

Assignment 2 – Library Administrator Interview

The best way to find out how to be an excellent library administrator is to meet and talk with one. Similar to a need assessment, your team should interview a current library administrator and identify 1) what his/her tasks are, 2) what he/she thinks the skills are necessary to be an excellent library administrator, and 3) what opportunities for improvement are for his/her specific library.

Although the interview will be a group effort, each member of the team should submit a paper regarding his/her interpretation of the interview and respective findings. 5 page minimum, double spaced, 12 point font. An outline will be provided for you to use.

The assignment outline is below:

I. Introduction

1) Talk about your research method

I chose to interview XXX of the XXX Library at XXX University. The information in this paper comes from that interview, from my observations as an employee of this administrator and from this institution's website.

2) Describe your library administrator and the library they are leading

XXX is the Head of Information Technology at the XXX Library. She has been in this position since 1999 and before that was the Electronic Resources Librarian at the same Library. Prior to her career in libraries, she held a management position in the corporate world with a home improvement chain. She brought many excellent management skills acquired in her previous career to her current position.

The XXX Library opened in 1956 and houses over a million volumes, subscribes to over 7,500 journals and has an operating budget of over 5 million dollars. The staff is composed of 54 full-time staff and over 150 student employees.

3) What are their goals, how are they organized, and who are the stakeholders they are serving?

The Library's mission statement quoted below describes the primary goals and stakeholders.

"The primary mission of the XXX Library is to support the current and future instructional and research needs of the faculty and students of the College, the XXX School, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and the Divinity School of XXX University, as well as the information needs of the administration and staff of the University. The library meets these needs by acquiring, organizing, preserving, and providing timely access to information and information resources in a variety of media, either on site or accessed from remote locations; the staff also meets these needs by providing instruction in information retrieval methodology. Instructional programs give students the skills necessary to function in, and contribute to, an increasingly networked world.

The library contributes to the development of lifelong learners and supports the University's mission of providing a nationally recognized values-based liberal arts education. The library's mission also includes service to the broader community and support of the University's status as a good neighbor in the community."

-library website

II. Administrator Tasks

1) Describe what his/her primary tasks are

The Head of Information Technology's primary responsibility is to administer the technology needs of the Library and its users. As the manager, XXX points out that she does not actually do all these tasks. Her position focuses on the big picture, coordinating efforts of the five members of the Technology Team.

Understanding what the individual team members are doing is key, but she doesn't need to "write code" to do her job. She relies on her team members to do their job and gives them the autonomy to perform. Part of administering activities includes knowing what the other teams within the Library are doing. Keeping abreast of team members and other teams in the XXX Library is important, as is having a good sense of the external customers, the students, faculty and staff of XXX University.

Other tasks include investigating and implementing emerging technologies. This is done through communication with the team members and other teams in the Library. As part of this process, she helps prioritize what the Technology Team is presently focused on and what the team needs to focus on in the future.

The Head of Information Technology also serves as the technology liaison to the University and external organizations, serving on the Committee for Instructional Technology and representing the Library on various grant projects.

XXX describes her management style as "situational management." The management of the Technology team depends on team members. She prefers to

give them the tools and let them run with the projects. She describes her team as achievers and self managers, and as a result spends more time managing personality issues than work motivation.

2) Explain the 1/3rd rule to them – how well does this fit within their leadership rubric and what they do on a day-to-day basis?

XXX said it would be almost impossible to see how her time splits up without a time management study. XXX believes the 33% of time spent on external customers is more true at the director level not at her level of team leader. While she sees the 1/3 as a useful metric, in her position the distribution is more evenly divided between internal customers and operations with a small percentage focused on external customers.

XXX believes in management by walking around. Also, being located in a public service area is a good idea. (This is similar to what we learned in "Raving Fans.") She also believes in jumping in where needed, something that is hard to do when you are disconnected from these processes or your office is in another area. She also believes it is important to stay active in training classes not only to keep up your own skills, but to make the statement that you value what these classes offer. She describes it as a fine line between helping and appearing to not to trust an employees execution of the work.

3) Ask him/her, if possible, to breakdown into percentages what they do.

The time breakdown for XXX's position as Head of Information Technology for the XXX Library is as follows: 40% of her time is spent on internal customers,

40% is spent on operations and managing staff, and 20% is spent on working with external customers.

III. Opportunities for improvement

1) How satisfied is he/she that his/her organizational goals are being met? What are some of their "opportunities for improvement?"

Strategic Planning: Both the University and the Library are in the midst of a strategic planning process. The Technology Team has always tried to see ahead. Three years ago a new director took the helm and as a result, the Library is more open in listening to customer feedback. Listening to user needs is key to meeting user needs. There are always opportunities for improvement, but often resources are not available to implement them.

2) In his/her opinion, what are the "ideal" qualities a library administrator should have?

XXX has never read "Raving Fans" and yet many of the ideal qualities she describes come from that text. One ideal quality she discussed is being able to recognize the qualities your people bring to the table. Focusing on their strengths is key.

She also describes being even handed and neutral, not playing favorites, and listening to what her staff has to say as ideal qualities. One pitfall she describes is that the closer you are you to your staff, the more you lose some of the objectivity required. In her previous career they moved people every few years to prevent this type of favoritism and it worked.

Other key qualities of a library administrator include following through on projects. If you say you are going to do something, do it! XXX Library has a big consensus culture and you need to be able to negotiate well to thrive. She also describes the importance of keeping the boss happy. It is also important to know people on a personal level, however interpersonal relationships are "fraught with peril" and a constant challenge to manage. Team environment needs these interpersonal relationships to be successful.

IV. Compare and Contrast our readings to your library administrator

1) How do the three secrets of Raving Fans apply, if at all, to your administrator and his/her library? Do you see a way for one or all the secrets to apply in your administrator's current library?

After describing the three secrets of "Raving Fans" to XXX, she stated the following: "As libraries become more customer driven and technology becomes more and more important in the delivery of services, Technology can be a customer service challenge as it frustrates customers when it fails. When this happens, technical staff need to face up to what has fallen short and be realistic in establishing service level agreements. Communication is another key to being a customer driven organization."

The strategic planning process that the University and Library are currently undergoing will help decide the level of service the XXX Library wants to provide. As part of this strategic plan, feedback from users is being solicited to better determine the needs and expectations of customers. As these two parts of the

"Raving Fans" formula are determined, the XXX Library will determine how to consistently deliver that vision and then take it to the "plus one" level.

2) Talk about the 12 questions or how they relate to your administrator and his/her library.

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?

The XXX Library does an excellent job with annual performance evaluations, position descriptions and annual goals that let staff know what is expected of them.

2. Do I have the materials and equipment I need to do my work right?

The XXX Library is fortunate to have adequate resources at its disposal.

3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best everyday?

In the opinion of XXX, the leadership of the XXX Library is very aware of finding the right people and the right fit for positions.

4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?

The XXX Library has a staff recognition program that encourages all staff to submit all recognition and praise to an online system where it can be seen by the entire staff. At monthly staff meetings on person who has had recognition submitted that month wins a door prize. This has been effective in both helping morale and making staff aware of each other's roles.

5. Does my supervisor or someone at work seem to care about me as a person?

The XXX Library is fortunate to be staffed by supervisors who believe in the value of interpersonal relationships at work.

6. Is there someone at work who encourages my development?

XXX believes it is the role of a good manager to support the development of staff and encourages their professional development.

7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?

XXX describes getting feedback from her team and using that feedback to improve her decision-making process.

8. Does the mission/purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?

The XXX Library, while employing 54 staff, is small enough that it is clear how every position affects the mission of the Library. Additionally, current leadership demonstrates the value of all positions.

9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?

Like all organizations, there are always people less committed than others to doing quality work, but this is a rarity at XXX Library.

10. Do I have a best friend at work?

The XXX Library is very much a family, and the director has demonstrated this repeatedly in her dedication to supporting staff in crisis.

11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?

In between annual performance reviews, managers at XXX Library are all willing to discuss progress. The staff member may need to instigate the meeting and discussion.

12. This last year, have I had the opportunity at work to learn and grow?

All XXX Library staff are encouraged to learn and grow, including opportunities to present at conferences, attend training classes and staff development programs, and even participate in graduate and PhD programs while employed at the XXX Library.

3) How about emotional intelligence and your administrator?

XXX has a very high emotional intelligence with regards to the members of her team and the other teams in the Library. She is insightful and understands the need to deal with people as individuals, not falling for the "one size fits all" myth of management. She understands the emotions of others and can alter her management style to fit the individual. For example, the members of her team that are very self-motivated do not receive prodding from XXX but those that may require more structure, receive that input from XXX.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 1) Summarize what you have learned about the library administrator your team interviewed and how this has informed your perspective on what it takes to run a library. Try to integrate what you have learned with**

your own leadership schematic based on this course and your own experience.

Both this interview and MLIS 650 have taught me more about the role of leaders and managers in libraries. Previously I was very concerned about moving into a management or leadership role in the Library. This was primarily due to a lack of management experience on my part and enough knowledge to realize that good managers have particular talents, both natural and cultivated, that prepare them for these positions. The qualities of good managers and leaders seen in texts like "Raving Fans" and "First Break All the Rules" apply very well in the real world of the modern Library, and they are qualities I've seen in XXX during this interview. However, XXX herself states that she cultivated these qualities through years of management experience and much trial and error.

Previously, I've avoided opportunities to manage and lead people, instead opting for positions like my current one where I manage projects and processes, but not people. I am optimistic that through what I've learned from these texts and this interview, if I am tapped for a management position, I will now be prepared to manage and lead. I've also learned that positions like mine that focus on managing projects and processes can be just as difficult as managing people as people are a key element in any work environment. Rather than avoiding these issues, it is far better to learn the skills to address them head on in an effective manner.

2) In your opinion, what are some the strengths and opportunities for improvement for your administrator and his/her library?

Some of the strengths of XXX include her ability to manage the chaos and constant change of information technology in today's libraries. The implementation of new technologies occurs at a dizzying pace, and implementing these changes while not overwhelming users is a challenge to any IT manager. Additionally, managing expectations of internal customers can be equally challenging.

For example, currently the XXX Library is undergoing a migration from POP E-mail to Exchange E-mail that will require all the XXX Library staff to migrate to a new E-mail server and new E-mail client. This migration is being done as the University's Information Systems department is beginning to migrate all users to Exchange E-mail. Thanks to a close working relationship with IS, the Library is able to be one of the first groups to migrate and able to schedule this migration for a time that will have the least impact possible on the Library staff. XXX, as the Head of Information Technology in the Library is responsible for managing this transition.

The University Strategic Planning Process, currently underway, will surely present the XXX Library with numerous opportunities for improvement. XXX is heavily involved in this process for the XXX Library, as she fully understands the importance of technology both in implementing this Strategic Plan as well as in meeting the needs of the XXX Library users.

In conclusion, examining both the best in leadership and management texts and actual leaders and managers in library settings are both effective ways to prepare LIS students for future roles in library management. By learning from case examples in texts and comparing that to library managers in "the wild" current students can create a supply of tools to serve them well in their future leadership roles.