

Changes: Discovering the Leader Within

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Abstract

Change, whether good or bad, is inevitable. Changes occur not only by administrative decision making practices, but also by advances in technology, individual initiatives, patron demands, expectations and much more. Our discussion not only included examples of how change has affected us personally but also the impact within our library, the campus and the field of librarianship. We discussed how these changes have afforded us the opportunity to take a leadership role by advancing our interests, positioning ourselves for growth in the profession, and acquiring new skills.

Discussion

Introduction

We all know that change is a part of life. Without change there would be no growth and when we don't grow, we stagnate. We all are aware that with change comes choices, challenges, excitement, opposition, and much more. However, too often we are confronted with too many new choices, a myriad of options that may require fast reaction. Our first response may depend on how (un)welcomed change may be depending on our current position or situation, to say the least. Therefore it's not uncommon for many of us to oppose change and become "change resisters" instead of "change managers". Change should be viewed not as a threat but rather as an opportunity for personal/professional growth and new beginnings.

There is an old philosophy that says leadership and great ideas start at the top. However, in today's challenging and competitive world, leadership and great innovations may come from anywhere within an organization-- starting with you. What differentiates leaders from everyday workers is action. Leaders assess and they (re)act.

In this session, we focused on how librarians can emerge as leaders from any position in the library. Although leadership opportunities may result from changes in job responsibilities due to budget cuts, personnel shifts or reorganization; other leadership roles may arise from taking the initiative and thinking outside the box.

Description

The session was formatted around a PowerPoint presentation, with ample time for both audience participation and discussion. We began by showing a YouTube video that talks about change. After, we talked about changes that we've experienced from the field of librarianship, the

University and within the Madden Library; we preceded to discuss how our title and responsibilities have changed over the last five years. We also talked about how knowing yourself (doing a personal SWOT analysis) can help in coping with change and finding the leader within.

Three audience participation sessions were conducted throughout the discussion and the following questions were asked:

1. *What are some changes that have occurred at your library?* (Think-Pair-Share exercise)
2. *What is your image of a leader?* (Poll using pollseverywhere.com)
3. *What are some changes that are happening to you?* (Think-Pair-Share exercise)

In addition, we handed out a SWOT analysis worksheet, URLs to a leadership qualities/skills test and a short YouTube movie, “Who Moved My Cheese?” by Dr. Spencer Johnson. The movie (also published as a book) focused on how to become change managers and not change resisters. Following the four characters -- Sniff, Scurry, Hem, and Haw, the audience was asked to inwardly identify themselves based on these four characters and their leadership styles.

KeyPoints

Our session allowed attendees to share and reflect upon their personal experiences, as well as brainstorm on how to find or align themselves with leadership opportunities as a result of change. Our personal experiences were shared, as well as the tools that we used to analyze ourselves and the opportunities available to us. One of the main tools is the SWOT analysis.

Audience Sharing

The following are some answers that were given during our session regarding the questions that were asked:

1. What are some changes that have occurred at your library?
 - New Deans
 - Consolidation of departments, units, etc.
 - New library, remodeled space
 - Elimination of library director position
 - Lots of retirement, no replacements
 - Budget cuts
2. What is your image of a leader?
 - 5 people = explorers and pioneers
 - 3 people = entrepreneurs and founders
 - 2 people = politicians and statesmen/women
 - 10 people = visionaries and thinkers
3. What are some changes that are happening to you?
 - More responsibilities (added)
 - New office
 - (Re) assigned to another job with no experience or knowledge of position
 - New role/change in library services

SWOT

SWOT stands for **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats**. It's a strategic planning tool created by Albert Humphrey, an American business and management consultant who specialized in organizational management and cultural change. SWOT is usually used in the business industry to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of a project or business venture (Clark, 2010). But you can certainly apply this same concept to yourself by doing a personal SWOT analysis.

With an understanding of ourselves-- our strengths (matching it to opportunities), weaknesses (seek training opportunities, etc., to improve) and threats (things that we can't control -- find ways to work with it, compromise, find balance, etc.)-- we are better equipped to handle change and position ourselves to be open to opportunities. If you analyze yourself using the SWOT framework, you can start to separate yourself from your peers, and further develop the specialized talents and abilities you need to advance your career (MindTools, 2014).

Take in Example 1

Bottom Up Leadership

“Can leadership be shown bottom-up? How often have you influenced your boss to think or act differently? Is this not leadership shown by you to your boss? Because we normally think of leadership as a top-down role, the very idea of bottom-up leadership is nonsense (Lead2XL, 2010).” However bottom-up leadership is alive and flourishing in our society, in our profession. Bottom-Up leadership is defined as: showing the way for others either by example or by promoting a new direction.

In this discussion, we shared our personal experiences in finding leadership opportunities by matching our strengths to opportunities in our SWOT analysis. Some of these leadership roles were obtained simply by volunteering for various committees; participating in library, campus or system-wide initiatives; or aligning our interests to campus goals and mission.

We conclude by encouraging our audience to find what inspires them, participate in or initiate collaborative efforts, seek opportunities to make a change, and lead by example. And most importantly, never, never give up even though you may feel like there's no light at the end of the tunnel.

“If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude”
Maya Angelou

References

- Clark, D.R. (2010). SWOT Analysis Activity. [Online]. Available from <http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/SWOT.html>. [Accessed: March 15, 2014].
- Lead2XL. (2010). Bottom-Up Leadership. [Online]. Available from <http://www.lead2xl.com/bottom-up-leadership.html>. [Accessed: March 13, 2014].
- MindTools.com. (2014). Personal SWOT Analysis: Making the Most of Your Talents and Opportunities. [Online]. Available from: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05_1.htm. [Accessed: March 12, 2014].

Appendix 1

YouTube Video: *Change America*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fs4ez73NJq4>

YouTube Movie: *Who Moved My Cheese?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91YxXk3fmw8>

Leadership Skills Tests: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_50.htm

Personal SWOT Analysis: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newTMC_05_1.htm

SWOT Worksheet:

<http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/worksheets/SWOTAnalysisDownload.htm>