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Creating a Culture of Assessment: A Catalyst for Organizational Change

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abstract: In the rapidly changing information environment, libraries have to demonstrate that their services have relevance, value, and impact for stakeholders and customers. To deliver effective and high quality services, libraries have to assess their performance from the customer point of view. Moving to an assessment framework will be more successful if staff and leaders understand what is involved in organizational culture change. This paper describes the new paradigm of building a culture of assessment, and places it in the framework of organizational culture change, utilizing a learning organization and systems thinking approach.

Introduction

Libraries operate in an environment of constant change. Currently, the main concern confronting libraries is rapidly shrinking budgets. At a time of fiscal retrenchment, meeting changing customer expectations becomes very challenging. The effects of the bear market on endowments and the economic downturn on state funding require that libraries manage limited resources to accomplish the greatest impact. On the technology front, emphasis is centered on providing increasingly more comprehensive and dependable service. The Internet is growing fast; the amount of digital information available is increasing even faster. Search engines are becoming more useable and able to retrieve relevant information across databases. The wireless environment is becoming a reality. The need to have better access to relevant information is of strategic importance to society. Customers are expecting more control and ease of access to services and information. Most researchers prefer delivery to the desktop. In addition to these demands, libraries are also faced with challenges from external funding agencies, accreditation agencies, and governments that want to make sure that out-

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comes are positive, measurable, and able to demonstrate cost efficiencies. In some cases, they are dictating the measures they want to see, and they tie outcomes to funding.

There is much discussion in higher education and libraries related to strategic change and measure of performance. There is a call for new, more outcome-based measures.[1] Library leaders are advocating for the development of a "culture of assessment."[2] This paper poses the questions: what is the essence of a "culture of assessment," how does an organization intentionally develop such a culture, what are the challenges, and what benefits are there to moving in this direction?

The concepts and ideas that comprise the principles and practices of a culture of assessment were outlined by Amos Lakos and Shelley Phipps in 1999 while developing, in conjunction with the Association of Research Libraries' Office of Leadership and Management Services (ARL/OMS), a workshop Creating a Culture of Assessment in Libraries. These concepts emerged from a dialog begun at the "Living the Future 2: Organizational Changes for Success" conference held in April 1998 in Tucson, Arizona, where Betsy Wilson (UW), Amos Lakos (UCLA), and Cathy Larson (UA) presented initial descriptions of what might constitute evidence of a culture that had fully integrated assessment into its method of operation. The ARL/OLMS workshop was designed to teach participants the basics of organizational culture in order to understand the new paradigm of building a culture of assessment. The workshop provided the opportunity to learn about a performance management system and its importance in creating organizational systems to effect culture change. An important part of the workshop was based on the Performance Effectiveness Management System (PEMS), designed at the University of Arizona Library in 1998/99. The PEMSystem guides organizational, team, and individual strategic goal setting, including measures that will indicate success. It also calls for an assessment of customers' explicit and latent, present and future needs to drive the goals-setting processes. In addition, it focuses teams and staff on the importance of continuous learning and the need for organizational and peer support for learning new skills that will be required in a radically changed future. [3]

Strategic Change and Customer Focus

In the 1996 article, "Choosing Our Futures," Carla Stoffle, Robert Renaud, and Jerilyn Veldof predicted that libraries would have to take present and future changes seriously in order to stay viable and true to their mandates of ensuring equitable access to information and delivery of services that are needed by library users and citizens.[4] Their article emphasized the need to study and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of library processes, to "collect data and use them as the basis for decision-making . . . and to benchmark costs." [5] They also stressed the importance of assessing customer needs related to the library processes of educating, selecting resources, and providing access. After detailing the need for radical organizational changes and the difficulties involved in implementing them, the authors stated, "The choice is clear. Change now and choose our futures. Change later, or not at all, and have no future." [6]

In the current external environment, libraries are challenged to be nimble, innovative, responsive, proactive and, most of all, able to demonstrate their value. Libraries must to be able to measure their outcomes and systematically make technology, budget

allocation, service, and policy decisions based on a range of data—needs assessment data, customer evaluation data, stakeholder expectation data, and internal process and organizational effectiveness data. Pressure to offer value-added service is mounting in intensity, and the rate of change is relentless.

Libraries must transform themselves into organizations that support the values of quality and quality management.[7] This also means that libraries should build organizations that support learning.[8] Peter Senge defines the learning organization as "a group of people continually enhancing their capacity to create what they want to create."[9] Libraries that focus on customer needs and continuously build staff confidence increase their quality service to their customers by concentrating on the organization's ability to learn and create innovative and timely solutions.

In order to do this, libraries must develop internal organizational systems that enable successful assessment and evaluation of their services and processes to achieve positive outcomes for customers. In her 1998 paper, Rowena Cullen identified three critical factors in successful performance measurement—recognizing that it is a political activity, a complex evaluative activity, and an activity that demands appropriate incentive.[10] For performance measurement to meet its intended goal, a culture of assessment must be developed within the library organization.[11] How do we create this culture of assessment? What hinders and what helps us in this endeavor?

Key Indicators for Successful Organizations

Most management studies stress the importance of measurement activities for ensuring business and organizational success, but few provide a blueprint for integrating such activities into an organization's work ethic, and most fail to recognize the need for strategic culture change. A study of senior executives in large Canadian companies, for instance, found that the three most important factors contributing to business success were managerial leadership and vision, customer service, and skilled and motivated employees. The study found the principal components of managerial leadership were clarity of purpose, the ability to communicate that purpose, the creation of a positive working environment, and careful measurement of results.[12] Good customer service is built on management commitment, working with customers, staff training for customer service, accepting responsibility, and measuring results through customer surveys and attention to customer retention rate. Skilled, trained, and motivated employees ensure that the organization retains the competence to continue successful strategies and maintains an attitude of caring for customer concerns.

The importance of communicating and reinforcing the measurement of success and constant benchmarking constitute the strategic focus of leadership. As Edwards Deming and most organizational theorists have articulated—an organization's major emphasis must be on the future and providing continuous value for external customers and stakeholders.[13] The study by Howard Armitage also observed an increase in the importance of measuring customer retention, employee turnover, and process improvement—all of which allow for the thoughtful examination of organizations from a variety of perspectives and viewpoints.[14] A key implication of this focus is the realization that what gets measured gets managed; creating value lies in understanding, communicating,

and measuring what matters to customers.[15] Furthermore, the importance of effective reward systems to organizational success is noted. This same issue was pointed out over 20 years ago by Steven Kerr when he summarized the pitfalls of many organizations whose performance measurement systems rewarded different behaviors than the ones they were hoping to obtain from their employees.[16]

In addition to measurement as a strategic prerequisite for success, it is important in times of fundamental change for organizations to pay particular attention to their culture, because the success of change is very much dependent on the management of cultural transformation.[17] Organizations that are not cognizant of the importance and power of their culture may find themselves failing when undertaking various change initiatives. Businesses that thrive over long time periods are differentiated by their culture. "The major distinguishing feature in these companies, their most important competitive advantage, the most powerful factor they all highlight as a key ingredient in their success, is their organizational culture."[18]

What is Organizational Culture, and Why Does it Matter?

Understanding organizational culture is critically important, because initiatives and changes undertaken without consideration of the need for culture change often have unforeseen and potentially negative consequences. Culture matters, because it is a "powerful, latent, and often unconscious set of forces that determine both individual and collective behaviour, ways of perceiving, thought patterns, and values. . . . Cultural elements determine strategy, goals and modes of operating."[19]

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Organizational culture focuses on beliefs, values, and meanings used by members of an organization, and the practices and behaviors that exemplify and reinforce them. Researchers, consultants, and managers have gravitated to the concept of culture in order to better grasp why and how organizations originate, evolve, and operate. Culture is not simple. It is not just "the way we do things here," "the rites and rituals of the company," "the company climate," "the reward system," or "our basic values." These are all manifestations of culture, but there is a deeper, more complex level where culture really matters. Culture must be viewed on several levels to be fully understood.

At the deepest level, organizational culture refers to the overt and covert rules, values, and principles an organization owns that are influenced by history, custom, and practices. These enduring tenets and norms form the basis of a social system and allow its members to attribute value and meaning to the external and internal events they experience. The essence of culture is the values, beliefs, and assumptions that, over time, become shared and taken for granted through a continuous, collaborative learning and influencing process. Culture determines attitudes and patterns of thought about

what is important and what must be done. If strategic change is needed, culture change is absolutely essential for success.

The Challenge

However, organizational culture is stable, difficult to change, and represents the accumulated learning of a group. The important parts of culture—values, beliefs, and principles—are often invisible. Culture is the "shared mental model" that the members of an organization hold and take for granted. It is difficult for insiders and outsiders to decipher. There is no right or wrong culture, except in relation to what the organization wants to achieve. The relative strength of an organization's culture is dependent on how well the group deals with external adaptation and internal integration.[20] For change to occur, the organization must recognize either a threat to its survival or a strong, positive external pressure that calls for adaptation and integration of new systems. Such systems provide the means to ensure continuation of the organization and the ability to achieve its mission. Members must commit to strong organizational values for the organization to adequately change.

The Need for Transforming Institutional Cultures

Educational reform in higher education has increasingly focused on the need to transform institutional cultures.[21] In the public libraries' arena, competition is increasing not only from the Internet as an information source but also giant bookstores that provide strong alternatives to traditional public library services. Municipalities, themselves under constant financial and social pressures, are closely evaluating library services and are demanding measurable value and outcomes. The same demands exist for corporate, school, and government libraries. There is increasing pressure to demonstrate their value to their stakeholders, customers, and funders.

Legislators emphasize accountability for a return on investment of public monies, and educators are beginning to emphasize student learning as something that requires measurement and documentation. For example, regional accreditation agencies in the United States are emphasizing student learning outcomes and using assessment as a means for improvement in teaching and learning.[22] In educational institutions at all levels, there seems to be general agreement on the need to foster inter- and intra-departmental collaboration in an effort to achieve institutional missions. This, in turn, requires a "culture of improvement." Assessment within institutions is generally seen as a key lever for creating an institutional culture of improvement, inquiry, responsibility, and—in the language of some circles—quality.

What kind of assessment fosters a culture of collaborative inquiry into student learning outcomes? How will the distinct roles, commitments, and identities of faculty and staff formed within a single culture be appreciated or changed as part of that organization's changing culture? What is most needed to achieve a transformation of institutional culture that meets our shared and diverse purposes?

As we focus on the higher education environment and the role of the library in nurturing and perhaps even leading the educational role of an institution, we have to

examine some important issues. Some of these questions, quoted below, were raised at the "Transforming Institutional Cultures" segment of the 2001 AAHE Assessment Research Forum Research Agenda meeting:

- Where does the institution focus its efforts and resources to make the most effective transformation to a culture of assessment?
- What are the characteristics of leadership that bring about the transformation to a culture of assessment (best practice institutions) when compared with those without?
- How do we sustain a culture of assessment over time?
- How can we balance assessment that stresses collaboration with the one-on-one nature of student and faculty relationship? How can we balance the tension between collaboration and one-on-one approaches?
- How do we transform a traditional research culture so that it also values scholarship of assessment?
- What steps are necessary to keep the focus on student learning outcomes?
- How is institutional culture formed/shaped/changed? Who sets the norms and the constructs that define institutional culture? Who are the drivers/definers of culture in an institution? How is culture affected by internal and external forces?
- Given increasing globalization, where can we make international comparisons of assessment approaches?[23]

Libraries, Librarians, and A Culture of Assessment

One challenge associated with creating a culture of assessment in libraries relates to professional values. A profession that inherently believes that it is a "public good" does not feel the need to demonstrate outcomes and articulate impact. There is a deeply held and tacit assumption that the "good" is widely recognized and that the value of library service is universally appreciated. In the current environment of competition and of questioning every assumption, this deeply held value results in resistance to change and resistance to continuous assessment. The recognition of the threat to organizational survival is almost non-existent in certain sectors of librarianship.

One challenge associated with creating a culture of assessment in libraries relates to professional values. A profession that inherently believes that it is a "public good" does not feel the need to demonstrate outcomes and articulate impact. There is a deeply held and tacit assumption that the "good" is widely recognized and that the value of library service is universally appreciated. In the current environment of competition and of questioning every assumption, this deeply held value results in resistance to change and resistance to continuous assessment.

In addition, assessment activities also require certain skills more aligned to marketing and business than to librarianship. Assessment has not been taught or appreciated by the profession. It involves "visioning" by the organization, which requires knowing what customers value and focusing on continuous improvement. The evolution of library activities into functional "silos" such as circulation, cataloging, acquisition, and reference service has imposed an organizational structure that assigns to the administrative periphery the activities concerned with planning, data-gathering, assessment, and evaluation. In the same way, it has assigned its customers to the periphery. Library professional organizations have focused on evaluating success as a function of size, capability, and financial input. Until the recent "new measures" movement—in ARL and in accreditation agencies—little emphasis had been on outputs and outcomes.[24] Now to successfully respond to threats to their survival and demands for better, faster delivery of information, libraries have to incorporate assessment into their everyday activities; they have to create structures for assessment activities and use these measures to create performance management systems.

Changing culture is difficult. Individual behaviors are based on long-held and strongly felt attitudes and assumptions, as are attitudes about work and effectiveness, and are difficult to change. Studies of organizational culture change link strategic change and culture change,[25] but there are differing views on how to effect culture change in the shortest amount of time. Tony Eccles suggests that behavior changes attitudes. New structures and rewards (incentives to change) that focus on behavior change can lead to changed performance and attitudes and result in real culture change.[26]

In order to survive and succeed in the present environment the following need to be embedded in library cultures: a belief in the need for continuous learning, an assumption that all decision-making needs to be strategic, a commitment to the necessity of prioritization of the allocation of scarce resources, and a demonstration of the value of public organizational and individual accountability. Libraries have to be engaged in strategic planning, "thinking through the issues and their implications . . . and delineating resources that would need to be assembled to carry out the plan."[27] It is imperative that they establish planning processes that foster an environment of assessment and involve staff in the creation of the plan and associated framework of actions. Allocation of time and financial support for learning about assessment needs to be substantial and sustained. Assessment cannot be seen as a separate "management activity" but must be appreciated and valued by all members of the culture and assumed to be part of their regular work.[28] Culture change will not occur until most members of the culture consciously care to know whether the intended outcomes of their efforts are indeed occurring. If measures indicate insufficient progress, analysis needs to identify problems and action steps to take in order to eliminate or reduce the causes. Lack of competence or ability is often a root cause. If organizations are serious about change, they need to invest in the development of new skills to sustain it. Designing organizational systems that ensure a focus on customers, enable shared learning, measure results, and use information from the external environment for internal decision-making is the surest path to creating a new culture of assessment.[29]

Prerequisites for Creating a Culture of Assessment

Defining a "Culture of Assessment"

"A Culture of Assessment is an organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research, and analysis, and where services are planned and delivered in ways that maximize positive outcomes and impacts for customers and stakeholders. A Culture of Assessment exists in organizations where staff care to know what results they produce and how those results relate to customers' expectations. Organizational mission, values, structures, and systems support behavior that is performance and learning focused."[30]

With this definition and the organizational assessment instrument that follows, the authors hope to create a framework that libraries can use to examine whether a culture of assessment is evident. The instrument can also be used as a delineation of steps to be taken in order to strengthen a culture of assessment.

Potential evidence of the existence of a culture of assessment would include:

- The organization's mission, planning, and policies are focused externally—on supporting the customer's need for access to information.

The formal documents, which define the library's mission, vision, and goals should explicitly refer to outcomes for customers and the expectation of an attitude of assessment. Goals and policies should indicate the importance of the customer and the stakeholder and would be developed based on customer input—as opposed to internal bureaucratic need.

- How performance measures will be assessed is included in organizational planning documents, such as strategic plans and unit goals.

Strategic goals of the library and each of its units should be specific, outcomes-oriented, and include targets or standards that should be used to measure progress. A planning framework should exist that directs work efforts toward explicit targets to achieve the organizational purpose. Plans should identify levels of service that would indicate success with customers. Measurement methods should be spelled out and regular reports of progress scheduled.

- Leadership commits to, and financially supports, assessment activities.

Leadership is essential for assessment work to succeed. Leaders must have a clear performance ethic and be visibly and continuously committed to assessment work and understand its importance to the success of the organization. If leadership is perceived to lack commitment, meaningful culture change will be difficult, if not impossible. Role modeling, teaching, and coaching must be practiced. Management decisions must show evidence of utilizing assessment and evaluation data. Open sharing of information is key if all units are to share accountability for making data-based decisions.

Leaders have to understand the importance of assessment to the success of the organization. Since assessment may produce information that major change is needed, leaders need to encourage risk-taking. Leadership, also, has to continuously articulate the organization's purpose and engage in meaningful strategic dialog within the organiza-

tion. Leaders need to develop incentive programs that support the culture change—rewarding learning and increased performance.

- Staff recognize the value of assessment and engage in it as part of their regular assignments. Individual and organizational responsibility for assessment is addressed explicitly—in job descriptions or is otherwise communicated formally.

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The challenge of delivering effective services in an environment of change should be appreciated by staff, and they should willingly engage in efforts to measure whether their work efforts are resulting in value-added outcomes for customers or whether improvements are needed. Measurement should not be feared as a potential tool for blame and punishment but should be embraced as a means of demonstrating success or learning of the need to change strategies.

Assessment should become part of the everyday work process. It needs to become part of the decision-making loop in the organization, a normal part of evaluating internal processes. A major challenge to overcome is the everyday, unexamined workflow. If left alone, it presents a daily barrier to creative experimentation and problem solving. Processes and services should be continuously evaluated for efficiency and effectiveness. Each work unit should have the responsibility to assess and manage changes to its processes that would benefit customers and gain cost efficiencies.

Since assessment work may be new, unfamiliar, and viewed as risky, time to learn and practice is essential. Risk taking and learning should be the norm in libraries. Staff are engaged and motivated if they know that time spent on assessment is expected, valued, and rewarded.

- Relevant data and user feedback are routinely collected, analyzed, and used to set priorities, allocate resources, and make decisions.

Structures, resources, plans, and processes should be in place to continuously communicate with customers about their needs, their expectations, and their successes in using library services. This data also should be analyzed and converted into information to be used to set new priorities for service and included in strategic planning efforts. Units should develop goals and budget requests for new projects or improvements in services based on information from customers and stakeholder groups.

Support Systems

- Assessment activities are supported by a Management Information System (MIS) or Decision Support System (DSS).

Because of the multiple and overlapping relationships between information sources, a single, integrated Management Information System should be developed that offers the ability to utilize information for decision-making. The design of such a system should reflect the need for critical information to be readily available, easily accessible, and retrievable by all involved in making decisions. Meaningful data should be routinely input, harvested, and updated. Resources should be allocated to support the design, development, and maintenance of the system, as well as coordination of data collection and interpretation. A management structure should be in place that ensures this activity has sufficient staffing and executive support and that data from the system is utilized through the organization.

Robert Hayes and Charles McClure recognized over 20 years ago the need for Management Information Systems in libraries.[31] However, setting up an MIS or a DSS requires awareness, commitment, and resources. Current examples of functioning MIS systems in academic libraries are beginning to occur. An early example of MIS development is work done at the University of Waterloo Library and the Tri-University Library Group Consortia in 1993–1999 by Amos Lakos.[32] Newer MIS type implementations or "data farms," as they are often called, are in development at The Los Alamos Laboratories, the University of Pennsylvania, University of Virginia, and University of Connecticut Libraries. Setting up these management systems is complex, but its benefits are already apparent and will increase in visibility as demands for accountability become the norm in libraries.

- Services, programs, and products are evaluated for quality, impact, and efficiency.

Libraries need to engage in a number of different activities to discover whether customers value their services and programs and whether or not desired qualities or expectations are fulfilled. All services should be evaluated from the perspective of customer expectations. Special efforts should be undertaken to identify appropriate measures of quality and ways to measure them. Service standards should be identified and services and processes measured against these standards.

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Continually striving for improvement in customer-driven explicit standards or target expectations should be the basic tenet of the library. In Great Britain, New Zealand, and the United States, governments have introduced programs designed to increase the standards of public service and make them more cost effective.[33] Parts of these initiatives are con-

cerned with being more customer-centered. In the public libraries, in particular, this has led to the introduction of quality service standards and ways of tracking them. Some service standards were also introduced in academic libraries, for example, at the University of Sunderland in the United Kingdom and in the United States at Wright State University Libraries.[34]

In the United States and Canada, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) and Texas A&M University have collaborated in developing the LibQual+ Project, which is designed to help libraries better understand the issues associated with service quality. LibQual+ is an effort to adapt the SERVQUAL to the library environment.[35] At the same time, Danuta Nitecki (Yale University) and Toni Olshen (York University), in conjunction with ARL's Office of Library Management Systems, developed an Online Lyceum Course—"Measuring Library Service Quality," which is teaching academic librarians the importance of measuring and implementing service quality into their functions.[36] At the University of Arizona Library, teams have experimented with the use of focus groups, surveys, unobtrusive observation, and the "secret shopper" approach, as well as being engaged in measurement of actual processes to determine whether the library meets customer-specified requirements or desires.

- Staff are supported to continuously improve their capability to serve customers and are rewarded for this.

Process improvement studies should be the explicit responsibility of all units. Each unit should understand which processes it owns, identify standards of service that customers expect, and continuously assess whether the current processes can be improved. Staff should receive training in process and systems analysis, as well as any additional training that may be required in order to offer higher quality services.

- Staff are rewarded for work and the application of new learning that demonstrates improved service quality or better outcomes for customers.

Reward and recognition systems should be in place, which demonstrate the value the organization places on staff who engage in continuous learning resulting in improved services for customers. Reward systems that are tied to clear organizational goals and expectations will enhance not only individual staff effectiveness but also help align the organization with its purpose and enhance its effectiveness. Without appropriate incentive systems, the need for renewed efforts by staff to develop new skills, change current work habits, and create new services and products aligned to changing customer expectations will not occur.

- On-going staff development in measurement, evaluation, and assessment is provided and supported.

Continuous learning is becoming part of the job of each person. The library has to plan and design each job to include enough time and opportunity to build new knowledge and new skills.

The changes in the information environment point to the need for continuous upgrading of skills at all levels of the organization. Without a well-structured learning and training environment, the library will not keep up with

new information opportunities and will be less effective. Continuous learning is becoming part of the job of each person. The library has to plan and design each job to include enough time and opportunity to build new knowledge and new skills. Programs that support individual and team learning boost the confidence level of staff and enable effective execution of change.

Staff development in all areas of assessment is needed. This includes learning about the need for and benefits of creating a culture of assessment and understanding appropriate methods for data collection and analysis.

- Units within the library have defined critical processes and established measures of success.

Individual units need to be empowered to take responsibility for determining their measures of success and to build processes that allow them to work toward achieving those standards. The standards and the derived processes must, in turn, be tied to the organization's articulated mission and its strategic plan. This means that all units and individuals have access to data that can be harvested to inform this work.

- Individual staff develop customer-focused S*M*A*R*T goals in an annual planning process and monitor progress regularly.

After setting standards for each library process and service component in accord with the strategic priorities of the library, staff commit to S*M*A*R*T* performance goals that are *Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-Oriented, and Timely.* When developing goals, the strategic purpose of the organization is to enhance staff understanding of their purpose, focus, and contributions within the organization and to facilitate staff willingness to participate in the assessment process. Support for achieving those goals becomes the focus of the performance management system. Conversations regarding progress result in positive feedback and problem solving. A shift in emphasis from personal appraisal to the process of goal attainment removes the onerous barriers associated with the former process. Goal attainment is a shared responsibility, with peers helping each other to succeed, not for internal supervisory approval but for customer satisfaction.

Creating a Culture of Assessment in Libraries: How Do We Get There?

Introducing a new concept and set of activities, such as continuous assessment, into an established library environment is difficult. Developing new attitudes in a well-established organizational environment that has been internally focused is difficult as well. There are built in cultural and personal obstacles to overcome. Some of the more important issues to focus on follow.

Leadership with Clear and Articulated Purpose

The presence of visible leadership cannot be emphasized enough. Leadership is paramount for any organizational culture change to take hold—to be planted, nurtured, and sustained over time until it becomes ingrained. A well-articulated purpose and vision, communicated clearly by leadership, will guide the organization through real

culture change. Leaders who are committed to organizational learning and to continuous improvement of services for primary customers and stakeholders will guide the systems and structure changes needed for cultural transformation.

The leadership that values inclusiveness, creates an environment of open and honest communication, and supports individual learning will be the most successful. Leadership focused on control will usually deliver either no change, or more likely, will reinforce the status quo and the present power structure. A "culture of assessment" stands in contrast to a "culture of control" with the attendant hierarchical relationships that impede change, owing to an emphasis on internal, subjective measures of success set by the manager's (rather than the customer's) expectations. Change leaders strive to create a learning environment, to deliver sustainable service quality to external customers, and to provide the common vision and purpose that are clearly communicated and are in turn understood and embraced by most of the organization.

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For culture to change, individuals have to embrace and personally commit to the new values and assumptions about what defines organizational success. They need to participate meaningfully in the change process in order to embrace it. The basic change has to be from internal to external focus, from manager focus to customer focus, from performing according to current capabilities to learning new competencies that will better meet the customer's needs. All this requires facilitative leadership—that of guiding, teaching, stewarding. Libraries need leaders who recognize that a systems thinking approach can prepare an organization for a successful culture change that is measurable. Hence the need for a "culture of assessment," which itself will drive and push the culture change.

Create a Systems Thinking Environment—Using the SIPOC (Suppliers, Input, Processes, Output, Customers) Model [37]

The SIPOC Model is an elaboration on Dr. W. Edwards Deming's system view.[38] It is a construct that enables individuals and groups to understand how interactions and interdependencies exist and work and how complex systems can be broken down into interdependent parts that enable us to understand the whole organizational system. It

is a construct for structuring processes that aligns organizational purpose with the customer, the outcomes they seek, the processes used, and the suppliers and inputs needed for the processes to work. [39] The SIPOC Model is an effective framework for understanding and analyzing how organizations work.

Creating an assessment environment and the corresponding infrastructure depends on seeing the big picture, its various components, and the links between them. Systems thinking refers "to the general reflex or habit of conceiving of reality in terms of interdependencies, interactions, and sequences. It is a way of thinking at the broadest macro-level or the smallest micro-level."[40] Learning to use systems thinking will enhance an organization's competence to do that. Recognition that systems and processes exist in relationship to their external environment can help staff understand the challenges and changes involved in developing a culture of assessment. Each part of the system has a definable purpose and contributes in some meaningful way to the achievement of the organization's purpose.

Every organizational system is affected by events and conditions in the external environment and needs to recognize important stakeholders' expectations. Members of the library need to understand the external environment, as well as the purpose for the library, the customers who need their services, and the processes needed to deliver value to the customers and stakeholders.

It is imperative for libraries and librarians to be educated about "systems thinking," about the dynamic relationships between expectations and inputs, about seeing the big picture, about thinking outside the box. Utilizing the systems model will enable libraries to create learning environments in which understanding of the need for customer "feedback loops"—"loops of information that inform those working within the system as to how well the system is functioning"[41]—and appreciation of the need for assessment as an everyday, reflective, systematic activity are commonplace.

Openness-Integrity-Trust

Good management requires having systems that support the emotional needs of people. Designing organizational systems that take into account how people interact, how they feel, and create a climate that encourages positive group interactions is of utmost importance for an organization that values openness and trust. Involving staff in decision-making and developing clear and comprehensive communication systems will increase the potential for actual culture change.

For assessment and evaluation to succeed an open working environment is needed. This is usually impossible in an organization that manifests turf wars and personal distrust. Nothing inhibits innovation, creativity, team building, and a sense of purpose more than lack of trust in an organization. This usually creates a sense of fear that is very difficult to overcome. Resistance to change inevitably results. When new ideas are introduced, acceptance will be difficult if little involvement or communication has occurred.

A culture of assessment is built on trust. Trust can develop only in an environment where divergent positions can be articulated and differences discussed calmly and thoroughly—with an openness to incorporate new thinking. Processes, structures, and modes of behavior, as well as decision-making and reward mechanisms that value experimentation must be built on a foundation of trust. Open dialog and a positive attitude to-

ward new initiatives, as well as collaboration and a wide acceptance of diverse ideas and opinions need to be supported. Trust is critical, yet difficult to develop. Fear that assessment will focus on individual performance appraisal and not on process improvement is a valid concern. As organizations attempt to implement the steps outlined in this article, research on the methods for developing trust within organizations needs to be integrated into creation of all aspects of the performance system.

Conclusion

Transforming our libraries to reflect a culture of assessment is essential to increasing our success with customers and stakeholders and maintaining relevancy in a competitive environment. Creating a culture of assessment pushes the organization to focus on understanding changing customer needs and on producing value-added outcomes for customers. It encourages self-examination and openness among staff, customers, and other stakeholders. Organizational systems and structures need to be redesigned to support external focus and standards need to be set for all mission critical processes.

Developing a culture of assessment is about learning how to learn. It is about developing the organization's and the individual's learning capabilities. It necessitates curiosity. The new competence, experience, and learning agility that are part of the creation of a culture of assessment lead to new confidence and enhanced expertise. This new expertise leads to more effective and measurable outcomes for customers and stakeholders, which in turn heighten the potential for survival and relevancy in a competitive information service environment.

Listening to the voice of the customer—using information about the customer and the changing environment to improve quality or develop new services and products and changing service attitudes—must not only be expectations in a new culture, they must be evident in the entire organizational design and its actions. New organizational structures must be created to ensure the continuance of externally focused activities.

If we are to create a culture of assessment, an amalgam of committed leadership, repeated articulation of purpose and external focus, time for group learning, and the creation of supportive organizational systems must be deliberately developed. Without this amalgam there is little chance of achieving true culture change, and there is a high probability of becoming irrelevant and unable to communicate the value and the worth of libraries in the information society.

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