

Leadership Competencies for Change Management in Libraries: Challenges and Opportunities

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper assumes that leading and managing change is not a luxury; rather it is a necessity for the library and information professionals (LIPs) in the networked environment.

Approach: Change management is not a singular concept; rather it includes a set of best practices and experiences, which are used to handle both the internal as well as external changes. Change management includes effective management of new methods and systems in an ongoing organization. It is both an area of professional practice as well as a body of knowledge. Change from an existing setup to a new environment has its own set of inherent problems and the problems become multi-fold when applied in a service institution as library.

Findings: It has been observed from literature that Libraries have been pioneers in adopting any new technology, the same holds true for information and technology also. The role of libraries has gradually changed from the traditional storehouse of information to access providers. There has been a paradigm shift in the ways libraries used to be managed. The problems associated with the transition in the case of libraries have both content and a process dimension.

Value: The study seems the first to highlights various leadership competencies needed to manage change in libraries, as well as underlines a few challenges and opportunities in the context of change management.

Keywords: change management, team management, effective leadership, library and information services management,

Paper Type: Conceptual work

Introduction

Management when defined simply is nothing but making wise choices at the correct time. Change management refers to effective management of new methods and systems in an ongoing organization. It is not a singular concept rather it includes a set of best practices and experiences, which are used to handle both internal as well as external changes. Change management is both an area of professional practice as well as a body of knowledge. PerSuman (2005) stated that change management includes the changes that lie within and are controlled by the organization and those that come to terms with the changes occurring in the surrounding environment i.e. the events originating outside the organization and the response to them.

The embedded complexity in the case of library and information centres makes the process of change management a task, a process, and an area of professional practice at the same time. Today, libraries and information services face

many challenges from changes in the information environment, most of which have occurred because of developments in electronic information resources and the evolution of the “digital age. In the past decades, libraries were slow in changing the ways they did business. These institutions are still perceived by many to behave and operate in a medieval manner. Today however, everything in and around the library is changing: services, technologies, organizational constructs, ownership and access policies, values, and most of the rest. The responsibility to set the “right direction” is now more complicated than ever before.

It is not uncommon to hear from some of the older librarians that they believe the library is a far different place today than what it was 20 or 30 years ago. A primary block to change is the strongly held belief that the library staffs are not ready to accept fundamentally new thinking. Some library managers like to advance this view, but today libraries are now becoming more positive and trust that the staffs generally

recognize that past ideas and models are obsolete (Riggs, 1997). Technology is now viewed as an enabler, a tool that helps libraries realize their goals and objectives more efficiently. For change to occur in any organization, everyone must think, feel, or do something different. The problem for most executives is that managing change is unlike any other managerial task they have ever encountered. Since managing change is quite complex, library managers who feel inept in this endeavour should seek outside assistance and learn from the “trials and errors” of other organizations (Riggs, 1997).

Change Management

Change management focuses on the infrastructure of libraries (collections, facilities, staff, and technology) and the relationship between libraries and the broader environment in which they function. It is likely that organizational change, and convergence and collaboration, relate to more than one aspect of the infrastructure.

In today's rapidly changing information landscape, libraries face opportunity and challenge. The only constant in this landscape is uncertainty. It can only be speculated about where libraries will be at the end of the next decade. More than in any preceding era, it is known that libraries must change, but do not know how to make this transition (Webster, 2007). Making that transition requires a careful focus on strategic planning, and knowing and striving to meet the organizational and institutional mission. Central to the process of transformation, including transformational leadership, is change management, which is defined as a systematic and proactive approach to dealing with change, from the perspective of an organization and those in the workforce.

An organisation must adapt to change, control it, and effect change. The degree to which these functions are performed differs per the level of management. Management viewed in its purest form is ‘the art of getting things done through people’ (Preston et. al, 2003). Good managerial practice dictate that greater emphasis should be placed on ‘doing the right things’ (effectiveness) as opposed to ‘doing things right’ (efficiency), which comes through insight into the roles managers are required to perform.

The dynamic trends across the social, technological, and economic landscapes of the Library and Information Service (LIS)

environment consistently impinge on the traditional management theories and practices that are still employed by some of these institutions. The LIS, like any other business entity must adapt quickly to the unpredictable nature of the society to remain competitive if it is to attract and maintain financial support, which has either been decreasing or somewhat elusive within recent years. Hence, the requisites for the LIS’ management team, irrespective of the strategic, tactical, and operational level, are to demonstrate the need for professionals who are, versatile, and equipped with skills and knowledge that will propel the LIS’ Unit to operate in unison with society

The role of the LIS manager does not exist in a vacuum but embraces the internal as well as the external environment. The internal environment in this case is defined as ‘internal factors that shape the organization and its operating environment’. This encompasses factors such as structure, culture, management styles, values, communication, and use of technology; whereas, the external environment ‘comprises the surrounding conditions in which the information service and its parent organization operate’ (Bryson, 1999).

Nature of Change

It is a well-known fact that change is the only constant and permanent phenomenon. But more important is the nature of change, which is discontinuous and unpredictable. The ICT and the Internet have made a profound impact on the structure and functioning of different types of libraries. But the mission of all types of libraries, i.e. the preservation of and access to our documentary heritage is intact. Only the format of libraries and response to external and internal pressures is changing. ‘There is a paradigm shift from standalone libraries to library and information networks; from printed publication to digital documents; from ownership to access; from just-in case to just-in-time; from 9x5 to 24x7; from intermediation to disintermediation; and from library as a place to library as a concept’ (Singh, 2009).

PerRiggs (1997) technology has been one of the primaries if not the primary, factor(s) enabling the library to move forward in quantum leaps. Time cycles have been dramatically reduced; access is now available to global digital collections, a migration is occurring that gives less emphasis on place-centric (and more emphasis on user-centric) access has become

independent of location, databases are widely shared, multimedia documents are readily available, librarians are becoming more important to their clientele, and numerous examples of added value are witnessed daily by library users all because of advancements in technology'. Unquestionably, the revolution in library services has been driven by the evolving technology. It has enabled the electronic-based library to become truly the "nerve centre" of their community. The speed of advancement of specific features of the technology is quite impressive and so fast that librarians have become navigators to global intellectual resources; whereby they can locate, access, and customize information to meet the needs of their clientele.

Besides technological changes, libraries are faced with educational, social, economical, and cultural changes. The most striking impact on libraries has been that of the technological and fiscal changes. Library and Information Practitioners (LIPs) are faced with a diametrically opposite situation with growing electronic resources on the one hand and declining budgets on the other. The end-user expectations are growing and the prices of publications are also increasing. Nonetheless, our libraries as social institutions whose historical mandate is to preserve the past, to serve the present, and to facilitate to build the sustainable future of peoples and nations cannot be closed (Singh, 2009). The ascent of information and ICT must lead to the ascent of man by taking him to the next level of consciousness. That is only possible by developing independent learning and critical thinking skills among the LIPs, the library users, and other stakeholders across frontiers. In fact, it is a defining moment in the history of library as a social institution. If libraries and librarians are to be a face in the crowd of information providers, they must make a critical analysis of the history of the future (Singh, 2009). The message is crystal clear, i.e. the future of library as a social institution is very bright as it can be seen that the role of libraries and LIPs is expanding. In the post-industrial society, library is supposed to become a local gateway to world's knowledge and information, and LIPs are required to open their closed mind-sets to facilitate globalization of the indigenous knowledge and information. They are also required to develop their leadership competencies for leading and managing change in libraries

Managing rapid change resides at the forefront of contemporary library management. Change has always existed, but the impact of the external environment on the Library and Information Service has catapulted and enhanced the complexity of change. Per Line (1999), 'managing change is not a one-off activity; it is now the norm in the Library and Information Service environment. 'If Library and Information Services Units do not manage change, change will manage them'. Again, in recent years there has been a dramatic change in work processes and the types of services provided by libraries. An example is the demand for library materials and services online, which necessitates those library personnel, be skilled in the use of new technologies. This change is an ongoing process and it calls for adaptability and readiness of the leaders to act in the roles of innovator and broker.

Faerman (2008) describes the innovator role as follows:

As innovators, leaders create the vision for change which defines the future direction of the organization. In this role, they also help others within the organization to adapt to change. . . . Thinking creatively about opportunities, library administrators performing in the innovator role will search for new ideas and approaches to organization of the library, and will not be limited to current configuration or structures. Moreover, they will be concerned with establishing a climate in the organization where new ideas and approaches are valued, where creative thinking is encouraged among all employees, and where appropriate risktaking is rewarded.

By extension, library administrators acting in the role of broker are expected to influence important people outside of the library, secure funding, and obtain approval for organizational change. Plans direction of the organization needs to be based on an adequate understanding of current conditions, specific barriers that need to be addressed, and analysis of the feasibility and benefits of proposed organizational changes and new projects. Organizational change may be implemented and innovative projects undertaken because of perceived desirable benefits, but the innovator and broker must recognize that if

nothing is done to address prevailing obstacles, then not much will be accomplished.

Response to Change

Because of shift from analogue paradigm to digital paradigm, instead of ownership of documents, libraries are now buying access for the information seekers. This is now done through shared subscription via library consortia, institutional and knowledge repositories, open access archives, regional library networks, and strategic responses of library and information professionals across the globe. A vivid example in Nigeria today is the EBSCO Project in most academic libraries today. It must be remembered that change is of two types, i.e. generational change and adaptive change (Singh, 2009). The above said change mechanisms are the result of collective wisdom and leadership. But this wisdom and leadership is not commonplace, particularly in some libraries.

Two important ways in which libraries will be able to meet the challenges of the future are using computers to automate the library's acquisitions, cataloguing, circulation, inventory and statistical work and by going out, both psychologically and physically into the community which is to be served and learning to operate in terms meaningful to those they are trying to reach. It is the librarian's responsibility to use the new technology whenever it is useful, to raise and broaden professional standards, to develop broad and imaginative patterns of national cooperation, and to express a keen and pervasive sense of the library's enlarged social commitment

Pressure for change

Like other stakeholders across frontiers, library and information professionals are also under tremendous pressure to manage change in libraries and information centres. There are both external and internal pressures. Externally, the ICT, the Internet, the Google, and the commercial information providers are giving fierce competition to libraries and library personnel. Internally, organizational culture, declining library budgets, and lethargic and apathetic attitude of majority of LIPs to change are the critical factors for the present state of the art. The result is that the end-user is moving away from the library and is getting carried away by the commercial publishers and search engine like Google (Singh, 2009). It is high time that LIPs adopt a pro-active attitude, internalize

team spirit, develop professional and personal competencies, and learn to be a face in the crowd of information providers.

Librarians are the best professionals to organize knowledge and information to save the time of the information seekers. There is a lot of chaos in the public domain on the web. Librarians are required to retrieve pertinent information from the web, consolidate and repackage it for the benefit of the end-users. In the digital age, customization and personalization of information is the heart of the matter. That can be done in a professional way by LIPs by using the best professional practices, such as library classification, library cataloguing, concept indexing, bibliographical control, and vocabulary control. But for doing that, LIPs must be on sound footing about the philosophy of library and information science, its theoretical foundations, and best practices (Singh, 2009).

Areas for Change

The work of libraries has always been organized around the flow of information. Generation, acquisition, processing, storage, dissemination, and use are the six stages of information life cycle. Barring the first and the last stages, libraries and librarians are directly concerned with the other four stages of information life cycle (Singh, 2009). In this context, change must be managed in the following functional areas in libraries and information centres:

Library outreach: The goal of community outreach within a library is to develop library outreach programmes for non-users, the underserved, and people with special needs within the community. Communities are living things; they are constantly growing and changing. To meet the diverse needs of any community, libraries must keep in touch with these changes and tailor services to meet ever-changing needs (Livesay, Petro and Yelm 2002). In addition to providing needed service to community members, community outreach programmes within a library provide a unique opportunity to improve public image within a service community and offers excellent collaboration opportunities with community leaders, groups and organisations that will enhance overall library service.

Reader services: Library services around the country can embark on programme of sustained improvement. A well-run library service can deliver vital services to all sections of the

community not just in its traditional roles of introducing the young to the habit of reading and tackling literacy issues, but in many other ways, such as assisting jobseekers, helping people acquire new skills, creating a space for adult learning, acting as a hub for community information and with digital inclusion. There are also many ways to improve service delivery which can all strengthen the library service and bring value for money, for instance co-location, integration with institution of learning, children's centers' and one-stop shops.

Collection development and management: Diversity in collections (both paper and electronic) and in services (focusing on user differences) should receive greater attention. New technology will provide the means to achieve this, most especially now that publishers have made possible selection, ordering and payment online for libraries. All that is required is the libraries to go all out and embrace ICT in order to utilise this opportunity. A change in this direction will surely put in place good collection development and management culture

Library automation and networking: Any library with aims to improve qualitative services to users must go for the latest in the field of information technology and be compelled to embrace automation. This is because automated libraries go for beyond the activities of traditional libraries. Digitalization is an essential and expanding medium for providing online access to journal articles, databases, project, images and more. The conclusion is that the use of Information technology in Libraries helps to give better services to the end user and the stock of knowledge is used in a better way for the development of academic activities.

Technical services: Technical services' need to be flexible and easily adaptable to meet new challenges, Efforts should be geared towards applying new and changing cataloguing rules, addressing various workflows, processing new types of materials, and automating all cataloguing processes

Library building: The new forms that the change in library building will take are impossible to foresee, so it is best to prepare for change by building spaces that can be altered. At the very least, they will be needed as a place to spend time. Paradoxically, the emergence of the Internet has given new importance to the need for more space in libraries. In the future, there will be more and more happening in libraries

thus libraries may need to provision space for lecture halls, discussions rooms, storytelling and book clubs' rooms. Meeting spaces and exhibition rooms will also give library users an opportunity to exhibit their work. In the public libraries people, may book meeting rooms even outside library opening hours.

Reading rooms and other reading places have lost none of their significance at libraries, although the demand for them is seasonal in part. They and the rooms for group work have a permanent social need to fill, and people will convene in the library café if there is no other space available. Other rooms that serve people's individual learning needs include soundproofed music rooms, where you can play the library piano or an instrument of your own. Libraries will therefore need to allocate even more space in future for just spending time and for supporting the community of users. Cafés must not be forgotten either: it is hard to imagine a good library without a café.

Library finance: Challenging library budgets have lead libraries to consider the ways in which they operate at a process level. Focus is on doing more with less and in improving performance within, or with reduced, resources. Libraries may need to experience greater decentralization in the budgeting process. For example, each department can run its own budget and this call for an allocation formula that should keep changing each year. This will put in place incentives that can lead departmental heads and other centre managers to accomplish their missions in ways that promote institutional objectives.

Library personnel: The work life of librarians will continue to change significantly. Technology, as expected, will drive this metamorphosis in the daily work of librarians. New assignments will occur, some new unanticipated positions will occur, and there will be less distinction between the work of librarians and information professionals. There will probably be more grumbling from the support staff because they see themselves doing the same work as librarians, but getting less pay. In an academic environment, librarians must work more closely with the faculty, while in the public library environment librarians may need to spend more time with the community of users to find out what they need in the future to do better and work more.

Commitment to pleasing the customer through top quality in products and services should be given a very high priority. Doing more with less is a characteristic of the workplace that is expected to continue in the future. Perhaps the information technology will improve efficiency to the point whereby fewer workers are required. Based on libraries' experiences with technology, the new technology did not "save" money nor did it allow a significant reduction in the work force; some will say that the contrary happened.

Leadership Competencies

Central to the argument of effective change management is that of leadership. Leadership is the ability to guide or move people in a direction and is a quality that must be able to induce, persuade, and motivate others to identify with the goals of an institution. Leadership also has a visionary quality embodying characteristics such as risk taking, good communication skills, and the ability to gain trust and lead by example (Hurlbert, 1998)

In the leadership literature, an important distinction is made between "managers" and "leaders." Managers are primarily involved with processes of planning and budgeting, organizing, staffing, controlling, and problem solving. On the other hand, leaders are involved with establishing directions, aligning people, motivating, and inspiring. In "What Leaders Do," Kotter emphasizes that leadership is about coping with change. Setting the direction for change is fundamental to leadership. Major changes in today's highly competitive business world are crucial to compete effectively and to survive, and "more change always demands more leadership" (Kotter, 1990). Kotter also clarifies that "leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile business environment." But for leadership, achieving a vision requires motivation and inspiring—keeping people moving in the right direction, despite major obstacles, by appealing to basic but often untapped human needs, values, and emotions." (Kotter, 1990)

In a similar vein, Topping's (2002) distinguished between managers and leaders. Per him "Managers wait to be told what to do, while leaders take initiative, figure out what must be done, and then do it." Topping emphasizes that it is important to have good managers, "people

who are able to effectively plan, organize and control," but, we also "have a great need for leaders inside organizations—people who inspire, motivate, and develop others. And we need leaders at all levels in our organization, not just at the top. . . . It is imperative that organizations have people who are capable as both managers and leaders." What is expected of managers is clear-cut, but this is not true regarding leaders.

The competencies required for leadership are thus diverse and multifaceted, so that understanding them, much less practicing them, requires a broad approach. A two-part study was done by Herson, Powell, and Young (2001) to determine what attributes (knowledge, skills, and critical competencies) are needed by university library directors in the Association of Research Libraries (ARL). The listing is extensive and reflects the numerous and complex challenges such directors face. This study also provides useful insights into managerial leadership in libraries in a wider context, beyond just in ARL. Desirable attributes are listed under the categories of managerial attributes (subdivided into managing, leading, planning); personal characteristics (subdivided into dealing with others), individual traits (general), individual traits (leadership); and general areas of knowledge:

Managing: Result-oriented, communicates effectively with staff, delegate authority, facilitates productive work environment, manages fiscal resources and budgets, and resolves conflicts.

Leading: Builds a shared vision for the library, manages and shapes change, thinks "outside the box" (in new and creative ways applicable to the problem), is entrepreneurial, and keeps the library focused on its mission.

Planning: Sets priorities and creates an environment that fosters accountability dealing with others. Treats people with dignity and respect, has good interpersonal and people skills.

Individual traits (general): Has self awareness of strengths and weaknesses, is honest, analyzes and solves problems, and can ask the right questions.

Individual traits (leadership): Is change-focused, exercises good judgment, articulates direction for the library, inspires trust, and is innovative.¹⁸ What we also see here is the applicability of the Competing Values

Framework. It's not possible to have all these desired qualities. The complexity of managerial leadership can indeed be daunting, and allowances for shortcomings may be inevitable.

Other skills that may be required of a leader are: (Suman, 2005)

Political Skills: These skills are required to motivate people and convince the management at the same time for the maximum benefit of the organization and users

Analytical Skills: The ability to analyze the situation judiciously and to act wisely is the primary requirements of a good manager. Further, if the property to be managed is change, then the analytical skills are of greatest significance.

People Skills: People skills are nothing but the ability to manage people in the groups, one that are part of the change and those that are bringing about the change.

System Skills: These include a set of skill required for designing of a new system or bringing out balanced renovations in existing systems. One should be able to have a balanced outlook towards all the components of the system ranging from input to the final output

Business Skills: Business skills have acquired greater significance because of the increasing emphasis on the evolution of self-sustaining profit generating information centres. As libraries are becoming more complex and confusing, reshaping and renewing themselves, and undergoing unparalleled changes, transformational leadership is in great demand. Excellent managers and transactional leaders are certainly needed too, but there must be that "something extra" ingredient in leading the libraries into the new century. Transformational leaders must be excellent strategists, strong planners, synthesizers, change agents, and visionaries. No one leader will have these attributes and each library situation will likely require a different type of leader at different times in the history of the library.

Nanus (1992) provides a dynamic overview of visionary leadership. He is of the view that there is difference between a leader and a manager, as well as competence and competencies. A leader he states 'facilitates change but a manager maintains the status quo. Similarly, competence means mastery and competencies mean a set of skills. Competence comes with experience. But

before that we must have a good commonsense and formal education. Then strategic professional learning must be internalized by the LIPs as a lifelong learning process. LIPs must be equipped with cultural literacy and information skills for learning. Similarly, a sense of responsibility and accountability along with team spirit, motivation, and interpersonal skills should also become a part of their mind, body, and soul as this theonly that way the LIPs can make sense of the web-based chaos'.

Challenges and Opportunities

Change from an existing setup to a new environment has its own set of inherent problems and the problems become multi-fold when applied in a service institution as library. Libraries have been pioneers in adopting any new technology, the same holds true for information and technology also. The role of libraries has gradually changed from the traditional storehouse of information to access providers. There has been a paradigm shift in the ways libraries used to be managed.

The problems associated with the transition in the case of libraries have both content and a process dimension. The reason is that not only the library operation has got automated but also at the same time there have been drastic changes in the way information content used to be presented and organized. The tools and techniques that were suitable for traditional documents don't hold good for born digital documents, so, a whole new approach needs to be developed to handle the situation (Suman, 2005).

Growing electronic resources and declining library budgets, leadership deficit, widening digital divide, resistance to change, poor interpersonal skill, declining culture of reading and assimilation, lack of team spirit, and ascent of the commercial information provider and the Google are a few challenges to be faced by the LIPs and library leaders (Singh, 2009). But at the same time, the Internet is a massive storehouse of knowledge and information to empower the end-users. Knowledge networking, particularly the tacit knowledge networking, is the golden opportunity available via the Internet. But still a lot needs to be done to use the ascent of information and the ICT for facilitating the ascent of man. Library leaders and LIPs can do a lot to take the end-users to the next level of consciousness.

There has been significant progress in connecting the various countries via the Internet; nevertheless, this is still a long way from claiming a “global” library. It is estimated that one half of the world’s population lives two miles from the nearest telephone. Technologically speaking, there are currently more “have riots” than “haves.” Digitizing local treasures and making them available throughout the globe is certainly one of the first steps in the “globalization of knowledge.” Chen (1995) in barriers to information access identified language competences, standardization, and interoperability of technology/software, lack of international policies, cultural differences, and affordability of information where more work need to be done to in developing policies and infrastructure necessary for global information access.

Libraries of all sizes are now influenced by the global efforts to make information more accessible. Some libraries have already designated a librarian (Systems Librarian) to oversee the international initiatives. It should be expected to see greater involvement in the internationalization of scholarship. In the future libraries need to be asking questions such as: What type of organizational structure should they have that will foster the international aspects of learning and research? What can library administrators do to promote a better understanding of international/global forces affecting the library? And how can the library position itself to participate in international information policy making?

Conclusion

The past and future of libraries will depend upon the critical analysis of external and internal pressures on libraries for change management. LIPs must remember the golden principle, “lead, follow, or quit.” There is no place for grumbling people on this planet called earth. The bottom line is that we must learn to manage change before it manages us and makes us dinosaurs of the memory of mankind.

Irrespective of the skill and knowledge required by the contemporary LIS manager, the individual must be he or herself. Whether the manager walks around or remains in the office, whatever method is employed, it must be effective. The manager who knows what he or she believes to be correct and proper, and who has a thorough understanding of what he or she wants from life comes over as firm and not

easily dominated. With the shift of LIS towards information technology and e-libraries, some difficulty managing in this environment is foreseen. Therefore, the manager must create stability zones, these may be activities or environments that would rejuvenate and refresh the individual to cope with all aspects of life.

Libraries face continuous challenges because of rapidly evolving technologies and their community’s demand for a multitude of new services. To meet these challenges, organizational needs often focus on automation, library expansion or downsizing, and subsequent evaluation of patron services all within the constraints of tighter budgets. Because the pace and demands of change can be overwhelming for library staff, “well-conceived programs and well-designed structures will be needed to improve and upgrade organizational capabilities and staff skills as these changes occur” (Jurow, 1992). The benefits of “a systematic and organized approach to the training and development of library staff” include: increasing the quality and quantity of work, eliminating the need for close and constant supervision (thus freeing supervisors to make more effective use of their own time), improving staff morale and job satisfaction by developing independent and competent staff, and increasing organizational flexibility and stability by creating resourceful and adaptable staff

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