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Recommended Citation

Jack G. Montgomery Jr. (2006). in Rosann Bazirjian, Rebecca Mugridge (Eds.), *Teams in Library Technical Services* (pp. 3-21). Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press

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The Role of Organizational Culture in Effective Team Development

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Abstract: The concepts surrounding team management and organizational culture may seem unrelated when initially considering the implementation of some form of team management however in fact both concepts are intimately connected. The success of any team management effort may depend on the successful identification, understanding and management of that wide variety of social and procedural elements collectively known as the organizational culture. This paper examines the role of organizational culture and how it impacts a manager or administrator introducing and implementing team management concepts to their workplace. The author will examine the definition of organizational culture, the various types of cultures and the author also suggests ways to operate within an organizational culture and successfully implement a team management program within one's culture.

Part One: So What Is an Organizational Culture and Why Does This Matter to Teamwork?

The concept of organizational culture, like that of team management, may be somewhat new to many librarians and unwelcome to many who have traditionally viewed themselves as removed from the competitive atmosphere of the for-profit sector of our society and therefore immune from the factors that influence the business world. As a consequence, librarians and library administrators have developed and maintained limited, if not a naive perception of how our institutions were socially configured and managed. Fortunately, those sorts of ideas and attitudes are quickly fading from view like those of the card catalog and the practice of guttering. In his chapter entitled "Culture and Leadership in Universities" William Taylor states that "current political and economic pressures and constraints upon universities are forcing a move from a person-oriented to a role and power-oriented culture.¹ Today enlightened library administrators are actively seeking to learn the science of management and help their organizations evolve into the modern, dynamic institutions they are capable of becoming. A major part of learning to administer an organization, consists of correctly observing, identifying and understanding the character and personality of an organization.. Understanding an organizational culture is essential to identifying the complex and often esoteric dynamics and features of a workplace. Such understanding is clearly essential for a manager to any attempt to bring change or new ideas like the concept of team management into a group. An administrator or even a manager must make certain that the organizational culture is capable of being receptive to the innovations that are being considered. "The wrong culture can sabotage vision, sandbag goals, and undermine values," writes author William Umiker ²

So what is an organizational culture and how does it function?

William Sannwald, in his article "Understanding Organizational Culture" defines four key functions of an organizational culture as follows:

1. An organizational culture conveys a sense of identity to those who work within it and to those who come into contact with it. In addition, “it conveys to staff what is unique about the organization and what sets it apart from other organizations.”³
2. An organizational culture instills a sense of value and purpose to what takes place as a result of the organizations activity and “it provides collective commitment to the organization.”⁴
3. An organizational culture promotes a “system stability, which is the extent to which the work environment is perceived to be positive and reinforcing.”⁵
4. It provides a rationale for the workplace and “allows people to make sense of the organization.”⁶ This understanding helps those involved in the culture to identify and develop the goals and objective necessary to proceed in a logical and productive manner.

In one sense, a healthy organizational culture is analogous to the healthy personality of an individual. A healthy person must have a clear sense of self, established ethics and values, a sense of purpose and self-control and a reason for being; hence, an organizational culture is the collective personality of an organization and must embody those same attributes. Most of us do not develop as individuals as a result of a clear and distinct written agenda but evolve gradually as a result of contact with a host of different circumstances, situations and people. Each of these factors leaves their marks on our individual psyche and, while the source may be forgotten, the effects continue to manifest themselves in our future. As a result, like an individual personality, there are often complex and hidden elements that have evolved unconsciously over time and may be operating without the person’s awareness. All of these elements exist in spite of a person’s education, social standing or ethnicity and may lead to contradictory and non-productive reactions. The same scenario exists for any organizational culture. An organizational culture may have developed historically in a manner that is totally out of sync with the formal written description of the culture often found in mission statements, organizational charts or job descriptions. It is, therefore, essential for an administrator or manager to identify and understand the actual cultural elements at play. Understanding the particular culture of an organization, however, is not an absolute guarantee of success in implementing and managing cultural innovation or change. Sannwald reminds us that “even with the best intentions, skills, and cooperation, new supervisors sometimes fail in a culture. The primary reason is tied to their people skills.”⁷ A manager or administrator may not even personally fit the culture in which he or she is attempting to function; however, understanding one’s organizational culture is an excellent place to begin. In this way, potential obstacles to team management may be identified and possibly modified before actual implementation is attempted. Tata and Prasad found that “Work-teams change the way people interact and work in organizations. The implementation of teams is context-dependent, the success of which can depend on the alignment between team-level and organizational-level structural factors.”⁸

Part Two: Different Styles of Organizational Culture:

There are many descriptions and models for organizational cultures available in the popular literature of business to help a person identify what defines a particular culture. In their book *The Character of a Corporation* Rob Goffee and Gareth Jones define four styles of organizational culture: *Communal, Fragmented, Networked and Mercenary*.⁹ They offer a series of diagnostic tools to help pinpoint which culture exists in a given place and time. To make an accurate identification of an organizational culture, the researcher should pay careful attention to factors such as how the physical elements of the work environment are structured, how and by whom communication is structured, how communication flows within the organization, how work time is managed, how people accomplish tasks, and how people identify themselves as individual working entities within the different parts of the organization. This identification process involves a considerable as well as an ongoing time investment on the part of the supervisor, but the rewards are immense in terms of one's eventual success. The researcher must also be aware that this attempt to examine, analyze and interpret the existing organizational culture may be viewed by others as threatening and potentially subversive by others in that culture. William Taylor asserts that often within existing organizational cultures “official descriptions are, in formal doctrine, isomorphic with the organization itself. Description is tolerated within limits. Analysis, comparison, interpretation, evaluation and explanation are more threatening. Mapping features of the organization onto other systems deprives it of uniqueness. The reductionism involved in analysis robs it of dignity. Potentially at least, comparison and evaluation can undermine the authority and status of its leaders. The alternative accounts offered by interpretation and explanation weaken the power of the official ideology.”¹⁰

These statements should not, however, dissuade the researcher but alert him/her to the delicate nature of this undertaking and the need for administrative support for the effort as well as careful attention to the diplomatic elements required.

Four Types of Organizational Cultures

The following entries are Goffee and Jones's descriptions of the four basic types of organizational cultures commonly found in business and industry. No culture is considered better than any other and that there are both positive and negative features and expressions associated with each type. Each culture, however, does create and disseminate many overt and subtle messages that are internalized by everyone involved and, in turn, form the basis of that particular culture.

The Communal Culture

Goffee and Jones identify Communal culture as having an overriding communal paradigm, that, combines the competitive spirit often associated with a mercenary culture with the work ethic of the networked culture. Communal cultures have an interest in results, yet are concerned with process and with people. There is distinct focus on high sociability with a strong, almost religious sense of commitment on the part of managers and workers alike. Often communal cultures mold themselves around a single person or group of persons and their particular vision of the work and institutional mission. Goffee and Jones use the example of a start-up company focused on a single product or goal

Such a company would be highly focused on the success of that product or goal and hence embody some elements of the mercenary culture to be mentioned later. They've observed that many organizations with mercenary cultures may also have communal cultures within them. 11

Friendship and kindness are personal and cultural traits valued in a communal culture but only as they relate to the mission or goal of the culture which is internalized and followed with an almost religious level of commitment. The institution may openly refer to itself as "a family." In this culture, an employee or manager walks the walks and talks the talk 24/7 as a way of embodying the cultural ideals. All of this can, in a negative sense, take a heavy toll on one's life outside work. It can also be devastating should those occupying the exalted positions fail in some manner. Also, if employees do not appear to buy into this vision or offer criticism, they are usually seen as traitors. Employees in communal cultures are often expected to attend company parties and other social events designed to strengthen the group. Employees not totally committed to the Communal ideals may resent this constant intrusion into their personal lives. An example of communal culture is embodied in the Japanese business work ethic and communal culture that requires workers to go out with their colleagues almost every evening to engage in elaborate socials designed to build solidarity.

Goffee and Jones suggest that a communal culture can exist for a time in an organization before possibly evolving into another type of culture. A library might adopt a communal culture during the initial stages of its organizational development and then change to a networked culture as the organization matures. Those individuals involved in communal culture often feel empowered as individuals and as an organization by and as a result of the high level of personal commitment required to make it function and yet this intense focus on the individual or collective personality. Such a focus can also make employee discipline and evaluations a very difficult, unpleasant process, yet such a process is as also necessary to retain the solidarity. 12 The close-knit communal culture requires that each person depend upon their immediate colleagues for just about everything and envision their first loyalty always to the organization. This dynamic can lead to a lack of self-examination and unwillingness to offer critiques of the culture or its practices even when prudence dictates so and failure to self-critique can lead to disaster.

The Fragmented Culture

In a Fragmented organizational culture, a low value is placed on the collective experience and a high value on individualism and autonomy. Employees are expected to be "free agents," distinct individuals with highly developed specific skills who function in an almost autonomous manner with regard to their work. This type of culture exists in fast-paced, high-risk organizations, such as investment banking, advertising, and in some high technology fields, as well as within academic departments and faculty in universities. Goffee and Jones define this type of organizational culture as having "low sociability and low solidarity." 13 They also state that people in a fragmented culture "work at an organization but for themselves." 14 While many librarians would not recognize themselves as working in a fragmented culture, Goffee and Jones suggest it is a very

common culture in educational and academic-based institutions where “your standing is also built on the outside world’s assessment.” 15 Within the traditional academic fields, a scholar gains status and prestige based on his or her professional development and intellectual output. The concept of bonding with or loyalty to a group of colleagues or even the institution is a distant second to being valued by your subject-based peer network. Most fragmented cultures have a certain disdain for any sort of group or team project or cooperative efforts. As a result, trying to implement traditional team management structure in such a culture is going to be difficult at best, if not impossible, without a significant change in the culture itself. Organizing the fragmented organizational culture along the concepts of teams management could be akin to herding cats.

In a fragmented culture, even simple attendance at meetings and planning sessions are often considered a disdainful obligation rather than something of value. Leadership roles in this type of culture, such as that of an academic dean, may be viewed as an unwelcome, imposed assignment. In an odd twist of fate, many academic library organizations, which have a traditional, service relationship to their university faculty, may unconsciously adopt the same fragmented culture posture and even in some cases develop a certain disdain for the service aspect of their profession. Clearly this form of cultural mimicry is usually going to be counter-productive to the organizational health of the library.

Results from a recent survey published in ALA Editions *Managing Conflict in Library Organizations: strategies for a positive productive workplace* seem to indicate that academic librarians have the greatest difficulty with positive self-image due to the predominance of fragmented cultures in library cultures in the halls of academia. However, as Goffee and Jones indicate, such a culture honors “ideas, not individuals,” and people may be hired for their intellect rather than their ability to get along and work well with others. 16

These trends applied to the academic hiring process have created a managerial system in higher education that is often ineffective and organizationally dysfunctional. It may reflect the classic scenario of a cognitively brilliant individual who is hired for research and teaching but who later is “promoted” to a position of administrative responsibility. Such individuals are often asked to manage a culture that they barely comprehend and often do not appreciate. Ironically, too the skills such scholars were prized for go to waste as they struggle to master a bureaucratic maze of university regulations and rules that seem meaningless compared to the important intellectual work to which they long to return. What usually lures rank and file professors to such choices is the extra “battle pay” that department head and other administrative positions include.

Goffee and Jones note that fragmented cultures can produce impressive results. They also advise managers to watch to be alert for the negative expressions of fragmentation, “where low solidarity and low sociability are creating dysfunctional organizational outcomes. Other warning signs: pervasive cynicism, closed doors, difficulty in recruiting, and excessive critiquing of others. In other words, ideas may matter, but so do the people promoting them, and no one is safe.” 17

Not surprisingly, any of the above warning signs could be found in an academic library. It is critical to the future of academic librarianship that there exist a balance between the university's culture and the internal culture of the library. Librarians in higher education should strive to avoid adoption of the negative features of the fragmented culture often promoted by their colleagues in the academic departments. Emulating the culture of the parent institution, in this instance, is likely to create a damaging environment. Academic librarians need to consider deliberately what cultural values prove most effective for their situation as a part of the larger institution and educational process so as to retain the ideals of service in their professional lives.

The Networked Culture

A Networked culture is characterized by the fact that "people know and like each other -- they make friends, as the rule goes, all over the organization." 18 Networked cultures, like communal cultures often foster high levels of socialization between its members, which in turn translate into a high degree of loyalty, and commitment to the organization and its goals. Significant value is placed on the ideal of reciprocity in human interactions and a "We all look after each other" attitude is present. Such organizations often have an emphasis on ease of communication and acceptance of individual expression and value the interconnected, interdependent nature of their work related activities. Individual differences are downplayed as unimportant. Due to this recognition of the collective value system of communication and expression, decisions tend to take longer than in some other models, but the degree of support for those decisions is often higher. Goffee and Jones suggest that in the networked culture great value is placed on helping others in a selfless manner. This sometimes expresses itself well during organizational strain with other departments. People's willingness to pitch in to assist when needed, or even "helping before they are asked," is evident. 19 This organizational atmosphere allows the institution to respond quickly and effectively to changes in the workplace. The Networked culture, as a result, is, a fluid, adaptable organizational culture. As Riane Eisler states in her article on the concept of partnership as a managerial ideal, "Already, there are calls in the organizational change literature for a recognition that we are interdependent on rather than independent of one another." 20 Many libraries may have networked cultures as their primary culture or embedded with a larger culture. Many technical services departments develop as networked cultures due to the interrelated, interconnected nature of the finished product. On the other hand, many public services departments, especially in academic environments, develop as fragmented cultures due to a wide variety of educational experiences and backgrounds and the independent nature of the services they deliver.

Such an environment may have some qualities that seem ideal, especially for a service-oriented business like a library, but it is certainly not for everyone. Some people are not accustomed to a high degree of sociability and may not feel comfortable in a networked culture. Similarly, individuals brought up with and rewarded for displaying a high degree of competitiveness may find the "Let's all work for each other" atmosphere frustrating. These individuals need the excitement of competition to spur them to achievement. This

need is not necessarily a personal flaw, but the networked culture is simply not a place where such a person can find satisfaction.

The Mercenary Culture

On the flip side of the networked culture is the mercenary culture, a culture most organizations have, at least at certain times. Mercenary culture is “restless and ruthless” and includes the “hallmarks of high solidarity: strong, rather fierce, agreement around goals, a zest to get things done quickly, a powerful shared sense of purpose, a razor-sharp focus on goals and a certain boldness and courage about overcoming conflict and accepting the need to change.” 21

Goffee and Jones admit that in a positive sense the mercenary culture can be highly productive. Results and success are prized above all else. Employees are encouraged to compete, yet they work together to overwhelm any outside competition. This effort can take on the quality of a military campaign. Perceived adversaries may become problematic for a mercenary culture unless management clearly and continuously identifies the enemy in some productive fashion. A mercenary culture also will be in the throes of constant analysis and evaluation so as to retain its place “on the hill.”

Mercenary cultures are also goal-driven cultures in which one campaign follows another in a military-like atmosphere. Being traditionally service-oriented, relatively few libraries, are mercenary in nature. They nevertheless have had a taste of the mercenary atmosphere as a result of rapid technological changes foisted upon them over the past thirty years. As soon as librarians recover from one wave of techno-fads and management innovation, another one comes along right behind it. Library administrators may compete with each other to see who can show off the trendiest innovations first, the most radical ideas in organizing their staff, or who can dream up the most unique new service. This atmosphere can readily catapult library organizations from one type of culture to another. A library with a cooperative, networked culture may find itself radically transformed into a mercenary culture as a new innovation, major staff change or organizational shift takes place. For example, if cross-functional “teams” are formed where before there had been hierarchal departments, confusion and dysfunction may last several years before people get used to the new ways of interacting. Budgetary shortfalls or increases will shift a culture if one group must compete with another for scarce or new resources. During such times, the level of networking and human interaction radically drops off as the competition intensifies. To many of the formerly networked people in the organization, this phase often seems like a world turned upside down; resistance takes on an intensity that matches the intensity of the change.

In a positive vein, if properly managed, the mercenary culture can shift the organization without damage to accomplish a short-term goal that has been clearly identified and had the groundwork established. As with managing change, managing an organizational shift, either temporarily or permanently, should be carefully planned, with the vision for change being clearly stated and passionately promoted throughout all chains of command on an ongoing basis throughout the process. This culture must be monitored and adjusted so

that the momentum and energy of the organization is turned toward the objectives rather than drained away in subversion and resistance.

The intense focus on results and success in a mercenary culture invariably leads to a situation of “winners and losers.” In short, if an individual fails to perform, the results and penalties are swift. Goffee and Jones point out that a “mercenary culture’s low sociability also brings with it a certain attractive ethos of fairness. Because of their absence of networks, politicking and cliques, mercenary cultures are usually meritocracies.” 22

This performance-based culture completely undermines the networked culture’s system of building relationships to accomplish goals and secure positions within the organization. In an ideal mercenary culture, an individual who is not performing to an established ideal or is being difficult will be perceived as subverting the goal. Unlike the networked culture, he or she will not be given the period of leniency or directed back into the collective fold. In an ideal mercenary culture, insufficient performance or failure is understood to be fatal to the individual’s career and little thought will be given to sparing the feelings of the difficult or nonproductive employee. As rough a stance as this may sound, on a practical level it is often perceived by the other employees of a mercenary culture as a firm but just way of dealing with such issues.

Today’s libraries face ever-changing organizational cultures. Whether a library tends towards a networked, mercenary, fragmented, or communal definition for its overall cultural orientation, different cultures can exist under one roof, each affecting the other, for better or worse. However, at any level of an organization, a managerial plan for working with change events, personal, or group transition and their resulting conflicts can only have a positive impact on the rest of the institution. Such a plan for change and conflict management must be considered an improved measure of the overall professional vision of any library professional for their organization.

Part 3: Teams within an Organizational culture

Alongside the four basic types of organizational cultures, is the concept and idea of team management as an element within these cultures. Since the 1980s, a vacillating love/hate relationship has existed between the ideas of self-managed workplace teams and the various organizational structures and the managerial substructures contained within. Early case studies of team management in the professional business literature seemed to indicate that teams provided many positive effects to an organization. However, as the history or the idea developed, a gap seem to occasionally appear and “the connection between self-managed teams and effectiveness does not always exist in practice.” 23 In many cases, upper management observed that teams often stagnated, became non-productive and even became a hindrance to the ideal for which they were formed. Such failures puzzled both management and researchers. The team concept was an idea that should work, yet aside from some success stories, why were there so many abject failures?

In one sense, a self-managed team is a mini-organizational culture imbedded in a larger one and hence reflects the larger organizations roles, relationships, policies, values, and communication styles while creating their own versions as well. Factors that impact this evolution of a mini-culture include the gender, educational levels, cultural backgrounds and current positions within the organizational group from which the members originated. This is especially true in teams that are organized from divergent groups within an organization. .

The first question in deciding to implement a workplace team structure is whether or not the workplace or the organization really needs a team. As Richard Gallagher states, “A team building environment requires the right values. When management and employees don’t trust each other communication is poor or workplaces suffer from departmental myopia, teams cannot happen no matter how much infrastructure you put behind them.”²⁴ Also the decision must carry more weight than simply following another organization’s implementation of a team structure. A “monkey-see, monkey-do” approach can be a recipe for disaster. Any serious approach to team management planning requires an understanding of one’s organizational culture and a serious analysis of ones own managerial motives and agendas. Questions to ask include:

Why do I, as a manager or administrator, want to bring team management into my organization? What issues or problems need resolution? Do I have a clear goal in mind for a team to accomplish?

How does my organization organize authority and allocate power within the organization? Is the decision making power centralized in a single individual (director), a small group of people(department heads) or is it dispersed throughout the organization? Empowerment of and support afforded to teams is a critical factor to their success or failure.

Additionally, recent management study findings “suggest that teams with high levels of self-management may be more effective in organizations where the authority to make decisions about task performance is distributed, and in organizations with fewer explicit rules, policies and procedures.”²⁵

Is the organization, going to be comfortable with sharing power with a team management structure if this has never been a part of its institutional history? It may not be pleasant to engage in this form of critical self-analysis, but it is absolutely essential to the process of organizing and implementing teams in the organization. What role does professional status play in your organization? Is there a hierarchy, pecking order or class system? What values have you placed on professional academic credentials as conveying status and authority? Whether you personally or openly acknowledge a structure of this type, you can rest assured that the members of your organization are aware of its presence. Remember that in a typically fragmented academic culture, people derive their emotional and

personal sustenance from their association with an academic discipline and may even view their role library as a necessity rather than a genuine calling. If such a culture exists, a cross-departmental, multi-level team may not be appropriate for your organization without significant modification of its organizational culture.

Do you really know or care how you managers and staff feel about their work environment? Do they know how you actually perceive the work environment and their roles within it? William Umiker asserts that “an organizational culture is the way things are done especially when no one is looking” and that many leaders “may fail to articulate the nature of their corporate culture or what they describe may be far from reality.”²⁶ If the honest answer to these questions is a question in itself, a detailed analysis may be necessary before proceeding with team management.

How does my organization handle problems or resolve issues that arise in the workplace? Are managers expected to resolve their own problems or is there a stated or unstated need to always seek input from a higher authority? How is a crisis handled? Does an atmosphere of crisis seem to always be present? You may find that you have what is termed a toxic organization or “one that thrives on control and exists in a constant state of crisis—depends on disasters and impending doom to make changes. Such change is often a short-term fix, rather than a well-thought-out solution to a problem.”²⁷

Do you, as an administrator like to know what is happening in every part of the organization or are you content to trust those under you to work out problems appropriate to their position? How were you personally taught to view authority, handle crisis, and make decisions? Were you given autonomy and responsibility or were you required to seek permission and counsel before acting? As trivial as these questions may seem, an honest attempt to answer them may reveal whether or not you and your organization can handle the challenges presented by implementing management teams. In fact, the planning and implementing of teams may induce a major change in your organization. If at the end of this careful analysis, study and soul-searching, your organizational culture is ill-suited for the team concept, then the most responsible approach would be to simply forget the whole matter and continue as always. There is certainly no shame in admitting that your organizational will not be better served by all the changes that real team management will induce or that your culture is simply not adapted to this innovation. Trying to force team management into the wrong culture will bring nothing but frustration, resistance, conflict and overall disruption of what may be a functional environment. On the other hand, Richard Gallagher reminds us that once implementing the team management concept into your culture it must become culturally integrated “to succeed in the long run, teamwork must go beyond a process or a program, to become an ingrained part of your culture.”²⁸

Part Four: Leadership: The Final Ingredient on Organizational or Team Management

Leadership is one of those terms that has been bandied around by librarians for decades without a clear, commonly accepted definition, any real understanding of why it matters, or how the concept of leadership might be applied to a library organization. The Encyclopedia of Library History states “the terms “administration” and “management” often have been used synonymously in the library field. 29 This combining of terms, though commonly held, is seriously misunderstood. The ability to “administrate” the policies and procedures of an organization has only a part of the overall package of managerial skills need by today’s librarian. Historically, as Charles Williamson stated “no one specifically connected the philosophy of library services with efficient library management.” 30

However, since the 1980s, as libraries budgets have grown and shrunk, costs for materials and resources have skyrocketed and delivery of traditional, as well as new proactive services has become the expectation rather than the exceptional. More libraries have come to adopt organizational postures similar to those of the commercial sector. In the world of professional librarianship, innovation and the changes that must come as a result of the above outside factors were not always welcomed in the library’s organizational culture. Reactions to changes in the work environment often focused on maintaining the standards and status quo of previous generations. That adherence to tradition and precedent often treated creative thinkers with suspicion, and thwarted their efforts or at least made any change an uphill struggle. In recent years technology has been the driving force in many library organizations; however, as Donald Riggs points out “the mission of libraries has not changed due to technology, but the way the mission is achieved has changed dramatically.” 31

Out of these changes in expectations have come increased expectations of accountability, measurable results regarding services and an ever-increasing expectation of productivity. With the proliferation of online resources, libraries have found themselves trying to justify their very existence in this new information age. The traditional passive “scholar in residence” approach to the profession and its attendant “Let them come to us” posture toward patron populations has become an unwelcome relic that actually works against the continued vitality of the library. In order to survive and thrive in the new information age, we must conceptually and organizationally cease selecting our professional leadership strictly on the basis of academic credentials but on the basis of demonstrated managerial ability. As two well-known library consultants indicate “the hyper speed of changes in information services now demands libraries that are lean, mobile and strategic. They must be lean to meet expanding customer expectations within the confines of limited budgets; mobile to move quickly and easily with technological and other innovations; and strategic to anticipate and plan for market changes.” 32

Managers are different in focus and function from leaders. As Donald Riggs indicates, managers “tend to work within defined bounds of known quantities; using well-established techniques to accomplish predetermined ends; the manager tends to stress

means and neglect ends.”³³ Managers deal with the organizational elements of the known, established work environment, and are focused on the process and procedures in those elements. There is a structured and controlled perception of the world as it is and one given to variation or innovation. Managerial skills and leadership are not however mutually exclusive. Both have their distinct value to the organization. In an ideal situation they would work together in a balanced manner to produce optimal results.

Leadership, in American and European culture, has traditionally had a mystique surrounding it and was often thought to have a divine or quasi-magical origin. In reality, leadership has clearly been demonstrated to be a learned and practiced skill. Leadership trainers swarm the world of business offering, sometimes at considerable cost, seminars and sessions on acquiring this set of personal skills.

What traits and characteristics constitute leadership as it differs and relates to management? Consider the following commonly held ideas concerning leadership:

Leaders are able to articulate and communicate their often-original ideas and help others envision the possibilities contained in those ideas.

Leaders inspire, persuade, motivate, and challenge people to achieve and get results. They integrate themselves and their ideas into the organization in a skillful and politically savvy manner.

Leaders are willing to take risks and can turn their and others' mistakes, conflicts and failures into learning opportunities and focus away from blame assignment.

Leaders know how to manage money and understand the language and concepts of their financial world. They are comfortable with ideas surrounding fiscal cycles, budgeting, allocations and the reporting of financial matters.

Leaders know themselves as persons and managers; they use their strengths and acknowledge and work with their weaknesses. They self-evaluate and welcome the evaluations of others. They manage the world of perceptions and impressions around and about themselves.

Leaders are able to effectively affect change at the organizational level and lead their people through the transitional phases to adaptation.

Leaders embrace diversity and conceptually move beyond the barriers of gender, race and social class in their recruiting, mentoring and promotion policies.

Leaders realize the interconnected nature of events and relationships. They know their words; ideas and their actions have effects that move throughout their organization. Leaders take time to analyze those connections and their possible impacts before they speak or act officially.

Leaders help people educate themselves as to how to lead or manage themselves and others, often by modeling the kinds of behaviors that you wish others to develop.

Leaders share their power as a way to increase their power and influence. If information is power, then sharing that information is more powerful.

Leaders have a vision of what is realistically possible and manage that vision in a practical, achievable manner. They also know how to sell that vision to others. As a result, there is a strong element of salesmanship and perhaps evangelization in the qualities of leadership. For librarianship leadership means being able to convey the enthusiasm and dedication for the service internal to the profession. Leadership creates and fosters an atmosphere of pride and excellence in service that no seminar or single presentation can transmit.

Leaders in librarianship, like leaders everywhere, fully understand the dynamics of the organizational environment and can operate successfully at both the organizational, cognitive and the emotional levels. They are realistic visionaries who understand how to secure and evolve the organizational culture as they bring about different changes. They view actions with a systemic view and continually assess the progress of their ideas, altering them as needed to achieve the long-range goal, whether that goal is team management or any other.

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