is able to sense changes in signals from its environment (both internal and external) and adapt accordingly. OD specialists seek to assist their clients to learn from experience and incorporate the learning as feedback into the planning process.



# "Other Knowledge:" Fields to Draw From

- **Organizational Psychology**

"the study of human behavior and attitudes in the workplace" "scientific study of individual and group behavior in formal organizational settings"

- **Instructional designers and technologists**

Instructional Design is the analysis of learning needs and development of instruction. Instructional design models typically specify a method, that if followed will facilitate the transfer of knowledge, skills and attitude to the recipient

# "Other Knowledge": Fields to Draw From

- **Information architecture**

"... is the construction of a structure or the organization of information. On the Web, information architecture is a combination of organizing a site's content into categories and creating an interface to support those categories"

- **Content management**

"...involves collecting, managing, and publishing web content and deals with content development, collection, editorial review, version control, content formatting and format conversion, security, indexing, taxonomies and classification, metadata, and workflow processes that bring this together in a digital content publishing process"

# “Other Knowledge:” Fields to Draw From

## ■ Information science

The collection, classification, storage, retrieval, and dissemination of recorded knowledge treated both as a pure and an applied science.



# Special Focus on Knowledge Management

- So, exactly what is “information” as opposed to “knowledge?”
- Nancy Dixon – “**information** is “data that is ‘in formation’ — it is data that has been sorted, analyzed, and displayed, and is communicated through spoken language, graphics displays, or numeric tables.”
- For Dixon, **knowledge** goes one step further and is “defined as the meaningful links people make in their minds between information and its application in action in a specific setting.”

# Special Focus on Knowledge Management

- One of the founding fathers of the concept of Intellectual Capital, Karl Erik-Sveiby, defines **knowledge** as:

“the capacity to act — knowledge is embedded in people and knowledge occurs in the process of social interaction.”

# Special Focus on Knowledge Management

- (new) Knowledge brings about (new) action
- “Knowledge sharing” in organizations is viewed as a program of activities that improves organizational knowledge



# Special Focus on Knowledge Management

- “Learning is a social process”
- to generate more knowledge and create a more valuable organization for customers, social processes must foster the communicative environments that improve knowledge growth.
- tools and techniques that increase communication, particularly of a spontaneous nature, will best serve the goal of increased knowledge sharing.

# How do we “change” ourselves, our work culture ?

- The Challenge to Libraries:  
Libraries are changing, recognize information is everywhere, hence opportunities for us are everywhere
- We Need to:  
Understand “it takes a village” of information and learning professionals to run a library now
- Need a “program” of incentives and disincentives to grow and share knowledge, be leaders, take risks, be opportunists
- change = opportunity

A background image showing two men in suits. The man on the left is holding a red cup to his ear, and the man on the right is holding a red cup to his mouth, as if shouting. A faint white line connects the two cups, suggesting a signal or communication.

*Thank you!*

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