**Tips & Tricks for Thriving in Your First Management Position**

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1. Introduction

a. What we're going to talk about today: We’re going to provide some tips and tricks that we used in our first year managing a branch. We’ll talk about two case studies that highlight the successes and failures we’ve encountered, and then we’ll open the floor up to fellow attendees for a Q & A session. Before we dive into our tips and tricks, we thought it’d be good to provide a bit of context for our unique experiences, because some aspects of our branch may be similar to some aspects of your setting.

2. About our branch

a. Staff upon arrival:

* 10 part time Access Specialist (desk work traditional circulation & basic reference), 6 FT, 2 HT Access Specialist (desk work plus responsibilities, like outreach, programing, early literacy storytimes, etc.), 6 pages
* A good team wanting to do a good job.
* They are a strong group who care for each other.
* They were tired, seemed defeated and had experienced Trauma.
* Previous management focused on different things (micromanaged process)
* Communication between management and staff only seem to happen when there was a problem (doors closed otherwise, limited one on one meetings, management didn’t work past 5 or on Saturdays)
* Worried about making their own decisions due to past criticism
* In some ways not able to talk with or ask questions of management. In other ways, wanting to get permission for many decisions that should be left to staff and not management

3. Tips & Tricks:

a. Observe, Listen, learn, hold back on changes

* It’s important to communicate on an individual level, as well as to staff as a whole. Listen and try to understand individual motivations and what employees are passionate about. This will help you align new projects and processes with the staff members that would be best suited to work on them, which helps play to their strengths, which benefits everyone.
* During your learning phase, try to validate the branches collective past and realize there’s a reason they’re acting or responding the way they are. Acknowledge their past successes in the midst of past turmoil or change: in spite of xyz, the branch is functioning and most interactions with customers and each other are largely positive

b. Develop shared vision

* I define shared vision as understanding, in the same way, where we’re going and why we’re going
* Relies on foundation from previous tip: Observe, listen, hold back on changes (helps establish necessary trust.
* Unified between managers, before you can expect staff to get on board. (Analogy Parents need to agree or kid will go to favorite parent)
* Involved a lot of listening and talking with individuals, small groups, and full team (think of it as sprinkling in an idea before a full rollout)

c. Build team environment: developing staff ownership, buy-in

* In a team environment, each person is an integral part of the whole. We created new opening and closing checklists that require everyone to work together toward same goal instead of operating individually
* As a way to build buy-in, plant seeds of change, and allow staff time to come around to the idea (or perhaps believe it was their own). This lets you build trust and buy-in before instituting any change
* To develop staff ownership, provide direction without micro-managing, and employees will begin to feel engaged with their projects/duties and take ownership over the outcome

d. After trust is building, experimenting with innovation, but being okay with failure. (If it doesn't work, we'll try something else)

* Staff needs to hear that’s it’s okay to fail, but let’s try
* Managers have to prove that it’s okay to fail.
  + If something blows up, remain calm and show it’s okay. (example staff member accidentally awarded prizes to every teen in SRP before the program began)

e. Focus on impact and aim for a ripple effect

* This begins in conversations with staff, by asking: How does what you do impact other processes/projects/outcomes? How can we align our actions and activities to have ripple effects?
* The goal is to maximize the impact of resources and services, and this ties back to building a team environment. Focusing on the ripple effects of impact encourages communication between staff in order to imagine how their actions and endeavors can better serve the community.
* Ask why. (why do we close the curtain)
* Why do we do it this way? (why are we checking in books at the service desk?)

f. Model behavior

* Modeling behavior begins by demonstrating that you care and value staff members, both as individuals and as employees. Demonstrating that you care looks different for each person, but being kind, acknowledging their contributions, and being willing to listen is a great start.
* Be an example by setting the tone for customer interactions, as well as interactions among staff members. Don't ask staff to do something you wouldn't want to do (nights, weekends, bathrooms). Working alongside employees helps to build team environment, and distinguishes managers from leaders

g. Accountability. Recognize success and strength. Working with individuals to set goals.

* Depends on regular and honest communication (you’ll hear more on the next tip)
* Recognize success but also be willing to discuss problems frankly.
* Plan goals to strengths, stay aware, but minimize goals focused on weaknesses.
* Must make sure staff attempt to solve conflicts on their own and talk directly to each other.
* Transparency:
* open Outlook calendars,
* announcing where we’re going when leaving
* leaving early might say, "I'm hitting 40 hours"
* Self care:
* Watch your hours!
* Fine line between be available versus always plugged in.
* You can be there for your staff only if you're there for yourself.

h. Modes of communication

* Monthly meetings: sometimes all staff, sometimes groups of employees (provide venue for employee class to voice concerns and feel heard)
* Team huddles before opening: Informal way to touch base and communicate recent changes/developments in branch or library system, and then send out notes to all staff
* Monthly individual meetings with full-time staff: small agenda, lots of brainstorming and reflection on how things are going. Areas of concern, questions, etc.
* Open door policy: big change from previous management. Encourages casual interactions with staff (and customers!), and allows us to see and respond to what’s happening in the branch

4: Case studies

A. Teens: Our branch is located less than a half mile from the high school, which means we see a lot of foot traffic between 2:30 and 7 pm every weekday during the school year. While I’m sure many of you have had run-ins with loud or rowdy teens, our experiences last fall were tinged with some violence, staff intimidation, and light vandalism, so it had a bit more gravitas or weight than usual.

* Scheduling and physical space
  + We took a couple of practical approaches to dealing with our teen situation. The first change was changing the way we scheduled weekday afternoons. When we only had two staff members at the desk and the branch was busy, there was nobody left to address disruptions created by groups of teens. We added a standing station to the middle of branch, which was purposefully placed in front of the teen area. We then increased the number of employees on the floor between 2-9 pm by staffing that standing station. This enabled desk staff to focus on the customers at the desk, and allowed the employee at the standing station to closely monitor and quickly respond to any incidents.
  + As we’ve mentioned, our branch is an open concrete rectangle, so there is no dedicated teen room (or even curtain). We made the best use of our open concept by re-arranging the teen area to actually open up to the desk. We also removed shelving and seating to eliminate hiding spots, and instituted a butts in chairs rule, so all teens had to be in seats where we could actually see them as a safety and security measure. I’ll pass it off to Brent to speak to the PR side of things
* Advocacy and community relations
* Rested on communications (community, with staff, administrative partners and incident reporting
* Advocating for staff (hours/staffing, burnout, safety, Diversity)
* Advocating for teens (while we handed out 12 month bans to 3 teens, we called a meeting to of community leaders to talk about, how are we serving teens in this community more broadly. What spaces are available to them? How do we respond to behavior problems? Can we train staff uniformly across organizations?
* Community meeting (in attendance Director/CEO, Assistant Director/COO, Regional Manager, Me, Assistant Superintendent (incoming superintendent met separately with us), Principals, Chief of Police, Chamber President, Board of Aldermen members, Youth Court Executive Director, Director of Parks and Rec, Manager of Community Center)

B. Increased access and diversity

* Displays
* While libraries in the 21st century are much more than just books, we are still about books, so one of my first big projects was to start highlighting the collection in an intentional way. Rudine Sims Bishop’s analogy of books being windows and mirrors comes into play here. Everyone should be able to read books that are a mix of mirrors and windows. Mirror books are those that reflect similar experiences, settings, and demographics of your life (as in, you see yourself as part of human existence). Windows, on the other hand, provide a glimpse into someone else’s life, as in, the characters, settings, and experiences are different than your own. While some of our displays are topical or seasonal, I was intentional about increasing access to the collection for the diverse community we serve. We’ve created two permanent displays to serve as mirrors for POC in order to better reflect our community.
  + - For the kids: while just under 40% of the population in the US are people of color, just around 10% of children’s books published each year feature characters of color. This means that every 10 picture books you pull off the shelf, maybe 1 will feature a person of color. When children don’t see themselves in books, it negates their experiences and devalues their role in society. To increase access to mirror books for kids in our community, we have a permanent display at the front of the juvenile section devoted to titles that feature diverse characters. Because you shouldn’t have to look through 10+ picture books to find one character that looks like you.
    - For adults in our community, we created another permanent display to highlight urban fiction titles. The genre is very popular with our customer base, but the titles aren’t cataloged by genre and are easily lost in the fiction stacks. It’s also a largely paperback collection that has a short circ life. I worked with various departments to refresh our urban fiction selection and create marketing pieces to highlight the new display. The display is now housed on the same row of our other genre displays and checks out like crazy. If you want to increase access to your collection, you have to give the people what they want, and make it easy to find!
* Hiring (front end and on on-boarding)
* Diversity (if important to you) is an active process
  + Recruited staff member from another library for part time work
  + Was able to work with HR to offer a new half time, benefits eligible position, to person of color who had applied for a part time, hourly position and was also in library school (came about by working with a colleague at UMKC who works on diversity and recruitment and retention for librarians of color
* Marketing position as a customer service position in a library setting
* Using an abbreviated job description (as customer service position in library setting) to post on Facebook, then targeted marketing at folk who live or who have been in Grandview and Identify in such a way as African American or Black, Latinx or Asian
* On both these approaches, we observed and learned about the community before making strides to better reflect it. We also took our own advice and focused on impact to make small changes that will have ripple effects.