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LEADERSHIP IN INFORMATION MANAGEMENT



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Editorial Team,

TINTA (Leadership in Information Management)

INFORMATION

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Leadership in Public Libraries

By

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Abstract:

Elisabeth Aldstedt and what she learns through her experienced of years in being a leader for a public library. Also, this article explains what it means by leaders in library as visionary, successful manager and also as role model for the people in the library organization.

Keywords: *leadership in library, management and library organization, developing leadership in library, library leader, public library transformation, visionary library leader, library leader as successful manager, library leader as role model, library executives.*

Since 2010, Elisabeth Aldstedt works in Stockholm as the head of the branch libraries. Her task varies from handling common questions, to coordinating the efforts of her subordinates that each one sees things differently to work on a common purpose. This also includes focusing on goals and strategies, coaching the managers, and creating a good work culture that is creative, motivated positively and focus on the customer. (The library users)

She is also responsible for strategic planning of Stockholm's new library structure plan until 2013. The library structure plan is the plan on how they shall build new libraries, where, what should the library contain, with what services should the library operate and who should they cooperate with. As a growing city, the vision of Stockholm is to become a city of world class with public library of world class. The new libraries in the plan and those who was built in early 60s and grown old are all expected to be attractive, accessible and efficient.

In the year 2000, Elisabeth Aldstedt got in her first job in public libraries in a city located in Sweden. She was surprised to learn the fact that the organization she has just moved in did not talk nor worked with the topic "Leadership". Elisabeth Aldstedt had worked in lots of different activities in public sector, e.g social planning, social work and education. Which is all activities that are very familiar to rules and regulations and better acceptance for leadership.

Elisabeth Aldstedt believed that she was positioned as the head of public library without any education in library sector but with background as the leader of larger organization for a couple of years because it was a sign that the library are demanding for strong, effective and clear leadership.

A leader in the library has to encounter and find resolution for challenges faced every day in the library. In 2001, when she started her job, none of managers in the library had ever had any education about management or leadership. Aside from working on how to improve and develop services offered by the library, there are no discussions on visions or goals for the institution as a whole, or the strategies needed to reach the goals. The organization is lack of strategic drive and vision. Which is one of the most important essence of an organization to be successful. The departments were run in the decentralized way. Departments were separated from each other and each was led by the strongest librarian than by the actual head of department. Discussion about are mostly done about what interested the staff, not prioritizing what users needed or wanted. There is very low focus on those who did not use the library service. Interactions with users are also very minimum.

After ten years, Elisabeth Aldstedt is currently working in Sweden's largest public library system. She thinks of management and leadership as an issue that have to be focused on more to be accepted as crucial strategic tasks for public libraries. The challenge of transforming traditional services into modernized concepts that attracts people can only be taken successfully with the presence of competitive, wise, brave and innovative leaders.

In Sweden, staffs of public libraries that express an opinion that contradicts with majority of colleague's opinions often resulted in negative response. This is a negative culture which causes one who works in the library decided to just follow the crowd and the leader than sticking on one's strong opinion. When you are positioned as the head of a library, formal authority and mandate are yours. However, you would have to gain trust from the staff and their submission to your orders and decision to be able to work out your ideas.

For the organizational development, leadership have to be worked on different levels, i.e the individual, group and organizational levels and to find out how the levels influence each other. Everyone in the library organization should work more with cultural matter. This focus more on values, attitudes, responsibility and roles in the organization. It is important for a leader to feel himself and use all his strength and weaknesses all the time. Developing leadership in the library has to be done from basic. During Elisabeth's two years in Stockholm public libraries, she have worked with thirteen leaders that are responsible for the daily services in the forty libraries. Weekly meetings with questions, methods and evaluations and etc. are planned to improve the leaders quality of performance.

As the head of the library, she is quite innovative in coaching her subordinates. Elisabeth Aldstedt tries to use simulation technique. They practice a situation so the leaders would know how to face it in the right way when the situation happens in real life. For example when all leaders had to debate for a decision made on a higher level to centralize all the media purchase and build up a special department for this. There is a few numbers of leaders that took the decision as controversial, some were even pessimistic towards the situation especially where staffs are required to be prepared before meeting an upset user-situation. They had a meeting before the situation-performed, in smaller groups, one performed and the others argues on how the staff would act.

The main objective of the training is to teach the subordinates about how to present the decision and answer critical questions, also the possibility to learn from each other helped them to do the necessary and to feel more calm and familiar in facing the situation.

Another way of working the group of learning staffs in the library suggested by Elisabeth has consisted of a search for good leaders and leadership. Staffs are required to find any individual in an organization to observe the person and present the reports of the inspiration and share it with the other staffs. The outcomes of these activities are very positive, they have lots of excitement and very eager to learn more. Also to check out on issues in other organization that affects library field.

Leaders in the library too are now studying each other's when they are leading their own staff meetings. Shadowing colleague studies how simple can leadership appears to be, which is something that we have identified in this library and are currently working towards improving the perceptions.

In every weekly meeting they have one slot reserved for the "dilemma of the day". As not everyone knows how to face their dilemma alone, this activities are slowly but surely bringing positive impacts on individuals and also on team works. That's an opportunity for anyone who wants to discuss something that is pressing or frustrating. It was hard in the beginning to get everyone involved in this kind of more personal tasks, but now this is one of the most appreciated parts of the meetings. This is actually the concept of experienced based learning and dealing with organizational realities (the dilemmas).

The meetings have successfully get the leaders to be closer to each other, which allows them to have necessary assistance from one another. They don't have to feel alone in facing difficulties as they have one another. What Edith Aldstedt and the rest of the organization are trying to work on is to create a leadership community that is based on feedback and learning, safe and transparent. They too are trying to identify the characteristic of leaderships that suits their organization in order to maximize the development of the organization. Because every organization have different needs that leads to different characteristics of suitable leadership.

Edith Aldstedt have done an impressive job when she transform the state library staffs of no leadership-management basic into now, a team of leaders working together towards achieving the organization's goals.

These are the other roles of leader in libraries. First, library leaders as visionaries. The essence of leadership is making a dream and making an interpretation of it into reality. Before there is a need or interest, effective pioneers see possible outcomes to make an environment where visionary speculation is supported and esteemed.

Visionary leaders are proactive. They work ahead of the client request by envisioning needs, predicting potential outcomes, and taking risks. A visionary library pioneer accomplishes more than creating a dream, annual objectives, and strategies. Library leaders become visionary by constantly trying to be inviting to new orientation and big goals. This includes finding new ideas, input and even words from people who are not connected to the library itself.

The leader too also look for opportunities, risks, and obstacles that may influence the vision in both positively and negatively by taking library staff as partners in forming and applying the vision. Another act of visionary leaders are promoting and giving reward for the creative thinking in the library. It is important to align the library with community's priorities, visions and goals. Harnessing the library's stature as a trusted resource to widen its potential and influence to become the center of opportunity and innovation which could be done by connecting with other visionary leader who can give few words from their perspective.

Library leaders' roles as successful managers are decided by the effectiveness of the management handled. As successful leadership and effective management needs each other to be achieved. By assuring that library system is well maintained, reliable, and well-respected as the community resource. Experienced and competent staff, well-structured fiscal management, well presented programs, and community-hostile buildings provide a base of widening and deepening library's role in the community. Not to forget, visionary leadership must be supported by reliable management.

Library leaders also act as role models for the staff of the organization. It is well known that character and credibility are extremely needed in order to achieve successful leadership. This long stable reputation is maintained and optimized through programs and services provided by the library and the people who stand for it, no one is more important than library executive.

In addition to preserve high level of personal character, credibility, and trust to enriched the library's reputation, library executives act as a lead by example in every decision and acts they take. How subordinates take their jobs and their relationship to the library will be formed by the executive's actions and also behavior. This is why it is very important for library leaders to have self-awareness to be role model to subordinates.

Library leaders are already setting an outstanding look in the communities they attend to. They have led the public library transformations from "quiet repositories of books and information" to dynamic, engaged, and innovative agents of change. Library leaders have created encompassing, community focused resources that few could have visualize even years ago. However, rising challenges and opportunities surely is waiting in the future. So, library executives must form persistent capability for the future by giving encouragement for leadership at all levels of their organizations, so that libraries can keep on transforming communities in outstanding ways.

Today's public library is an necessity for community resource that reinforced economic vitality, enhances literacy, backs workforce evolution, links the digital divide, and more. Tomorrow's public library condition will be decided by the vision, energy, passion, and skill of leaders who some forward to take on new responsibilities that go forward to expands far beyond traditional library roles.

Reference

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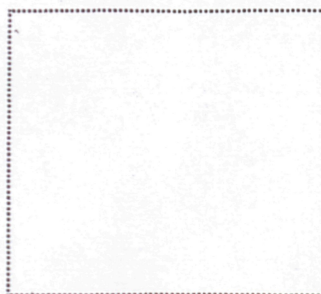
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