



# JLAMs

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# Managing from Middle

# Engagement & More



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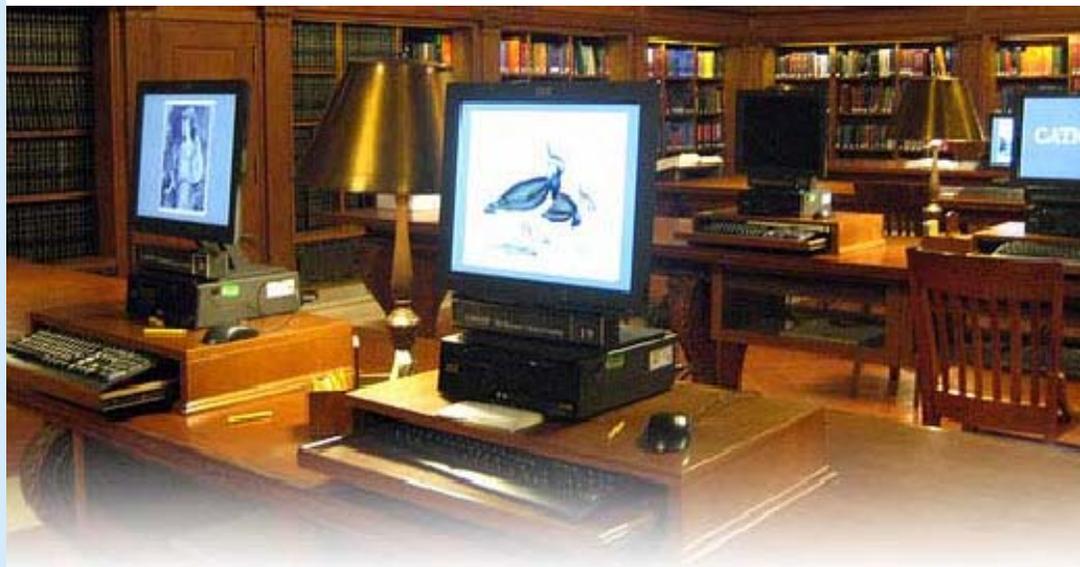
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# CONTENTS

## **3** PRESIDENT'S AND EDITOR'S

## **4** MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE *By Robert Farrell*

## **19** ENGAGEMENT: A LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVE *By James W. Marcum*

## **28** PARALLELS BETWEEN MENTOR/MENTEE RELATIONSHIP AND SUPERVISOR/ EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP *By Regina Vertone*

## **33** WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A MOVER AND SHAKER IN THE FIELD OF LIBRARIANSHIP? *By Raymond Pun*



**Claudia Depkin**  
*LAMS President*

## President's and Editor's Message



**Richard J. Naylor,**  
*JLAMS Editor*

JLAMS, the electronic Journal of the Leadership and Management Section of the New York Library Association, finishes its ninth year and we are happy to introduce the Spring 2012-13 JLAMS.

JLAMS provides a valuable outlet for the dissemination of ideas, articles, academic papers, and essays of interest to library leaders at all levels and of all types of libraries: academic, public, school and special libraries. As library leaders, we have a lot in common, but we have few places to share in detail what we know and what we learn. JLAMS was the first peer-reviewed journal in NYLA, and the original editorial board set a high standard for the publication and we are proud to maintain that standard. Readers of JLAMS are well-served by our team of referees, as are those whose contributions are published here. For the high quality and value of JLAMS to be continued your submissions are vitally important. For information on article submissions, editorial policy, a submission form and more, visit the JLAMS website page at <http://www.nyla.org/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=318>

Over the years that we have been publishing JLAMS we have enjoyed working with and learning from many interesting colleagues. In this issue we have four articles. Our lead article by Robert Farrell illuminates a topic LAMS has provided programming on at conference, i.e. how middle managers can lead and make change happen. Next, James Marcum contributes a leadership article on engagement. In the third article Regine Vertone describes how the supervisor / employee relationship can be enriched to provide mentorship to employees. Finally, Ray Pun describes the importance of the Library Journal Movers and Shakers program and why we should embrace it.

JLAMS is made possible by your membership in NYLA and in LAMS. LAMS receives funding based upon the number of NYLA members who select LAMS as their primary NYLA section, as well as by those who pay an additional \$7.00 to add LAMS as a secondary section. Please keep this in mind when renewing your NYLA membership. Also please take the time to encourage all of your colleagues and contacts in the profession to consider joining NYLA and LAMS. And thanks for your support!

## MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE

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*By Robert Farrell*

**A** *bstract:* This paper seeks to provide library managers with a theoretical framework for thinking about how change is effected by those in middle management positions. Starting from the principles that change takes place within socio-culturally bounded contexts and is most successful when approached indirectly, two scenarios characteristic of many situations requiring change middle managers commonly face are then put forward. Following each scenario, a possible solution or path towards change is advanced in order to provide the reader with models for putting into practice the theoretical ideas presented. A methodology that combines theoretical frameworks and practical scenarios is adopted in order to ground theory in practice and thereby lead readers toward what might be called a “praxis” of change making.

### **Introduction**

It is no longer enough for middle managers to demonstrate competence in the traditional management areas of “planning, directing, organizing, and controlling the activities of their areas of responsibility” (Gilley 2005, 49). Today’s library directors, in line with contemporary management practices, increasingly demand that their middle managers become “change leaders”—individuals capable of identifying trends in the field or problems on the horizon and envisioning and implementing innovative responses and solutions (Gilley 2005). But how, from positions of marginal power, are library middle managers able to respond to this call?

A number of factors have led to these new expectations for middle managers. Libraries have followed the historical trend towards “shared leadership” within their organizations, a leadership structure that emphasizes bottom-up strategic planning and goal setting processes, and places responsibility for practical execution on those who manage the specific units to which goals correspond (Cawthorne 2010). Second, libraries are positioned at the center of rapidly changing political, economic, and technological circumstances. Public, school, academic, and special libraries, particularly those within corporations and government, must cope with increasingly unstable budgets, pressures to increase efficiency, and the changing landscape of digital information access and consumption. Phrases such as “culture of innovation” and “dynamic organization” have become

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## MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE

buzzwords in the library field, giving rise to new organizations (Harvard University 2012), conferences (OCLC 2012), and publications (Journal of Library Innovation).

Sullivan (1992) drawing on Kanter (1986) was one of the first in the library field to point to the emerging entrepreneurial role of the library middle manager. Since then, library middle managers have come to be seen as “intrapreneurs” within and entrepreneurs outside their organizations expected to identify opportunities for innovation and leverage the resources needed to effect it (Lambert, Roberts, and Rowley 2011; Rowley 2013; Farrell 2011). Library middle managers increasingly are expected to secure buy-in from colleagues and others we might call “change partners,” strategize methods for bringing the desired change to fruition, and guide the activities necessary for ensuring success. Much in the literature has been written on change management – the process of guiding front line employees through changes implemented from above – from the middle manager’s perspective (Gorman and Williams 2013). Mosley (2004, 119-132) provides an important, almost paradigmatic picture of the library middle manager as the agent of change directed by upper administration. Little, however, has addressed the nuanced work of conceiving and implementing change from positions within the middle of library organizations.

This article thus seeks to provide library managers with a theoretical framework for thinking about how change is practically brought about by those in middle management positions. In doing this, two guiding theoretical principles will be put forward.

First, library middle managers must understand how their libraries and the larger institutions in which their libraries exist (universities, cities and towns, corporations) “think.” Drawing on the work of social anthropologist Mary Douglas (1983), it can be argued that effective change leaders should not view individuals as independent rational agents but should rather understand them as members of organizations who share the values of and think through the intellectual categories afforded by those organizations. By understanding individuals in collective terms, middle managers are able to gain a clearer understanding of what motivates people within organizations and how change can be framed and communicated to change partners, both of more and less authority, who must buy into and contribute to new organizational directions if change is to be successful.

Second, following economist John Kay (2010), it will be argued that effective change leaders rarely attempt to effect change through head-on, top-down, direct methods. This challenge is particularly important for middle managers to recognize since they generally lack the power and authority to bring about change by fiat. Rather, effective change leaders adopt indirect approaches to change, methods that adapt to the complexities of working with people of varying personalities in complex, changing situations and strategies that rely upon influence.

After considering these two principles, they are applied to several problem-based scenarios characteristic of many common change situations library middle managers face. Following each scenario, a possible solution or path towards change will be advanced in order to provide the reader with a model for putting into practice the theoretical ideas presented.

There are several reasons for adopting a methodology that combines both the presentation of theoretical frameworks and practical scenarios. The theoretical frameworks put forward can be seen as the core of what we might call the praxis of change making. As Jacobs (2008) defines it, “praxis” is “the interplay of theory and practice...[which] simultaneously tries to ground theoretical ideas into practicable activities and use experiential knowledge to rethink and re-envision theoretical concepts” (260). Darder, Baltodano, and Torres (as cited in

## MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE

Jacobs 2008, 260) explain the importance of developing praxis, noting that “cut off from practice, theory becomes abstraction or ‘simple verbalism.’ Separated from theory, practice becomes ungrounded activity...” Dreyfus (2004) characterizes praxis as a “phronisis,” a term from classical Greek philosophy that denotes the kind of practical wisdom skilled practitioners in all walks of life acquire through deep reflection on long experience.

The scenarios put forward, therefore, provide controlled opportunities for readers to think through the practical application of the theoretical ideas presented, thereby serving as aids to developing praxis. As Kepner and Tregoe (1960) note, the case method approach to business learning, which as Victor (1999) points out shares much in common with the use of scenarios, allows “the manager [to gain] vicarious experience in seeing how ideas have worked out and might work for someone else” (117). Scenarios present true-to-life situations that allow readers to project themselves into the action of the scenarios in order to think through various ways of approaching and solving the problem presented. But “because scenarios...attempt to stimulate thought about the process of analysis rather than a specific set of do’s and don’ts, multiple solutions are possible. Since many of these solutions are equally applicable, no ‘right answer’ exists” (Victor 1999, 100). The path towards effecting change put forward after each scenario is thus only one of many possible approaches to achieving change within the parameters outlined. The theoretically informed approaches to solving the problems presented in the scenarios challenge and even beg library middle managers to disagree with them. As such, readers should feel free to set the article aside and use the scenarios (or similar ones of their own devising) as jumping off points for independent, problem-based thinking or as topics for groups of librarians to consider and “war game.”

### **How Institutions Think**

Novice library middle managers very often make a common mistake when they attempt to introduce innovation within their unit of responsibility or the library as a whole. Seized with the brilliance of a new idea, many attempt to force change on their colleagues either through their actions or words. They believe that reason is on their side and that anyone willing to listen to reason—or at least their reasons—will be convinced that the changes they’ve suggested are necessary. Anyone not in favor of their suggestions is either irrational or irascible, depending on the middle manager’s perspective.

Gordon (2007) notes that librarians new to an organization run the risk of alienating the very people on whose cooperation they depend if change is to be successful. She argues that approaches to change “with less likelihood of alienating colleagues stand the best chance of success” and recommends that librarians “cultivate the ability to balance the need for change with respect for institutional memory and strengths,” because “understanding these perspectives can help you get yourself and your ideas taken seriously by long-term colleagues and administrators” (71-72).

Practical experience tells most of us that these are wise words: It’s best to try to understand and respect the way things have been done in an organization if one is to then become a successful innovator within it (Martin 2012). But what does it take to understand institutional memory and the way institutional memory determines how new ideas will be perceived and received? And how are individuals within organizations shaped by institutional memory and how does that affect their decision-making processes when change is suggested?

To answer these questions, we need a robust model of the relationship between institutions and the people who comprise them. The social anthropologist Mary Douglas puts forward such a model in her book *How Institutions Think* (1986).

## MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE

Douglas starts with the premise that only individuals within institutions think and make decisions. But she argues that this does not mean that these individuals are independent rational agents operating outside socio-cultural contexts. Institutions, no matter how large or small, constitute specific social spheres, the members of which establish collective beliefs and structures of thought that allow them to communicate with each other, make collective decisions, and coordinate collective actions. Douglas argues that “each kind of community is a thought world, expressed in its own thought style” that “penetrat[es] the minds of its members, defin[es] their experience, and set[s] the poles of their moral understanding” (128). Institutions provide a common framework for members to understand themselves and each other as engaged in important collective projects that depend on their ongoing solidarity and commitment to the group. For Douglas, institutions shape the categories of their member’s thought, not only informing their sense of who they are, but also circumscribing the scope of what counts as right or wrong, good or bad, categories that come to correspond to that which either preserves or threatens the existence of the institutions through which their lives find purpose and meaning.

Institutions shape their member’s sense of self and moral outlook in two primary ways. First, they are established on a founding analogy – a kind of metaphorical principle – that helps individual members make sense of their activities and efforts. For example, within academic libraries a common analogy is that of the library as the “heart” of the campus. This is clearly demonstrated in University of California Berkeley’s centennial celebration of its Doe Library appropriately titled “Heart of the Campus” (University of California Berkeley 2012), suggesting the library is to the campus as the heart is to the body. From that founding analogy a host of other relationships and purposes can be derived. The members of a different library founded on a different analogy – say an academic library that sees itself as the “crossroads” of the community (Smith College Library 2012), or a public library that sees itself as a “build[er]” of “community” (Seattle Public Library 2012)–will thereby have a different understanding of their mission and role as a library and as librarians.

Second, the members of an organization preserve institutional memories (as well as engage in collective amnesia when necessary) to reinforce the values of the organization. These memories help create an organizational narrative – the story the organization tells about itself and its role in the world. In Douglas’ (1986) words, “Public memory is the storage system for the social order” (70). Past events are interpreted through the system of meaning grounded in the institution’s founding analogy. Activities or events that do not fit with the group’s narrative sense of its past are often forgotten or reinterpreted to fit into the story told about the institution.

There is nothing mystical or magical about the way institutions give rise to thought worlds. Again, in Douglas’ view, it is not the institutions themselves that think. Rather, each individual member’s way of thinking is shaped in a similar manner by the institution–and for the most part these individuals operate unaware of these guiding beliefs.

Many libraries and communities do not have a stated vision or mission statement that explicitly articulates their founding analogy. The middle manager must therefore work to make these thought worlds clear to herself if she is to be an effective change agent. At times she must try to excavate the guiding metaphors that underlie the institution’s thought style and its members’ sense of their collective past in order to determine what will make sense to them for their future. Suggested ideas or courses of action that appeal to the group’s founding analogy or accepted history will be perceived to strengthen the group and thus be more favorably received. Those that violate the founding analogy or appeal to past experiences the group prefers to forget will be seen as threatening. Simply appealing to reason and expecting objectively good ideas to be adopted is in most cases not only ineffective; it is off-putting and counterproductive. The values that guide group decision-making are typically not logical values, but rather unique institutional values–the deep commitments to ways of thinking and doing that are shaped by the norms of the institutional culture.

### Direct vs. Indirect Approaches

For the library middle manager, change can best be thought of as a problem to be solved. Stated as a problem, change can be formulated abstractly as: How do I make X become Y? Or, more concretely: How do I get this particular group of people in these particular dynamic circumstances to bring into existence a new set of circumstances or way of doing things?

Senior managers can often take direct approaches to solving problems and creating change. They can exercise authority and direct others to implement their ideas. But this is not an option for those in the middle of an organization. Middle managers are almost to a person not in positions of complete autonomy or authority. As such their power is extremely limited. Whereas senior managers can and do at times implement change by fiat, middle managers depend upon suasion and their power to get others to lend their energies to projects or performance practices that originate in the minds and desires of themselves or those who direct them.

Kay (2010) provides middle managers with a useful framework for understanding the roles of direct and indirect, or what he calls “engineering” and “oblique” approaches to problem solving and change. In Kay’s view, the direct approach to problem solving views real world situations requiring change as situations that can be “engineered” to become better or different. Such an approach begins with the “engineer” defining the objectives or optimal outcomes he would like to bring about. The engineer then undertakes a “root analysis” (60) of those objectives to logically deduce the intermediate steps that must be taken to realize them. As Kay notes, the direct approach can be successful “if you are clear about your high-level goals and knowledgeable enough about the system their achievement depends on” (178). In other words, if a situation and its variable parts are relatively simple and can be understood much as one might understand the components and rules of a game, logical, a priori solutions to real world problems can be determined and implemented with success (63-65).

Some situations in life are like this. But most situations in need of change are much more complex. Direct approaches in such circumstances not only very often fail, but lead to even worse situations. As examples, Kay points to numerous failed attempts to engineer positive change, including the disastrous consequences of applying Corbusier’s architectural ideas to mass public housing problems (4-5), Robert Moses’ later work to “improve” New York’s transportation systems (53-54), and the most recent Iraq war (173-178). Those who take an engineering approach to problem solving are much like those who, in Douglas’ view, over estimate the power of rationality to operate within socio-culturally bounded institutions. Kay’s thought thus dovetails nicely with Douglas’: both are skeptical of the power of abstract logic to influence complex circumstances.

The world doesn’t often lend itself, according to Kay, to direct approaches to problem solving because our “goals are often vague” to begin with, “complexity extensive, problem descriptions incomplete, [and the] environment [in which we and those with whom we collaborate] uncertain” (178). Generally speaking it is not clear what moves one should make to solve problems and bring about change within or between complex institutions, as we understand them in Douglas’ terms. There are simply too many variables, too many moving parts, too many culturally and historically shaped attitudes.

Kay makes clear this complexity by drawing distinctions between “high level objectives” (the change outcomes we ultimately desire), “intermediate goals” (short term outcomes we need to achieve along the path towards realizing high level objectives), and “actions” (the concrete steps we take, relationships we develop, and choices we make as we progress in our course) (87). Engineering approaches based in overly analytical, a priori thinking discount the complex ways actions taken to achieve intermediate goals modify the situation in which subsequent actions must be determined, Kay believes. They also ignore the way the “parallel objectives, goals, and actions” of change

partners necessarily impact the practicable actions and goals afforded to the change leader (87). In other words, intermediate goals often must be modified due to the actions of others, which in turn may require the change leader to take new, unexpected courses of action, perhaps even modify higher level objectives in order to bring about a different, “best possible” change or solution.

Obliquity, Kay argues is best understood as a sophisticated form of “muddling through” problems towards the best solution that emerges as present actions determine future possibilities (59-67). “Muddling through” is not a nebulous process of intuitive, random actions. Following Lindblom (1959, 1979), Kay (2010) notes that it is in fact a “disciplined, ordered process” by which the problem solver, through acting and reacting to circumstances his actions have modified, evaluates successive actions by comparing the options delimited by his previous moves (62).

Classic works in the area of indirect strategy, books like Alinsky’s *Rules for Radicals* (1971), Sun Tzu’s (5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E/1971) and Clausewitz’s (1832/2006) works on war, political and moral works like those of Machiavelli (1532/2005) and Baltasar Gracian (1647/2005), can be seen as studies that attempt to articulate some basic principles of the “science of muddling through.” As Kay (2010) notes, Machiavelli can be seen as “the epitome of the oblique decision maker” (136). In truth, the middle manager must be a little bit Machiavellian, since he is rarely in a position to engineer changes even if he is able to see clearly what needs to be done and who should do it.

But advocating that library middle managers adopt oblique approaches to effecting change is not a call for political or social manipulation. As with the use of any tool, strategic approaches to influencing and guiding the actions of others toward desired ends can be undertaken from ethical or unethical standpoints (Shell and Moussa 2007, 242-244). Like others who find direct approaches either impossible, impractical, or unfruitful—social activists who lack social or political power, military planners who cannot risk undertaking lines of direct attack, politicians or business people who rely on keeping their motives veiled—the middle manager must intelligently and ethically “muddle through.” The analyses that accompany the following scenarios aim to illustrate such an approach.

## Scenarios

### *Scenario*

#### **1 – Creating a makerspace in a public library**

Steven oversees the User Services department of a public library located in a historically economically depressed, former manufacturing town. A handful of public libraries of a similar size in other, more affluent areas of his state have recently experimented with creating makerspaces in their libraries, investing in new technologies including 3D printers and other expensive tools.

Articles in the press and on library-related blogs indicate that these makerspaces have become popular and heavily used resources and Steven feels that such a space might be both exciting to manage and useful to his community.

Both Steven and the Library Director, Margaret, are relatively new to the community and have only been employed at the library for the past three years. So far they have not introduced any major changes in library services, but both are intrigued by the possibility of creating a makerspace and see it as a possible avenue for economic development and job training for the community.

### *Analysis*

To begin, Steven should find it relatively easy to identify the founding analogy and consequent institutional tropes he and Margaret should tap into within the cultural context of their economically challenged community. If the former manufacturing town still views itself as independent, creative, and hard working, a makerspace can be explained to stakeholders as a way for the community to uphold and recommit to those root values. If the community wishes to move away from that image and recreate itself as a part of contemporary knowledge/information economy, Steven could frame the idea as a way for the town to move in a new direction. Whatever the narrative may be, innovation and the investments it requires can be made desirable by connecting it to community held traditions and shared perspectives. In a different institutional context—such as a suburban community whose values center around families and child rearing or a tech-centric bedroom community outside a major city—a different approach would be called for. Perhaps appealing to traditional family values or learning would work better in the former situation and the desire to be cutting edge, to be “ahead of the curve” in the latter.

Having established the values to which he and Margaret should appeal, Steven must next identify the potential stakeholders who might benefit from the creation of a makerspace or see such an innovation as beneficial and worthy of their support. Steven might find the “audience analysis and identification” section of the Public Library Association’s 2007 Toolkit, *Libraries Prosper with Passion, Purpose, and Persuasion*, a useful resource in this phase of his planning. To acquaint himself with prominent and influential community members, beyond obvious, well-known local political figures, Steven might turn to the library’s archives and local newspaper clippings to determine who in the community might become advocates or even donors for the creation of the makerspace.

If Steven could assume the existence of established relationships between upper management and prominent community members, extensive planning to identify potential supporters might not be necessary. But this is not the case for Steven. By definition, a middle manager must take an indirect approach if he is to effect change that requires cooperative relationships among many potential change partners where such relationships are absent. The middle manager must therefore exercise patience and accept that a long time horizon might be needed to see change accomplished. It also requires that one be willing to sacrifice the accolades one might receive from the larger professional library community for introducing a novel and possibly tenuous innovation for the long-term satisfaction of successfully implementing a new service that will last.

Keyes and Namei (2010) provide the field with a model for slowly developing change by applying the Japanese concept of *nemawashi* within the context of creating credit-bearing information literacy courses in academic libraries. As they note, “In its literal sense, *nemawashi* refers to digging around the roots of a tree and carefully binding them before beginning the process of moving the tree, in order to ensure successful transplantation” (25). Within Japanese business culture, the term has been metaphorically applied to describe the painstaking process of gaining the cooperation and “buy-in” of multiple stakeholders within an organization needed to implement an innovation successfully once all parties are on board (26). While *nemawashi* as a strategy for effecting change “may appear, at first, to be inefficient and overly cautious,” the slow process of consensus building allows all parties to identify with the common goal put forward, thus ensuring their commitment to the project’s success (27).

As the middle manager begins the slow process of *nemawashi*, he will find that each individual approached will bring his or her own agenda and interests to the table. Steven’s strategy must therefore be flexible. There is no a priori method to determine how conversations will unfold, how relationships will develop, or how one relationship will help or hinder the development of another. Steven must make his pitch in a politically savvy manner, tailoring his advocacy for the makerspace to the audience or individual he’s addressing. He may find it necessary to study persuasive influence techniques to build the buy-in and enthusiasm he seeks (Shell and Moussa 2007; Daly 2011).

## MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE

He may also need to adopt the kind of iterative, experimental approach to moving forward advocated for by Kay. As each relationship develops, new opportunities will be created or closed off, delimiting his scope of choice and action as he advances towards his goal.

Such slow change is made even more difficult from a middle management perspective in so far as some relationships can only be secured through the patient work of a willing senior manager or one trustful enough to empower a subordinate to develop strong ties with influential community members. Steven, in our scenario, is in a fortunate position. But senior library management can often be the most change-averse party in a library. Different organizations and institutions reward different kinds of leadership approaches. An institution may have survived because of an inherent conservatism in the culture. Rather than viewing individuals with vision and energy as leaders, those shaped by the values of conservative institutions may see such people as individuals who will put at risk the stability of the current institutional structure. And even if the library middle manager finds himself working with a supportive senior manager, as Steven does here, he might encounter conservative or reluctant community members whose help he and his manager will need if they are to realize their objectives.

As Bishop (2011) points out, it is easy for workers to blame rather than understand individuals whose work styles or personalities seem to inhibit the positive change or outcomes they seek (73-81). Such situations call for “workarounds” (Bishop 2011). Clearly, moving in a direction contrary to a supervisor’s or influential community member’s wishes would be a mistake. Steven might therefore seek to indirectly influence a senior manager or community leader to become more positively disposed towards change and perhaps even want to take on the role of change leader himself. To do this, he might try to tap into the power of what Patterson et al. (2008) call “social motivation” (137-165). Influencers, they note, “appreciate the...power that humans hold over one another.” Through their “ridicule and praise, acceptance and rejection, approval and disapproval,” people influence the ways others think about and either embrace or dismiss proposals for change (138).

The middle manager might try to identify “opinion leaders,” those who are “socially connected and respected” within an organization (Patterson et al., 148). Opinion leaders, or “sparkplugs” in Lubans’ (2009) terms, are people who, through their own social influence, can sway others in the organization in ways that the change leader may not be able to do. Steven might identify those who have the ear of the library director or community member and try to partner with that person on the project. Similarly, Steven might seek to stimulate grassroots interest in the project among important members of the potential change partner’s constituency—for example, the library’s board or a particular political district—to make it seem less daring and less risky and potentially more popular to those the reluctant party respects or needs than it otherwise might. For guidance on strategies and tactics for developing grassroots support for library issues in other kinds of situations, Steven might consult Comito, Geraci, and Zabriskie’s (2012) *Grassroots Library Advocacy*.

The middle manager can also look for examples of other organizations that have successfully implemented the desired innovation as a way of creating the kind of social pressure that might motivate a reluctant partner to embrace change. As Daly (2011) notes, fear can be an important source of motivation (227-230): the fear of being left behind, of being behind the curve, of not keeping up with one’s peers, of not seizing a profitable opportunity when one has the chance. If there is a peer institution or peer city that has embraced a particular innovation, the middle manager can find indirect ways of making senior management or community leaders aware of it, thereby exerting influence.

By working with opinion leaders, creating grassroots interest in a change, and tapping into fears, the middle manager can make the proposed change seem like something the senior manager or community leader might want to be associated with or even take credit for. Transferring ownership of change—ceding the role of change leader—

can be one of the most effective indirect strategies available to the middle manager, but a strategy that depends upon humility. When required, the middle manager must be willing to put the success of the idea above any desire he or she may have to take credit for it.

But such approaches require a delicate touch, Daly (2011) notes. The middle manager must make sure pressure to change is introduced in a measured, strategic way. Daly suggests a number of principles change leaders should follow lest the fear they introduce into the situation “boomerang” and turn the person being persuaded against an idea all together (228-230). Like any oblique move whose outcome is uncertain, social pressure can potentially backfire and rankle senior management or others whose help the middle manager seeks. It should only be used with caution and in an ethical manner.

### **2 – Improving customer service**

#### *Scenario*

Cindy, the head of a busy circulation desk at a medium-sized academic library, has been receiving a number of complaints from patrons about her staff in recent weeks. The emails relate to issues surrounding the inability of students to register for classes due to fines owed to the library. The latest irate email was copied to her direct supervisor, the head of the library, who has directed her to get to the bottom of the problem and solve it.

Cindy has her staff keep an incident log to record any difficult or heated patron interactions. In the log they record the date and time of incidents, the issues or causes of the incidents, and how the incidents were resolved. She notices that there has been an uptick in incidents recently. The log indicates that other heated exchanges surrounding the same issue occurred around the same time, though they did not escalate to the same degree or prompt formal complaints.

After discussing the situations with staff, Cindy learns that patrons have become angry about staff’s limited ability to deal with fines blocking students from registering for classes. Patrons who have been waiting in long lines at the registrar’s office are being directed to lines at the library’s circulation desk for clarification about their fines, and are then directed by library staff to the bursar’s office where they have to wait on an additional line. Each department has its own separate computing system, none of which can be accessed or communicated with by the others. When patrons hear the news that they will have to wait on a third line from library clerks, heated confrontations result.

#### *Analysis*

When told by their supervisor to change a problematic situation, many middle managers might simply view the problem outlined above as a customer service issue and seek a quick and direct solution to the problem, one they can point to when asked by senior management to explain how they’ve addressed the issue. Such managers, looking for a “quick fix,” might arrange for staff to attend a customer service-training workshop. They might also peg individual staff members’ next annual evaluation to measurable gains (reductions in incidents logged) in the area of customer service.

However, it would be a mistake to address this problem directly as a simple performance issue. In this scenario, Cindy’s statistics point to systemic rather than individual performance problems. Moreover, there are a number of complex variables that indirectly affect Cindy’s staff as they attempt to work with patrons. Thus there is no clear path toward a solution involving multiple departments within the institution—bursar, registrar, and the library—each

## MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE

with its own culture, way of working, and way of thinking. Cindy must first understand how the different components of the institution have intersected to create the problem in order to determine what lies in her staff's power and what she can do to increase their ability to avoid heated situations going forward. While training can often prove effective in many circumstances (Sidorko and Woo 2008), problems that arise out of a complex nexus of causes cannot be solved directly through training because of the number of variables outside the control of the employees involved. Similarly, attempting to address these performance issues by goal setting amounts to coercion, a "carrot and stick" type approach that is "effective", as Kay (2010) points out, "only when we employ donkeys and we are sure exactly what we want the donkeys to do" (179).

As Patterson et al. make clear in their book *Influencer* (2008), complex change requires complex, indirect approaches. Like Kay, Patterson et al. don't view direct methods to create change as particularly effective. They argue that people can only engage change themselves or work towards creating or implementing new initiatives if they have two things: the ability and motivation to do so (75-79). We will use the ideas outlined in *Influencer* in combination with Kay's thought to examine how Cindy might increase her staff's ability and motivation to change the outcomes of patron interactions involving registration issues.

### *Ability*

Patterson et al. note that effective influencers "overinvest in strategies that help increase ability" (172) and suggest that change leaders approach the process of increasing the ability of change partners on a number of fronts, including their structural and personal abilities to change, which we will here focus on in turn.

It is well known that the choices people make and the behaviors they exhibit in various situations, including the workplace, are affected and often deliberately directed by the structure and architecture of their decision-making environments (Thaler and Sunstein 2003, 2008; Thaler, Sunstein and Balz 2013). In the language of Patterson et al., we can say that work environments can be designed to either enhance or inhibit the "structural ability" of employees to act in the ways we prefer them to act (220).

In the scenario presented, the structure of the work environment is the primary cause of the problem in need of change: college computing systems do not have the ability to communicate across offices. Students must wait in multiple lines to resolve their issues. Cindy might therefore begin by looking for ways to create structural changes in the work environment by identifying physical and procedural aspects of the workplace that impede staff from ideally functioning and from making the kinds of decisions during patron interactions that lead to positive outcomes. In this scenario, the middle manager will need to leverage new relationships across the college in order to find new processes that decrease student frustration and thereby indirectly avert conflicts in the library.

Again, Cindy has a choice to either address these other departments directly or indirectly. Adopting a direct approach would entail meeting with the managers overseeing these other departments, presenting data and angry emails to them, and proposing changes she might believe would solve the problem. The odds of such an approach working are quite slim. Most likely the managers of the other departments would see such suggestions as an attack or an accusation that their own workflows or processes, processes that have probably been in place for a long time, are the cause of what they would identify as her department's internal performance issues.

Like the larger institution itself, each department on campus has its own organizational culture and as with any indirect approach, one must begin by attempting to understand those cultures. A first step in this direction would be for Cindy to get to know or socially reconnect with the managers of those other departments in order to familiarize

## MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE

herself with their values and goals as well as the challenges they face. Once she has a sense of how they view their missions and relationships to the larger campus community, she might then introduce them to some of the issues she faces, including the problem at hand, which involve their departments. She may choose to frame the issue one way to the bursar's office manager and another way to the registrar's office manager based on the socio-cultural self-understanding each uniquely possesses.

By gradually introducing the problem with student registration, library fines, and payment, Cindy is able to connect the library's experiences working with frustrated students with the other units' most likely similar experiences in ways that make sense to them within the interpretative frameworks of their organizational cultures. From this position of mutual interest and trust, Cindy might then solicit proposals from the other unit heads rather than offer solutions herself, again engaging in an indirect approach to change. By giving change partners the power to suggest directions for change, Cindy avoids creating any impression of pushiness, accusation, or threat and transfers ownership over the kind and pace of structural change to her peers. Cindy's goal is to see that the structure of the work environment becomes such that her staff do not encounter situations that might escalate into critical problems. She need not be the direct cause of these changes. She may even wish to give credit for the changes to the other departments to build goodwill and social capital that can be drawn on in future situations.

However, given a sufficient level of trust and mutual understanding, Cindy might make some direct suggestions. Perhaps Cindy could propose that a phone for student use— a library hotline of sorts—be placed in or near the registrar's office so that students can call the library to determine the nature of their hold without losing their place in line. She could suggest that someone from the library with an iPad equipped to access library patron records be present or dispatched on request to students at the registrar's office at times of peak need. Perhaps an online payment system could be set up in the library to obviate the need for students to visit the bursar's office to pay library fines. Each of these changes enhances staff's ability to make better decisions during patron interactions involving registration issues.

As with any problem that requires an oblique solution involving multiple parties, each with their own objectives, any direction taken will have effects on the subsequent actions that seem relevant and possible. Cindy will need to constantly assess her interventions in order to determine the efficacy of her actions. Some of her steps may be false ones and not work out. She will then need to take a different approach, establish new intermediate goals, and clarify her ultimate objective to improve customer service at the circulation desk.

On a personal level, middle managers can help improve their employees' abilities by giving them opportunities to engage in the kind of "deliberate practice" (Patterson et al. 2008) that can increase learning and performance of essential workplace skills related to the change being sought (119). "Deliberate practice" is defined by Patterson et al. as a means by which the performers of certain tasks or behaviors crucial to achieving desired outcomes can practice that task in a highly concentrated, controlled, and reflective way, often facilitated by the help of a coach (118-119).

Cindy might identify the area of communication as the crucial skill—the "vital behavior" in Patterson et al.'s terms (23-44)—required to de-escalate potentially volatile situations at the circulation desk. Again, rather than sending employees to a workshop or training session on customer service related communication in which staff might be told about or even try new communication techniques, Cindy might develop opportunities for staff to deliberately practice such communication. She might allocate time once a month to have staff think through scenarios and engage in role-playing exercises that mirror the communicative situations they face at the circulation desk.

In order to effectively coach staff, both in such controlled settings and at circulation desk, Cindy may herself have to develop deeper knowledge of communication techniques, perhaps by studying the work of Radford (1999) and

## MAKING CHANGE HAPPEN IN THE MIDDLE

others both inside and outside the library field (Ross and Dewdney 1998; Fisher and Shapiro 2006; Stone, Patton, and Heen 2010) who have analyzed the principles of effective communication. Or she may wish to train a number of senior members of her unit in this area in order to have them serve as peer coaches, a more indirect and possibly even more effective approach (Manaka and Hughes 2007; Stoltz, Czarnecki, Wilson, and Martinez 2010). Once staff have begun developing a critical awareness of their communication practices, either she or those who have been trained as coaches can then observe staff/patron interactions. Much as elite athletes or musicians might watch or listen to recordings of their performances in order to identify areas for improvement, staff can “replay” their patron interactions with their coach and through reflective dialogue identify areas of excellence and areas for improvement in the skill.

### *Motivation*

Patterson et al. (2008) define personal motivation as the desire to want to do something and argue that change leaders can often acquire buy-in from change partners by influencing their will to change. Cindy might begin this process of indirect influence by examining the metaphors and narratives that guide her unit’s sense of mission to see if they are aligned with those of the larger mission of the college, including those of the bursar and registrar’s offices. If members of her unit have a limited conception of their role in the workings of the college, they may take a “not-my-job, not-my-worry” attitude when working with patrons seeking to resolve fines for the purpose of registering for classes. Have staff ever heard librarians or their peers’ language connecting their work to the diverse offices that tangentially relate to or depend upon the circulation department’s services? If not, staff are unlikely to know about the larger processes into which their work fits and may have little motivation to explain those processes and thereby possibly assuage angry patrons or avert their anger altogether. By adjusting her department’s mission statement – by setting up a new founding analogy for her unit – Cindy can slowly create a culture in which new values and attitudes among staff can flourish.

Next, she might examine how staff view patrons in human terms. Corporate or bureaucratic structures very often shape the way organizational members view those with whom they interact (100-104). We ourselves have probably been on the receiving end of interactions with corporate or bureaucratic functionaries whose treatment has left us feeling to a greater or lesser degree dehumanized. If staff simply view patrons as demanding students disgruntled by perfectly rational rules and procedures, if they have an antagonistic or even hostile attitude towards them and regard them as privileged or entitled, staff will lack empathy for their patrons and thereby the motivation to change the situation. Staff may then need to be opened up to or reminded of the larger lives their patrons live. Cindy will need to “humanize” patrons to appear to workers less as students disgruntled by rules and bureaucratic procedures—rules and procedures most likely outside the library’s control—and more as individuals whose success in college depends on staff’s help and kindness. She can do this by helping staff to become more aware of the “human consequences” of their actions, making clear how their work fosters or hinders student productivity and happiness and how that in turn affects the campus environment (100).

### **Conclusion**

As the above scenarios hopefully demonstrate, the middle manager who is under pressure to create change, find places to implement innovation, or grow new services must be prepared to seize on moments that present themselves unexpectedly. Moreover, his responses must be informed by the deep structures of the institutional cultures within which he is operating if his words and actions, his entreaties and efforts, are to find receptivity with

his institutionally acculturated audiences. In the course of leading change, the middle manager may at times run the risk of over-reaching, may misunderstand the analogies and narratives that ground and guide an institution, may muddle through towards a dead end. But mistakes are part of the process of developing praxis. By making mistakes, reflecting on them, and taking them to heart the middle manager acquires, in time, the kind of practical wisdom needed to make decisions in a more intuitive and artful manner in future circumstances (Dreyfus and Dreyfus 1986, 158-192).

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## ENGAGEMENT: A LEADERSHIP IMPERATIVE

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*By James W. Marcum*

**A**bstract: This paper proposes a model of staff engagement as a replacement for past motivation practices and a more suitable way of working with librarians and information specialists in a time of networked organizations and better educated “knowledge workers” and “creatives.”

Every administrator dreams of a staff of committed people who go above and beyond expected performance levels and who offer proposals and pursue goals making to make the organization better. The concept of engagement is widely used today to signify that quality of dedication to the organization, or at least to their colleagues, boss, professional domain, or workplace. The term has become popular in the new century as a growing awareness of the impact of the network triggers new collaborations and teamwork, increasingly important practices in today's competitive and fast-changing environment. Engagement with colleagues and with work processes is vital to library organizational effectiveness.

To anticipate the message of this essay, I argue that engagement has displaced motivation as the operant theory, but that old ways die hard and prevailing practice continues to stress staff “motivation” as the practical management approach and method. Motivation, with all the glitter removed, can be viewed as attempted manipulation. It is a commonplace practice, used by parents and teachers as well as managers to try to induce people to behave in desired ways. Incentives and rewards have replaced threats and coercion, by and large, but the results are only occasionally satisfactory. As Alfie Kohn (1993) demonstrated, rewards signal that the rewarded task is not inherently worth doing on its own merits. Rewards thereby kill interest, over time if not immediately.

### The motivation legacy

Today many authors, managers, and consultants talk “engagement” but use the practice as a smarter, updated motivational strategy to elicit desired behaviors. The new and improved practice is sophisticated and can have temporary effect, as demonstrated by a new business literature offered by several practitioners, notably Haudan (2008), and Gebauer and Lowman (2009). Such studies contribute to understanding employee attitudes and goals—such as wanting to belong and the desire for meaningful and challenging work—but resort in the end to offering practices to entice people to commit to the organization's new strategy. The whole matter remains unsettled. An enduring school of thought promotes recognition as a less behavioral and more modern approach. One example is

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## Engagement: A Leadership Perspective

Ian Ayres' study (2010) that incentives, properly used, can greatly improve performance. By contrast, Paul Marciano (2011) insists that *Carrots and Sticks Don't Work*. Others talk engagement but never define it and propose an agenda of promoting "happiness" by listening, asking questions, saying "thank you," and encouraging improvement (Tracy 2011). Additional information is needed to settle the argument.

Beyond the workplace the concept of engagement is used to study larger issues, such as citizen involvement in civic affairs (Zukin, *et al.* 2006) and as a barometer of student success (Indiana University, 2007). Precise definitions of the term are often lacking, however, because engagement is a common word with generally understood meanings. The root, engage, is widely and broadly applied to signify personal commitment, promise, or covenant. It is used to mean attract, charm, or fascinate; to entangle or hold fast; to fasten or attach. It has a military connotation of entering into conflict, and a mechanical sense, as in interlocking gears. An *engagement* is an act of betrothal, a pledging of property or a promise to pay or appear—such as to entertain—at a given time. It can mean an appointment or promise of employment. There are special meanings in economics and trade as well as for political relations between nations (*OED*).

Focusing on human behavior reveals other meanings. Engagement is used to signify relationships and communication by which people work together without coercion (McMaster 1996). This critical dimension is overlooked by many, but assumes special importance in the age of the network. An additional dimension is helpful: Davenport and Prusak (1997, 92-95) utilizes a sliding scale of engagement with information from the passive (seeing, hearing) to discussion, to presentation or instruction, to "use in practice," as commonly employed to manage information overload. Because of its multiple uses, care must be taken to define engagement specifically for our purposes.

To focus more precisely, engagement is studied in psychological research, especially in relation to motivation practice and theory, and in learning theory. Investigation uncovers no widely accepted general definition but dozens of descriptive or implied definitions including:

Absorption	Direct participation	Initiate activity
Achievement	Effort	Initiate learning
Active learning	Emotion	Innovation
Activity	Involvement	Involvement
Areas of ability, competence	Energy	Openness
Attention	Be engrossed	Organismic
Arousal	Enjoyment	Relatedness
Behavioral involvement	Enthusiasm	Selects challenging tasks
Can wax and wane	Hard work	Self-determination
To carry out an activity	High motivation	Social relatedness
Conscious consideration	Identification (primary / secondary)	Solving complex problems
Curiosity	Interest	

## Engagement: A Leadership Perspective

Any useful definition of engagement must consolidate this list into something simpler. Analysis and reflection leads to the following terms as most descriptive for utilizing engagement theory in behavioral practice:

- involves activity and, usually, cooperation with others
- is absorbing or engrossing
- implies enjoyment in the work
- pertains to the subject's field of activity, ability, or competence
- requires direct participation
- involves acquiring more or better knowledge
- demands significant self-determination
- involves an element of challenge
- is characterized by persistence, and
- serves to focus and prioritize attention (Marcum 1999).

Summarizing all this, engagement is defined as *persistent learning and involvement in an activity in one's area of competence and interest, within a social context, that entices personal commitment and developing expertise with continuous individual autonomy*. An additional qualification is that moderation is in order. The goal is not peak experience in Maslow's sense (1968)—or even *flow* as used by Csikszentmihalyi (1997)—because neither is sustainable. Engagement does, however, produce episodic, repeated, and sustained high—and sometimes creative—performance. It is rather a steady attention to the task for its own sake, for its inherent value (and therefore requiring no special reward). Engagement can be accomplished by developing what Csikszentmihalyi describes as the autotelic personality, characterized by a steady curiosity, a clear sense of self, of belonging to something greater than oneself, and a focused attention that avoids entropy (wasted time and thought) while fostering psychic energy and a steady improvement of the meaning and quality of one's life. He calls that *flow*.

It should be obvious from this discussion that no one can do that for someone else; no one can direct or effect another's engagement. One engages oneself, or avoids doing so. There are many obstacles that can serve as an excuse for avoiding engagement, such as “too much work,” too many personal complications, antipathy for one's boss or colleagues, and so on. What ultimately is at stake, however, is one's mental and physical health. Isolation, anger, or grieving over difficulties can diminish health and shorten life spans. The choice is the individual's. The manager, the leader, the parent can at best create conditions that encourage personal engagement; a positive and safe social atmosphere is perhaps the most important component of such a situation. The implications are powerful: no boss, no teacher, no family patriarch can cause another person to “engage.” The decision, the choice, the timing, and the intent rest with the individual.

### **The uses of engagement**

What then is the responsible administrator seeking to improve their organization to do? There is no silver bullet, no sure-fire technique. But there are human characteristics that can be acknowledged and encouraged to stimulate more people to begin to engage, and others to engage more fully. Many of these have been tried, with some

## Engagement: A Leadership Perspective

success, particularly in business practice, and, more specifically with full recognition of the emergence of knowledge work.

Scholars—from Edward Deci (1980) to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1997)—have known for decades that committed people share certain attributes and perform above the norm when conditions favor those preferences. Essential elements are:

1. self determination: they are working on preferred issues, topics, or problems
2. competence: they are working in domains where their knowledge, skills, and background have prepared them to function effectively; they know what they are doing
3. creative task engagement: the issue is open, the outcome in doubt; this is not routine work but open ended involvement where the matter is not settled but yet to be resolved
4. interest: from background, personal choice, or engagement they are emotionally interested in the issue or problem.

These conditions can be expanded and refined, but the outlines are persistent. In recent years, however, additional considerations have emerged, triggered by the impact of technology-enabled connectivity and information access. The new circumstance requires additional considerations that are explained by scholars like Richard Florida and scholar-practitioners like Thomas Davenport.

Davenport (2005, 15-27) stirs into the mix the impact of technological change on the workplace and the rise of the knowledge worker. He discusses typical attributes but stresses that the work is not easily diagnosed or described. Managers must just watch, observe. Routine processes hinder their work and creativity, but knowledge workers have good reasons for what they do. They value their expertise and are unwilling to give it away blindly; knowledge workers are very aware that it is their skills and judgment that comprise their value and they distrust—often with good reason—the institutions that employ them. There is a grey area here; they instinctively network and collaborate and share with others working on the same issue, whether in the next office or for another organization in another part of the world. But they expect help from those collaborators in turn. “I store a lot of knowledge in my friends,” is a byword; they are comfortable functioning in domains where they are expert on some matters and needful on others. They do not hesitate to ask for help or advice.

A broader net is cast by Florida (2002) who explores the conditions preferred by “creatives,” a twist on the knowledge worker concept. Creatives—even more than knowledge workers—spark innovation and invent new processes and services that give new life to organizations and entire cities or regions. A need for challenge, responsibility, and autonomy are qualities shared with knowledge workers. Working for a “caring” company is highly desired by creatives, but relaxing expectations and abandoning established routines is even more important to them. Creatives care more about the quality of their life than the advancement of their careers. The academic world is a natural habitat for such individuals, accentuated by the greater tolerance that characterizes university towns.

The result of this overview is that engaging bright, educated, and talented people requires care and adaptation, characteristics that make many human resources departments anxious. Accountability is easier when routines are set and job requirements clear. Performance assessment is particularly troublesome in the engagement domain. And some employees are very uncomfortable in an open, diffuse workplace lacking set boundaries and clear expectations, where failure is celebrated and what looks like “time wasting” may be the seedbed for a new breakthrough.

### Where is the evidence?

Hard data are available linking the level of employee engagement to company performance and profitability. These data provide the basis for the “business case” for employee engagement. Two firms have produced substantial evidence of the level of employee engagement and its relationship to company performance. Over several years Gallup surveyed employee attitudes. The process led to the development of a test known as Q<sup>12</sup>, a measure of talent maximization. Surveys were conducted in the US and several other countries. Over the years 1.5 million responses to the 12 questions have been tallied; the most recent report appeared in 2012. From this work a formula emerged:

$$\text{Per-person Productivity} = \text{Talent} \times (\text{Relationship} + \text{Right expectation} + \text{Recognition/Reward})$$

The findings can be summarized: high employee engagement companies enjoyed higher customer loyalty (12%), profitability (16%), productivity (18%), and fewer safety incidents, lower absenteeism, and fewer quality defects. However, the overall engagement level of employees is stunning: 28 percent are “engaged;” 54 percent not engaged; and 17 percent are actively disengaged, meaning they could be behaving in harmful or disruptive ways. Fewer than one-third of employees are engaged positively in their work. (This author balks, by the way, over the Gallup emphasis on recognition and rewards.)

Another significant study, the BlessingWhite Employee Engagement Report, has been repeatedly run. The latest report, in 2013, finds little change since 2008 despite the global economic upheavals in the interval. Their findings are more prescriptive: 31% of the 11,000 surveyed are engaged and 17% are disengaged. Some findings confirm the expected: executive, high status, and long-term employees are more engaged. And many of the “problems,” in their view, are that executives and managers do not exhibit the behaviors that inspire employee engagement. Perhaps it’s no coincidence that their study comes from the consulting business, offering information and training—targeting managers in particular—to develop a more engaged workforce.

Two recent articles in the human-resource literature provide peeks into the possibilities. The first—in the January 2011 issue of *Chief Learning Officer*—addresses the creation of an engagement culture. There are five components proposed: creating an atmosphere, an ecology of opportunity for all; assuring that expectations and standards be communicated clearly; taking pains to validate the individual’s work and person; and creating comprehensive cultures of inclusion and community (Roth and Lembach 2011). It’s not direction or command that matters here; it’s creating an atmosphere where more members of the organization choose to be engaged.

The second article discusses a technique that could complement the proposal just discussed. That is for all managers, executives, and especially supervisors to open meaningful conversation, dialogue, with every new employee early on. In an article on development dialogue in *T+D* (Kaye 2010), the recommendation is to move quickly to open meaningful dialogue with all new hires; the assumption is that their true talents and potential will not be recognized at once. The technique can be considered “re-recruiting” the new hire. This will require the development of coaching and mentoring skills among a wide range of managers, but those skills should repay their development costs many times over. And discussing such personal-work issues as commitment, passion, challenge, relationships, focus, and balance will engage some new employees. And as we have seen throughout this discussion, gaining the commitment and full intelligence of the employee is what gives a company its competitive edge.

### **Nurturing engagement**

Engagement cannot be directed or commanded, but it can be nurtured. Favorable conditions can be created for it to flourish, much as favorable conditions usually induce plants to grow and flourish. A number of theories remaining ensconced in the motivation tradition appear to be seeking to push into a modern paradigm consistent with the realities of the new day.

The rich interaction and participation of Facebook, YouTube, and wikis invite self-selected participation and the pursuit of personal and group interests. Control is out of the question, but there are no limits on human imagination and innovation. Shirky (2010) attributes the participation phenomenon to excesses of education and leisure time producing creativity and sharing. But that could easily be occasional in nature. The scope of phenomena such as Linux, Wikipedia, and Facebook can better be understood in terms of engagement; no amount of “motivation” or creative urge could produce such sustained and widespread activity.

A number of writers, theorists, and consultants offer tools, processes and methods to increase employee engagement. These offerings usually are directed to managers and leaders of corporations to enhance productivity. An early definition and discussion by Jackson Kyle (2000) stresses a characteristic heightened state of emotion and awareness. He compares engagement to the concepts of flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1996) or peak performance (Maslow 1943). He concludes, however, that a middle-range dynamic is more enduring. I suggest that such a dynamic is to be found in writings in the form of Japanese “Ba,”—shared mental and physical space—(Nonaka and Konno 1998), care (von Krogh 1998), or mindfulness (Langer 1989).

There are related dimensions that enhance the value of the engagement approach. Engagement leads to competence, which also is a factor in the development of one’s sense of self efficacy. Conner and Wellborn (2001) made the point at the start of the new millennium, making engagement a key to the social context (relatedness to others), self development and competence, and patterns of behavior. But further inquiry leads back to Csikszentmihalyi (1985) who argued that autotelic (intrinsic) awareness, endogenous (self directed) activities in an open situation leads to self development and competence and even at times to flow.

The points keep piling up. Fair processes, clear explanation and expectation facilitate engagement according to Kim and Mauborgne (1997). Davenport (2005) adapts the new perspective into an approach for emerging “knowledge work.” Knowledge workers require autonomy, open communication, a collaborative social environment, and full technological support to produce to their capacity and potential. Engagement can more often emerge from an improved working environment.

The caveat here is that too often these endeavors offer a top-down approach to assure a positive specified outcome. Since costs are involved, there is attention to providing measurable results in reasonable time to justify the expense. Philosophically, this approach falls back into the command and control assumptions of most businesses today; it falls into the same trap as does the “rewards” approach critiqued earlier in this discussion. The desire to follow this path is entirely understandable but may not achieve the ultimate purpose of engagement. Recall that engagement begins with individual choice and is characterized by learning and involvement. This is counter-intuitive for managers but essential for genuine engagement. And some of the data, especially that from BlessingWhite, emphasize the point.

### **From algorithms to heuristics**

A recent study sheds new light on the issue. Traditional motivation practices—what Dan Pink labels Motivation 2.0 and its 2.1 update—do not align well with what drives working people today. Work now is much less “algorithmic,” meaning that it is less scripted, formulaic, and routine. It is now more “heuristic,” that is, problematic

## Engagement: A Leadership Perspective

and non-routine (Pink 2009). The “carrot and stick” practices can diminish intrinsic motivation and high performance effort, in keeping with the arguments of Kohn, Deci, and Csikszentmihaly.

According to Pink there are three key elements to drive (his version of engagement): autonomy, mastery, and purpose. Worker autonomy demands flexibility in approaching the issue, time to decide how to handle it, choice of technique, and team support. Mastery requires a mindset that expects to grow and learn rather than be judged on a single performance. True mastery is unattainable, but its pursuit is one of the rewarding pleasures of life. And, finally, it is purpose, doing something that matters to the individual, something greater than themselves, that enables the “good life” of engagement in one’s work.

Libraries enjoy some advantages but face serious challenges adapting to these new requirements. Advantages include higher education levels, a more eclectic view of disciplinary restraints, familiarity with cross-disciplinary inquiry, and the expansion of knowledge. But many librarians remain embedded in routines and procedures developed for an earlier, less complex time. Growth, which characterized libraries (with occasional setbacks) for generations has become problematic in the new century. Growth generates complexity, which can be managed to a point with routines, bureaucracy, and systems. But accelerating change is creating super-complexity, which demands adaptability. The comfort zone of the profession is being invaded by requirements that librarians learn new skills and engage in exploration of new roles to assure our sustainability in a time of post-abundance, connectivity, participation, and collaborative knowledge creation.

Engagement, recall, is characterized by learning and involvement, bringing us full circle. Davenport offers a practical matrix tool for analyzing processes for their complexity and level of interdependence. The complexity axis ranges from routine transactions and processes and integrated methods and standards at one pole, to improvisational thinking and behavior at the other. The interdependence axis ranges from the routine transaction and the judgment of the expert to collaboration and exploration. This frame of reference, from *Thinking for a Living* (2005, 27), offers a new standard for evaluating and valuing professional work, such as that performed by librarians, wherein routine components can be handed off to non-professionals, creating greater opportunity to align professional expertise with new tasks and challenges. The process also creates greater opportunity for learning and involvement, or engagement, for more staff. For his part, Pink provides a veritable handbook of guidelines and recommendations for pursuing drive. His “Toolkit” includes exercises and an annotated list of 15 most important books that support his approach (Pink 2009, 149-215).

Many visions for future libraries are purely digital in nature, but there are options and variations on the theme, including participatory community centers for knowledge creation (Lankes 2011), makerspaces (*American Libraries* 2013), and centers for inquiry and new learning (Marcum 2009). Human engagement is one key to the successful pursuit of such visions. Problem-solving and “selling” new proposals in an environment of fiscal exigency and ongoing predictions of the demise of print and libraries requires new levels of thinking, experimentation, and creativity on the part of librarians. Visionary and adaptive leadership combined with contributions of people with drive and engagement may generate the mindsets and commitments needed to address our many challenges.

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## Parallels Between Mentor/Mentee Relationship With Supervisor/Employee Relationship

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By Regina Vertone

**A**bstract: During the typical evolution of a career in libraries, employees will start out as a new employee with theoretical knowledge and then spend their careers learning and adapting. In one's first job as a professional librarian, one must take the knowledge and skills obtained in college and apply them to this new environment. Libraries are changing rapidly due to many factors such as technology and changing patron expectations, so the organizational cultures are evolving as well. Having a mentor in the workplace is recognized as beneficial for learning and growing in the new work environment. As one's career progresses, a librarian is typically promoted and many take on greater supervisory responsibilities. As supervisors they are expected to have not only the technical skills of librarians but also administrative skills to successfully manage library organizations. One way to effectively run an organization is to listen and truly know your library employees. This article will discuss the parallels between these two relationships with how the mentor and mentee model can directly inform the dynamic between supervisor and employee.

### Mentor and Mentee

In the general interpretation, mentoring is a "developmental relationship between a more experienced individual (the mentor) and a less experienced partner (the mentee)" (Ilevbare, 2011, p. 197). For academic librarians there are extra challenges in becoming engaged in the library culture. A new employee must gain general professional skills while managing changing job duties and teaching responsibilities and for some there is dealing with the tenure process as well. (Ghouse & Church-Duran, 2008, p. 373).

A mentor should be a person of guidance, who provides social support, expertise and compassion. The mentor/mentee relationship can also provide this support "across multiple relationships and time periods" within the mentees working life or time spent employed (Ghouse & Church-Duran, 2008, p. 373). It is hoped that both parties receive benefits from this partnership although they may be uneven at times.

Authors Ghouse and Church-Duran discussed a study done in 1995-1996 at the Centre for Information Research and Training (CIRT) in the School of Information Studies, University of Central England, explaining the need for

mentoring and identified six key types of mentoring that are crucial for library professionals. (p. 375). These six mentoring types are shown in the Table below. Ghouse and Church-Duran detail more mentoring programs at other colleges and indicate that their ultimate goal was to help with retention and job tenure.

### **Six Key Types of Mentoring Crucial for Library Professionals**

- Management skills
- Professional support and development within the post (networking)
- Specific skills (coaching)
- Support for the new recruit (acclimating)
- Professional contact (reducing professional isolation),
- Career development (helping the individual to gain promotion)

Creating and developing a deeper relationship with a new colleague, takes time. For many of us our own mentoring skills need to be developed. When one mentors, one shares knowledge in a sharing, collegial manner. This is mimicking the leadership skills that supervisors need to have when overseeing a department (Ghouse & Church-Duran, p. 376).

Should mentoring be a natural relationship or formally created by upper management? Ghouse and Church-Duran describe how Kansas University Libraries developed a mentor/mentee program and about the effectiveness of a “top-down” mentor and mentee pairing. Kansas University implemented a six month initial period where the new employees simply got to know their colleagues before being paired up with a mentor. A possible benefit was to make it feel more collegial and less forced. The author noted that the initial purpose of the program was to help new library employees gain eventual tenure. After this program was reevaluated by the administration and pre-tenure committee, issues and challenges faced by mentors and mentees were discussed. More feedback shifted the purpose of the mentoring to be about “fostering cultural awareness, confidence building, and other developmental opportunities for the mentee” (p. 382). However, the mentor guides the librarian mentee but is not ultimately responsible for the outcome of the work like a supervisor may be (p. 382) so that mentor empathy would be very helpful.

Creating a mentor and mentee program at a library gives structure for all employees involved and may facilitate the process. Mentees know from whom they can ask questions and receive guidance. In the process mentors gain experience with explaining processes and allowing the colleague to grow professionally. The goal is to let newer employees grow and feel comfortable in the relationship.

Ilebrarve (2011) makes an interesting parallel between the mentoring of adults and mentoring of students. Characteristics of the mentor/mentee relationship with a teacher and student are: guidance, “acclimatize new students to college life,” provide stimulation and motivation (p. 198). Any mentoring or supervisory relationship should have a structure of support and encouragement for advancement. Like any good student, the mentee must be aware of his or her own responsibilities in this relationship. These responsibilities include: communicating with your mentor, mutually agreeing on goals together that are measurable and timely, establishing mutual expectations, understanding the mentor’s expectations and being trustworthy and maintaining confidentiality (Ilebrarve, 2011, p. 199).

Osif (2008) describes several mentoring programs at different universities and colleges (University of Delaware, Pennsylvania State University, University of Utah, University of Washington, Yale University, California State University, and Colorado State University), detailing their similarities, differences and strengths. The general consensus from comparing these libraries' own mentoring/mentee programs is that mentoring works and a encouraged supportive relationships. At Washington, more than one mentor is assigned to each individual mentee. One goal of that is to broaden the perspective of different kinds of feedback for the mentee. (p. 339). University of Utah's mentoring program goals are different than most: "help librarians achieve their potential, concurrently making them more marketable" and to integrate the librarian into campus life and the university (p. 340). The marketable angle is different and demonstrates a concern for the employee.

Bosch, Ramachandrah, Leuvano and Wakiji (2010) describe the mentor/mentee program for librarians at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). The authors explain that the long and expensive process (up to a million dollar investment) of hiring an employee, such as a potential faculty librarian, makes the mentor program essential. Naturally, the motivation behind this is twofold – the new hire will hopefully feel comfortable with staying and growing in their place of employment. While the organization asks an already established employee to use their knowledge and skills to guide the new hire. "Every organization should take care of their investment and make every effort to ensure the new employees succeed and are satisfied with their jobs" (p. 59). For the retention of all employees, job satisfaction remains a constant theme. The CSULB mentoring program model "consists of three experienced librarians mentoring, coaching and training a single mentee" (p. 60) and this model also encourages learning from other departments and perspectives. Personally, I feel this is quite fitting since librarians often act as subject liaisons and teach bibliographic instruction in different subject areas.

### **Management in Libraries Today**

No matter what the environment, a primary goal of the manager is to guide staff and keep the workplace functioning efficiently and effectively. Today, libraries face increased challenges and service disruptions and thus it is ever more important that employees share knowledge and experience. An effective mentoring program can make the difference between employee turnover meeting challenges with creativity and energy.

Today's library users walk into libraries with much different expectations than the patrons who utilized the library 20 years ago. Technology is both a blessing and a curse for any library today. Having access to technology on our mobile devices creates the immediacy factor of needing information right now and obtaining it easily. Potential library users may believe they do not need libraries for information if everything is available online. Coordination of activities to carry out the library's goals requires a united effort, something that mentoring provides.

One mistake made by some library managements is holding onto the past and taking it for granted that library users know the benefits of using the library. Now libraries must clearly be customer focused and listen to their library users sharing where they get their information. In dealing with such situations mentors can also learn from their mentees who often possess skills in using things such as social media and communicating with younger generations.

Employees are not immune to the worries and concerns that their managers may feel. It is up to management to create an open environment where employees feel safe with voicing their concerns or suggestions. However, the manager needs to create the proper balance between being accessible to his or her staff and also sharing the proper and timely information that is allowed to be shared. Due to confidentiality of upper management or sensitivity of topics, managers need to be careful about sharing information that is both allowed and pertinent. There is a right time and delivery for most any kind of news. These considerations are also à propos to the mentor / mentee relationship.

With the importance placed on the job of supervisor, it is interesting to note the apparent lack of management class available or required in graduate library programs. In the article, "Management Education for Library Directors: Are Graduate Library Programs Providing Future Library Directors With the Skills and Knowledge They Will Need?", a study was conducted where 48 graduate school programs were reviewed to see if any management or human resources related classes were required. Mackenzie and Smith (2009) detail that out of the 48 programs reviewed, many program gave a management course as a choice for an elective. 54.2% of programs required just one management course for completion of the graduate degree. An additional 2% of programs required two courses. The remaining 43.8% of the programs had no firm requirement of a traditional management course within their curriculum (p. 135).

An important distinction should be made here: library schools often have classes that have the word "management" in them but these courses cover library specific tasks (such as collection development or cataloguing). The majority of courses described in the study were not the traditional management courses you may find in a human resources or MBA program. Academic preparation is no substitute for real life experience and career involvement as one learns. Perhaps the lack of required courses in management lends itself to the argument that the mentor/mentee relationship is a crucial model for developing an adequate and eventual supervisor/employee relationship.

### **Supervising a Staff**

Successful staff management has similar characteristics to mentoring a coworker. As discussed earlier, the mentee is someone who is guided by another colleague to learn about the organization and the job itself. A mentor should bring out strengths and talent of the mentee and help this person become more confident and feel a part of the library with the rest of their colleagues. The job of a manager is sometimes similar to that of a coach, more of a facilitator than a commander (Giesecke & McNeil, p. 5). Employees respond better to feeling valued, being included and appreciated for their talents.

While supervisors are supposed to know how to do the work of their staff, they cannot do everything and manage effectively at the same time. The foundation of any workplace is its staff. Each individual staff member does his or her own job that creates one piece of the puzzle. Thus, when you efficiently combine many different staff and their different duties, you have a cohesive library organization. Supervisors also can learn about an organization's processes and culture by listening carefully to others and observing their staff. When asking staff about their jobs, supervisors should simply listen, keeping an open mind about workflow and processes, observing who succeeds and why, and remembering to look at the big picture beyond their own units. Taking the time for reflection on the library organizational activities and thinking about its culture will create better understanding of your employees (Giesecke & McNeil, p. 6). Better understanding of your employees leads to more creative and successful management. The mentor / mentee relationship is a kind of microcosm of a learning organization.

In participating in the University of Utah's mentoring program, who embraced helping their employees with marketability as discussed earlier, employees who are challenged may enjoy their jobs and respect their supervisors more in return. Not only should supervisors challenge themselves with looking at new trends and technology, they should also encourage and support their employees with professional development as well (Giesecke, p. 156).

The reasoning behind this is that the supervisor ends up with a staff who feel consistently valued and challenged since their boss encouraged them. This also helps the supervisor carry out new and enhanced goals for the future of the library. With libraries changing so frequently due to technology and society expectations, having employees who are eager to learn and evolve creates a tremendous asset.

### **Conclusion**

Creating a successful mentor/mentee dynamic between supervisor and employee creates more understanding of interrelationships. No one in a library work environment can purely exist alone; there is always a need for assistance and guidance. No matter what our position in the workplace, we are still working towards specific goals, our bosses and/or the larger purpose for which the library exists. It is very fitting that the dynamics the relationships with students, mentors, mentees, employees and supervisor are so similar. The common thread they all have is about educating others and using knowledge to the best of our abilities.

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## What Does it Take to be a Mover and Shaker in the Field of Librarianship?

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By Raymond Pun

Since 1993, every year, *The Library Journal* recognizes around 50 people from over the world that demonstrate extraordinary talent and passion in the field of librarianship. The *Library Journal* categorizes these people as library advocates, innovators, change agents, community builders or tech leaders in their organizations. It is a tremendous honor to be nominated by peers and colleagues and selected for this award where one's diligence, innovation, projects or creativity are being acknowledged by a major publication in the library world.

In 2012, I had the fortune of being nominated as a Mover and Shaker under the sub category "change agent" where my abilities to create public programs and ability to effectively mentor college students were highlighted. Though it was not my intent to be honored, I like to think it was my commitment to the profession and my efforts to ensure that the people I encounter (students or not) receive the best research experience in the library. And perhaps I can be thankful that my motivation is strongly aligned with one of the Library's fundamental missions: advancing knowledge.

If I can somehow advance knowledge through research consultations, public programs or digital literacy classes then I will feel that I have fulfilled my role as a research librarian. I can now appreciate that taking initiative in establishing and collaborating with peers or other institutions is a major time investment requiring patience, dedication, strong communication skills, decisiveness and a belief in the goals of the institution. These actions and qualities are not only traits of a good librarian but also a good leader.

The purpose of this essay is to explore some important leadership moves that one can make; reading this essay or following the suggestions in this essay does not guarantee a spot in the next LJ's Mover and Shakers category; however, it may light up and expand a tunnel vision perspective to unveil and harness some hidden skills that you may already or soon possess as you continue your library career.

This semester I was fortunate enough to be selected as a participant in my institution's leadership training program called "Managing for Excellence" where 30+ colleagues from the library system were selected and brought together to discuss, share, and learn about different management and leadership styles. We also learn about the types of human resources issues that a manager may have to deal with: progressive discipline, performance management, interviewing

## What Does it Take to be a Mover and Shaker?

techniques, team building, and so forth. Such workshops hone our skills as managers or future managers and leaders, and can be implemented in and beyond our libraries.

This essay echoes some of the points addressed in this workshop to better illustrate how one can redefine and take charge of their own leadership skills. Here are a few major points that seem most worthy of our focus:

1. **Leading by example:** When you lead by example, you demonstrate confidence, expertise and decisiveness; leading by example is certainly not an easy task. For example, if you require everyone to work on a Saturday, be prepared that you may need to work on a Saturday as well. This demonstrates your role as the manager but also your commitment to the organization. No one wants to do things when they are not being supported or acknowledged so it important for a manager to take charge and lead by example.
2. **Risk taking:** Demonstrating initiative and being proactive can ensure that you are not only creative but driven to succeed. Taking chances in learning to collaborate and accepting failure are part of the process of being a good leader. When you succeed in a difficult project then the next one will surely be easier. People often have a challenging time in being proactive because they are very accustomed to and comfortable with their limitations without having to deal with new tasks; this should not be a road block – you should always learn new things and experiment with collaborative projects and ideas. If they don't turn out the way you want, you can always learn from that and work on finding better approaches; this will broaden your experience and expertise.
3. **Empathy:** This is another important trait to have when you are able to identify the emotions of your colleagues and staff; the purpose of this trait allows you to relate to them. One means of developing more empathy is similar to increasing our emotional intelligence. As Travis Bradbury and Jean Greaves, authors of *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* put it, “Emotional intelligence is your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships. “ (pg. 17). It is important for a leader to be able to relate to their staff and understand how changes may affect their emotional states or concerns. By knowing how your staff feels, you can support them in a way that can be reassuring; thus gaining trust from your staff.

An important aspect of leadership is communication skills. It is vital that you articulate your vision and goals to your teams. It is also important to clarify issues to ensure that everyone is on the same page. One should likewise offer constructive feedback. A positive attitude is generally much more effective than a negative one. If you practice these skills, people will develop greater trust in you by sharing their ideas and remaining open to feedback.

Another way to promote leadership is to reward colleagues you feel are making strides in that direction. When the next call for Movers and Shakers appears on *The Library Journal's* website, be sure to nominate colleagues who have demonstrated leadership skills or who you think have the potential to be good leaders. You might want to focus on a particular project that this person had worked on successfully and diligently.

In some of the past nominations, the movers have empowered people, in this case with Sam Chada (Movers and Shakers Class of 2012), “Chada removes people’s fear of learning new technologies, ... she makes people believe they can do it ... She’s a perfect example of tomorrow’s librarian” according to her nominator.

A nomination can also highlight your appreciation and satisfaction with a person’s work ethic and creativity. When the nominee represents the profession by going above and beyond to demonstrate their commitment, it can only help

## What Does it Take to be a Mover and Shaker?

motivate them further when they are acknowledged. In the case of JP Porcaro (Movers and Shakers Class of 2012), his nominators described him as “gutsy, irreverent ability to speak truth to power in the library world and to provoke critical thinking about what it means to be a librarian in the 21st century,”

When a person actually receives the designation of a Mover and Shaker, the award truly acknowledges the important work that this person does for their library and beyond; their stories will inspire others to strive for greatness and to improve our world through vehicle of the library.

### Additional Resources

Movers on the Map 2002-2013: <http://lj.libraryjournal.com/category/people/movers-shakers>

Bradberry, Travis, Greaves, J. *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*. CA: San Diego: Talent Smart, 2009.

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