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The Arrakis County Library System will be undergoing significant organizational change in the near future. Changes are going to be made in how the library and its branches operate and function that will alter how both the public as well as the ACLS staff perceives the library. The goal in this pursuit of organizational change is to improve the library experience for all involved. One important and essential step in the process of effecting organizational change is to gain an understanding of the organizational culture that pervades the library system. This section of the Library Reorganization Plan is intended to define and characterize the organizational culture of the ACLS and to subsequently propose steps to be taken as a means of improving the organizational culture for the benefit of the library's patrons and library personnel.

One important aspect of organizational culture to be noted is that it is at once unambiguous and elusive—while a general impression of an organization's culture will typically be front-and-center, the finer points and details thereof can be intricate, nuanced, and complex. Many variables are involved in the makeup of organizational culture, and moreover, the ways in which these variables affect each other constitute variables unto themselves. It is also important to understand that organizational culture cannot simply be changed with the flip of a switch—rather, it is a reflection of many aspects and elements of the organization, its people, and how they operate together, and to refocus efforts so as to bring about positive change demands careful adjustments and augmentations. Changing the organizational culture of a library is an iterative process.

From a cursory external view, the Arrakis County Library System may appear to most as a library organization that functions normally and properly. However, someone who frequents

the library as a patron or a staff member who has worked in the system likely sees that the current organizational culture of the Arrakis County Library System leaves much to be desired. From the patron's point-of-view, the ACLS appears to show little regard for maintaining an environment in which information science and technology are chief concerns. An employee who has worked in the ACLS for any length of time will have this same impression of its organizational culture. Stagnation in this regard has taken root over the years due to a persistent feedback loop that reinforces the organization's latent tendencies to lag behind current trends in library and information science and technology. There are many deeply ingrained *assumed* organizational values that are in direct conflict with the direction we intend to head in the library reorganization plan. These are unspoken tendencies and beliefs that reflect patterns of behavior that are not in alignment with our updated values (Sarjeant-Jenkins, p. 451). One of these unwelcome values which are taken for granted is this tendency to disregard the notion of maintaining technological relevancy in the library system.

Many employees who have worked in the system for several years are part of this dominant culture of stagnation. This can be a hinderance to organizational change since this culture is a well-established one—those who have worked within this system and are more or less satisfied with the status quo will be particularly resistant to change (Riggs, p. 23). An important aspect of the reorganization plan will be inclusivity. Every staff member will be encouraged (and expected) to join the ongoing project of reshaping our library system. Those who do not sufficiently work as part of the team to change the complexion of the library system will find themselves under scrutiny from their supervisor. We will be wholly transparent in our expectations of staff from the beginning of this process. This will ensure that there is no ambiguity regarding how we expect the various changes and adjustments in operations to be carried out (Farrell, p. 870). The establishment of routine performance appraisals for every employee will ensure that everyone is held accountable and that no elements of favoritism or preferential treatment will carry over from previous management (Farrell, p. 869).

It will be important to engender a sense of partnership and community within the staff to effectively communicate that this will be a group effort and that all hands need to be involved from the beginning. While individual performance will certainly be important to measure, it is through our collective efforts that significant cultural change will occur. The message should be sent to staff that this must be a system-wide, collective reorganization. Perhaps more important is to convince staff that the change is wholly warranted. The aforementioned “resistant” employees will likely be less inclined to buy into the reality that the status quo is unacceptable and that organizational change is necessary. It will be crucial that employees understand that the organizational culture should be a positive aspect of our library system rather than a clear indication that patrons are not being served nearly as well as they could be.

The culture that we strive toward should be one that clearly embraces our vision, mission statement and values. In terms of our values—accountability, dedication, equity, and versatility—the ideal organizational culture toward which we will focus our attention must strongly reflect these tenets. Accountability needs to be a major aspect of this because in the past it has been adhered to inconsistently, at best. Without consistent review of the performance of all employees, expectations of improvement and development will likely not be given the attention necessary to achieve meaningful progress. Dedication means that employees must have the drive and passion to improve the library experience for patrons as well as their fellow staff members and the entirety of the organization. If this kind of dedication doesn’t exist or can’t be developed in an employee, the individual will find themselves falling behind the majority of employees who are fully on-board with the reorganization effort. Equity will be a major factor moving forward as well—for too long has the ACLS fostered the unfair treatment of employees as well as an environment lacking the celebration of diversity that the community needs and deserves. Adhering to more of a meritocracy in which everyone has equal opportunity will establish a much more positive working environment where minorities and women can achieve to the same degree and at the same rate as any employee. Versatility and the cultivation of an

organization poised and ready for the rapidly changing information technology landscape are qualities that must be ubiquitous throughout the reorganization process and, especially, beyond.

A new hire in the ACLS will not succeed if they aren't able to understand our goals of nurturing a progressive work environment and cultivating a positive and impressive library experience for the community. If they can't see themselves as a contributor to the inclusive and respectful organizational culture we're trying to create, they will not be successful in fulfilling management's expectations and will thus find themselves under scrutiny from management. If they are unable to adapt to our library system's culture, they will either be inclined to resign or be subject to termination.

It will be important to avoid overwhelming employees with sweeping changes from day one. Instead, the process will be eased into, with only one or two pressing issues handled at a time initially (Farrell, p. 868). Setting the bar too high in the early stages of reorganization could have disastrous results—long-term employees could see it as too much change too quickly and become disenchanted with the new direction (Riggs, p. 23).

Because organizational culture cannot be changed simply through administration by management, it is imperative that staff be an integral part of the process of changing it. Creative input from staff must be petitioned for and encouraged. Those employees who have been identified as outgoing and driven to embrace organizational change will be chosen by management to lead roundtable brainstorming sessions where employees are encouraged to present ideas and suggestions regarding the reorganizational path forward. This will demonstrate to employees that their voices are valued and respected. In concert with these sessions will be written surveys of employees that will allow those less comfortable with the in-person setting to express their thoughts and opinions which they otherwise might not (Riggs, p. 24-25).

References

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