Academic Libraries: How do we put it all together, become agile, and adapt?

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CHARLESTON CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 7, 2018

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What do we (libraries) really do?

- We enhance teaching, learning, and research through data, information, and knowledge

- And what is knowledge? Its "know-how," or skills and abilities

Libraries provide resources to CREATE

"Libraries are no longer 'grocery stores' where students can go to pick up ingredients, but 'kitchens' where they have the resources necessary to create a finished product."

- Joan Frye Williams

http://blogs.slj.com/neverendingsearch/2008/08/25/library-as-domestic-metaphor/

Libraries support the full knowledge production process

Resources / Technologies / Expertise

CONCEPT > IDEA > SKILLS > TECHNOLOGIES > PRODUCTS

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People and their Beliefs about their Work

- Beliefs matter…

- They guide, even control, how employees carry out their work.

- This is what we refer to as "work culture" or "org culture."

- Believe you/your library can make the changes, tell yourself you are going to do this, and focus on that.

  - *It's amazing how related opportunities arise*

- Don't tell yourself "I can't do this, I can't do that" or "I don't have the money." If you think that, you will certainly be right.

How does a library become adaptive and be an agile organization?

A recent report by the consulting firm, McKinsey & Co., states that 62% of executives believe they will need to either replace or retrain a quarter or more of their employees within the next five years.
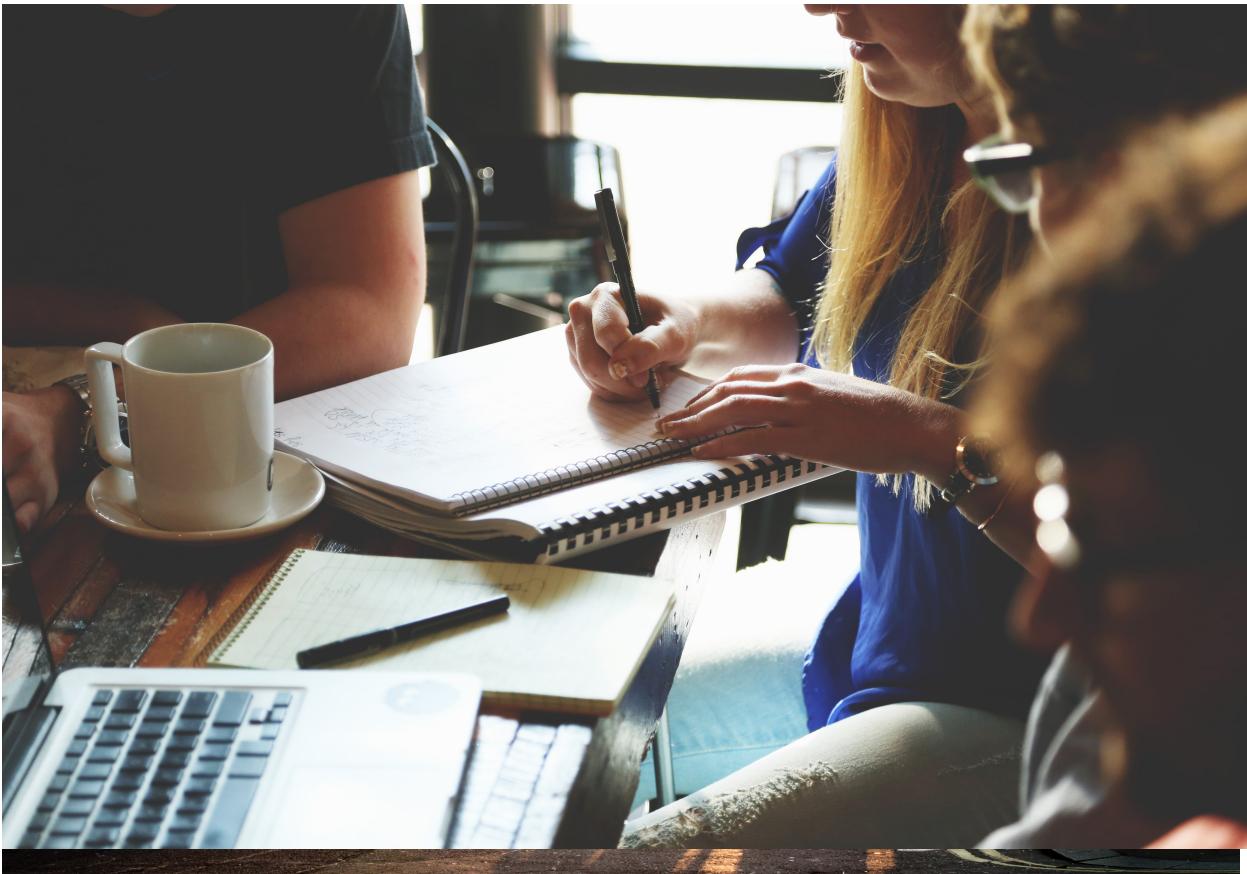
Cited in: *The Expertise Economy,* by Kelly Palmer and David Blake

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Know all about Finances and HR

Know your institution's policies on:

- Managing budgets and expenditures

- HR administration

- **Remember… "The easiest money to find is the money you've already got"**

- Boundaries: salaries, wages, operations. Can you move $$ around?

- Add Wage to Salaries? Staff to Faculty?
- Convert "term" to "ongoing" employees?
- Trailing Spouse programs?
- Co-funded positions?

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Managing Distress

We learn less if we are not exposed to differing viewpoints

- Allow for some employee discomfort:
    - Distress comes from external forces that create change
    - Don't always protect people from these forces (threats)
    - External forces stimulate changes in practices and in beliefs
- Orienting employees:
    - As an alternative, orient far less on "the current" and orient employees on "the future," where your library needs to go. Set the tone right away
    - Goal: Develop the new perspectives and practices you will need to have in place

Managing Distress #2

- <u>Don't stomp out conflict too fast</u>:

  - Focus on the issues in the conflict, help get them "on the table," front and center

  - Facilitate the conversations. Help maintain respect, civility

- "<u>You can lead the horse to water…</u>"

  - Help employees see that today's practices are not etched in stone, not permanent

  - They were developed in a particular time when different parameters were in place

  - These parameters have changed, but employees must convince themselves of this (allow threats, distress to occur)

  - As a leader its your job to live in a space that's about 2-4 years away. Help them see this world with you (fiscally speaking, my head is about one year ahead of others)

Recalibrating the People component

- What are you trying to achieve strategically in the next three years? <u>Hire for that</u>.

- Rarely fill a vacancy "as is." <u>Focus on the goals</u> you are trying to reach.

- Proportionally, its less about "how do we maintain current service," but more about "<u>how do we achieve our future</u>" (2-4 years out).

- The purpose and goal is to <u>reallocate resources to advance your strategies</u>, not get your library perfectly organized (too much attention to org charts)

"Not Always an MLS"

It Takes a Village (of Professionals):

- We have always had HR and business personnel, marketing professionals, systems administrators, PhD subject specialists, archivists, IT people, etc. They are part of the village.

- The Village now has expanded to web developers, software engineers, digital library architects, user experience specialists, information architects, web and graphic designers, videographers, records managers, data specialists, computational research and informatics specialists, and more.

- Tell HR what you are trying to achieve, as opposed to them reading standard policy interpretations to you.

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A Strategy:
Load up on positions as much as possible

Develop existing and new people to adopt the work cultural traits and perspectives you wish to see predominately in your library:

- Strive for flexibility and nimbleness

- Be opportunists (think "data/information/knowledge)

- Attract relationship builders

- Work with others compassionately through change (get to know people)

- Listen and Communicate always

- Embrace the team approach

- Be a Knowledge Sharer vs. a Knowledge Hoarder

- **Be Constructive, optimistic, encouraging vs. Judgmental, doubtful, critical**

Identify adapters in your library

- Cultivate their perspectives, share your views on how to initiate strategic directions and approaches

- Identify and observe people in the ranks of your library. See which employees begin to speak up and push forward in adapting to the directions you have described

- Involve, and incrementally empower, these people

Conducting performance reviews

- Less focus on the past, more focus on long term goals and the short term objectives that take your library there
  - Review the coming semester and coming year in the performance review
  - Tie brief discussions of past performance to the work at hand that advances the library toward its strategic goals
  - Listen, Coach, Encourage. Be constructive.
- What about people who won't adapt?

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Resistance and Lagging Behind

- This is a tough topic for all of us

- Be respectful. Listen to people who seem to be lagging behind or resisting

- Give them some time/attention, always invite them to come along with you

- Find ways to use their strengths, leverage their skills and experiences

- **Example:** VT Libraries liaison roles model:

  - Allows liaisons to choose their major and minor areas, choose to "refer & release" or "refer & partner" with other professionals in the library (e.g., rights, data, publishing, computational research methods, learning technology, multimedia design, etc.)

New Roles Libraries Can Play

- Research Data Services, Education & Consulting

- Research Impact & Collaboration Services

- Scholarly & Educational Publishing Services

- Digital Libraries & Repositories

- Informatics (Technology) Projects & Consulting

- Digital Literacies, Content Development, and ePortfolios

- Learning & Research Space Programming

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