Keeping Our Sanity During Change

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Scenario: New Boss

- Close the main reference desk.
- Incorporate reference into the circulation desk.
- Put a coffee shop where the desk used to be.

Monday
- Hire an architect
- Create a building committee
- Create a collections move committee
- Create an organization committee

What committee do you want to serve on?
What should I have done differently?

A. Give me your reasons about why you are making this decision.
B. Provide an opportunity for feedback before a final decision is made.
C. Allow more time before making such a big change.
D. Give me a chance to tell you why I think this is a bad idea.
Objectives

- Explain systems theory and its impact on organizational dynamics
- Understand the promise and the trap of transparency and feedback
- Describe your power in an organization
- Ability to use tools to survive and keep your sanity in an ever-changing environment
Outline

- Systems Theory from Barry Oshry
- Feedback and Transparency
- Feedback to your Boss
Systems Thinking

The Possibilities of Organization

By Barry Oshry
Systems Thinking

- Typical = Us against Them (Internal Warfare)
- People respond based on their place in the organizational structure

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Tops, Middles, Bottoms

• Tops – suck up all the responsibility
• Middles – stuck between Tops and Bottoms
• Bottoms – Tops are making a mess of it!

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Self Reflection

Where are you?
A. Top
B. Middle
C. Bottom
Q&A

How many of you recognize the “Us Against Them” or “Internal Warfare” in your library?

• Yes
• No

Photo by Ryan Roberts, CC-BY-SA
For those of you who answered “yes” in the last question, how many of you would like to save your sanity and change this dynamic?

- Yes
- No
Keep Your Sanity

- Recognize how we contribute
- Freedom to act differently

- Hope = Partnership

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Commitment to Our Sanity - Tops

Typical Actions

- Suck up all the responsibility to myself
- Feel burdened and overwhelmed
- Create isolation to keep new problems out

Tools for Sanity

- Involve others in the big issues
- Ask for help
- Share high quality information
Commitment to Our Sanity - Bottoms

Typical Actions
- See negative conditions
- Tops could fix these conditions
- Tops are responsible for what is going wrong

Tools for Sanity
- Don’t count on Tops to fix what is wrong
- Find others to work together to fix what is wrong
- Offer actionable suggestions
- Ease the conditions of others – How can I help?
Commitment to Our Sanity - Middles

Typical Actions
- Torn between two sides
- Responsible for the problems between them
- Lose our independence of thought and action

Tools for Sanity
- Lead from the middle
- Be a coach to empower others
- Be a facilitator
Outline

• Systems Theory from Barry Oshry
• Feedback and Transparency
• Feedback to your Boss
Transparency & Feedback: Food & Drink

- What do we expect, or hope will happen, when we are asked to give feedback?

- What do we expect, or hope will happen, when we ask our leaders to be transparent?

- Example: Food and Drink in the Library
Feedback – Food & Drink

A. People will leave a mess
B. Food leads to pests
C. Food and pests damage books
D. What about Special Collections
E. The smell!
F. Libraries are not cafes

G. I don’t want to be the food police
H. I want to have positive interactions with users
I. This is a good idea
Response – Food & Drink

- Thank you
- Plan is to move forward with allowing food and drink
- Not in Special Collections
Were you heard?

A. No, you didn’t take my advice
B. Yes, you did what I wanted
Feedback & Transparency Expectations

- Being heard is different than being agreed with.
- I heard you, I just disagree.
Expectations

An expectation is a premeditated resentment.


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Keep Our Sanity

Adjust our Expectations

- **Employees**
  - Not everyone will agree with us
  - Included in the decision making process
  - We are still valued, respected, and appreciated

- **Leadership**
  - Not everyone will agree with us
  - Listen without judgement
  - Be prepared for passionate and strong opinions
  - Be ready to adjust the original idea
Feedback to the Boss

- Is the decision final?
- Do you have new information?
- How important is it?

- Connect feedback to organization’s or manager’s goals
- Provide actionable suggestions
- Offer to help

Acceptance can be empowering because it makes choice possible.

Sanity for Employees

- Provide actionable suggestions to fix what is wrong.
- Offer to help.
- Manage expectations.
  - Not everyone will agree with us
  - Included in the decision making process
  - We are still valued, respected, and appreciated

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Thank you

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Questions?

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