

DEVELOPING THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT: THE DIRECTOR'S ROLE

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Creativity and innovation are crying needs in the library profession today. Though they have been valued in many libraries for some time, the need for the creative thinker, the idea person, the dreamer, is even greater now. Traditional and time-worn ways of doing things are being challenged regularly. Budgets no longer support libraries to the degree they used to. Creative financing is a buzz word. Resource sharing has reached a high level of importance and must be accomplished in innovative ways. CD-ROM is emerging as a technology which has exciting possibilities. Laser cards and expert systems are being discussed and even developed for library applications. Old solutions to new problems are no longer accepted. New ways of addressing old challenges are desperately needed. Entrepreneurs and, perhaps more appropriately, intrapreneurs, are welcome individuals in librarianship.

Pinchot defines an intrapreneur as:

Any of the "dreamers who do." Those who take hands-on responsibility for creating innovation of any kind within an organization. The intrapreneur may be the creator or inventor but is always the dreamer who figures out how to turn an idea into profitable reality.¹

Finch describes intrapreneurs as freewheeling individuals who are willing to go outside their job descriptions to accomplish their goals.² The dictionary definition of an entrepreneur is "one who organizes, manages, and assumes the risks of a business or enterprise." Perhaps quibbling with terms

is unimportant. What is important is that libraries need innovators, creators and risk takers.

The director's role in developing the entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial spirit is five-fold. The top administrator of the library must:

- Personally understand the value of having creative people in the organization.
- Recruit creative people into the organization.
- Create an environment which encourages risk taking.
- Encourage present staff to "dream."
- Set the example by being an uncommon leader.

UNDERSTANDING THE VALUE OF CREATIVE PEOPLE

Understanding the value of having creative people in the organization means that the director must firmly believe that creative people contribute in meaningful ways to the overall well-being of the organization. A strong belief is important because the depth of that belief, or commitment, will be tested. It will be tested regularly during

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Developing the Entrepreneurial Spirit

the initial stages of an evolving intrapreneurial environment but will taper off as staff witness the positive effects on the organization as a whole and more especially on them individually. The testing will come from those who lived in and are comfortable with a more stable organizational environment. Creativity, innovation, and risk-taking imply change; change means disruption of old ways of doing things, reallocation of resources, and different working and reporting relationships.

Creative people add value to an organization in a number of ways. They tend to help keep the organization on the cutting edge of the profession. They do this because, by nature, they are curious. Because they are curious they read much and stay in touch with other creative people. They also attend association sponsored meetings where they meet people and share ideas. They keep co-workers and administrators on their toes and up on the latest because of their approach. They ask questions that often require answers which have come from new ways of thinking. They create an atmosphere of exploration, excitement and newness. They lift the knowledge level of those around them as they infuse the organization with new thoughts. They despise stagnation, and hence, inspire forward movement. They simply improve the overall work environment and morale of the staff.

As stated earlier, however, an innovative person does cause stress in the organization and can draw criticism from those who are more comfortable in a stable environment. The director must be consistent in the manner in which s/he handles the criticism which comes the way of that person as well as in the manner s/he handles the criticism and praise which comes from personally encouraging the intrapreneurial spirit in the organization. It is important to be patient and understanding with detractors. If handled well, most will eventually

be converted to the value of this new spirit and will become its strongest supporters. The administrator must not overreact to fringe opinions or actions. Moving forward in a positive, consistent, unemotional way, encouraging the development of this new environment, will have the greatest chance for success. There is no place for discouragement along the way. Though the director may be alone at first, there are enough others who believe in the intrapreneurial spirit that it won't be too long before allies will gather and a foundation of support will develop.

RECRUIT CREATIVE PEOPLE

Recruiting creative people into the organization is critical. When introducing any new philosophy or practice into an organization one must win converts among the existing staff and bring people into the organization who believe in the developing philosophy. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive. Doing both is often appropriate. If the director has the luxury of having vacant positions which can be filled, especially at the upper and middle management levels, putting people in these positions who support the philosophy will be most helpful. If not, normal attrition will allow eventual and systematic recruiting of new individuals who do.

One way of accomplishing this is through national searches for individuals to fill vacant positions in the library. Though this process is often criticized as being bureaucratic and time consuming, value accrues to people in the organization in different ways. First, it helps guarantee a large pool of applicants from which to select the very best people. Infusing the organization with the new, excellent people is healthy. Secondly, national searches strengthen in-house applicants for positions. When an in-house person is selected after competing with several other people, especially when these people represent a large variety of

geographical areas, libraries and experiences, her/his self-confidence is enhanced. In addition, peers gain a renewed respect for their colleague, and the known person is accepted into the new position much more readily. Therefore, when seeking creative people, it is important to codify the qualities and characteristics desired, along with the expectations of the position and encourage a large pool of applicants.

It is also important to involve present staff in the process. Three to five persons representing various parts of the organization serving on a search committee is an excellent way to involve staff. They can help agree on the items to be placed in the advertisements and position descriptions. As they read letters of application and resumes, members on the committee will pick up on the type of characteristics which the organization values and some will begin to internalize them. As those on the search committee do phone and personal interviews of the top candidates, a similar phenomenon will occur. Once the committee has made its recommendations to the director, and the person is selected, the organization will more readily accept the new person. The search committee members who have an investment in the decision will become a support group for the new person and help integrate the new employee into the organization.

Identifying individuals who have qualities and characteristics which will add to the developing intrapreneurial spirit and attracting them into the organization is not an easy task. However, patience and careful screening will reap rewards. Not settling for applicants in the first round, if they appear not to possess desired qualities, is important. Speaking to trusted colleagues who know the track record of applicants will help assure success. Remember that creative people are often seen as mavericks by co-workers. Brophy points out that "internal venturing" or "intrapreneurial"

programs free idea people from bureaucracy while allowing for the creation and marketing of new ideas.³ Candidates should be self-motivated, risk-takers who are persistent and quick studies, thriving on variety in daily tasks. Some of the problems which these type of people encounter in organizations include others being jealous of perceived extra attention and of the talents/skills held; not being accepted by peers for one reason or another; and having to prove themselves more than a conventional employee.

CREATE A RISK-TAKING ENVIRONMENT

The director must create an atmosphere in the working environment and among the organization which encourages risk-taking. This can be done in several ways. The overriding method is to give the message both verbally and by action that one can fail and not be demeaned, embarrassed, or made afraid. It must be understood by all that a certain number of errors will be unavoidable in a risk-taking environment. It must be understood that errors will not only be tolerated, but will be looked upon as opportunities for learning and growth. How the director reacts toward the person(s) who makes a mistake will send a message to others in the organization. A positive, building, "Hey, no problem. What can we learn from this experience?" response will send a message to budding intrapreneurs that they do work in an open, encouraging atmosphere. This type of reaction by the director may even encourage the skeptic to occasionally take a risk.

Another way of helping to create an environment in the library organization which encourages risk-taking is to sponsor workshops or other development/training opportunities which will enable the staff to learn or to sharpen their creative skills. Professional associations will often provide programs, mini-workshops, or seminars

Developing the Entrepreneurial Spirit

which focus on these skills. Providing time and money for staff to travel and to participate in these is a positive signal. The director may want to bring in a consultant for a period of time to help the staff get their creative juices flowing. Some of these individuals often reside within the community and can be called upon as resource persons at relatively little cost. On university campuses may reside faculty or staff who possess the skills to help prepare library staff to move into a greater risk-taking posture.

At Texas Tech University, a workshop on participation and creativity was sponsored by the Library for all staff. A faculty member from Speech Communications acted as the resource person. This person did an outstanding job touching the lives of a large number of library staff. She was so well liked that the Library has used her services for learning experiences on other topics. At this workshop, the faculty member gave a pre-instructional skills assessment instrument to each participant.⁴ The instrument was designed to help the individual identify his/her skills in encouraging participation and creativity in the work group. It was also designed to define areas in which the person might wish to improve skills. The following statements were rated by participants as to the frequency with which they did each:

- Set special time aside for the group to work on new approaches to work problems/procedures.
- Give the group advance notice of topics to be discussed in problem-solving or decision-making sessions.
- Arrange to avoid distractions during the group's problem-solving or decision-making session.
- Encourage the group to avoid having "all work and no play" in problem-solving or decision-making sessions.
- Encourage group members to turn in ideas or suggestions that may occur to

them after a problem-solving or decision-making session.

- Do not censor myself if I have a new ideas during group problem-solving or decision-making sessions.
- Initially withhold all negative verbal evaluation when a fellow group member suggests a new idea.
- Maintain communication/relationships with people outside my group, as well as outside of the organization.
- Keep up with progress/innovation in my field through relationships with others, through reading journals, and so on.

Another important element in creating a risk-taking environment is the director's sincere concern for and interest in the individual staff member. This interest manifests itself in the respect shown by the director for the employee's accomplishments and the director's dedication to the staff member's future development. This sincere personal interest engenders trust in the working relationship of the superior and the subordinate. Once a strong feeling of mutual trust is established, the employee will be willing to experiment, to stretch and to spend the energy thinking of new ways of doing things. Trust creates a nonthreatening environment in the work place. People tend to become relaxed, spontaneous and confident in a high trust environment. In short, they are more themselves. There should be no room for tentativeness, insecurity, tenseness and self-abasement in a creative, intra-preneurial environment.

The director's backing is important in creating an environment which encourages risk-taking. Also important to people who are innovative thinkers is the realization that they do not work well within a typical organizational structure.⁵ We must, then, give the bright, creative individual the support of the organization. It is often quite difficult to obtain the backing of the

organization for individuals who tend to be more comfortable working outside the usual structure. But efforts must be made. An organization which has been in place for some time will likely take more energy to move it in the direction of acceptance of this type of individual than one which has seen recent major changes, or one which is relatively new. Regardless, by persistently using the approaches mentioned above, the director can lead the evolution of the organization into a supportive role.

ENCOURAGE STAFF TO "DREAM"

Another major role of the director in developing the entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial spirit is encouraging present staff to "dream". Cornell is insistent that in the entrepreneurial environment, supervisors "...will need to find ways within the framework of the organization to increase individual opportunity, to take calculated risks, and to reward success." He further argues that "the core of the entrepreneurial process is to find ways to increase opportunities for personal decision-making."⁶ The most effective way of encouraging staff to "dream" is to give regular signals to them to convey the message, "I'm pleased with what you are doing." These signals can be given in any number of ways. Four are mentioned above. Increasingly individual opportunity for experience, success, and growth is an important and appreciated signal. Some staff will step forward and volunteer for more opportunities but others will not. A discerning director will know when an individual is ready for an increase in opportunity. When a staff member is ready for growth, carefully chosen additional opportunities should be offered within the appropriate time frames. The innovator will appreciate this boost and welcome the opportunity to contribute in more or different ways. Another signal is to communicate to the staff member that a calculated risk is being taken on him/her. Creative persons appreciate more than others what it means

when the boss takes a risk on them. Expanding responsibilities, especially when the person has no track record with the new type of work, is a risk on the part of management.

Rewarding success can be done in several ways. A simple congratulatory comment or a look of pleasure are reinforcing. Comments on an evaluation, a merit pay increase, a special letter noting a success, and public praise are all encouragers to continue present behavior. Allowing a person to make more and more decisions signals trust and respect in the person's abilities. This autonomy is strong indicator to an employee of the director's and the organization's level of support and encouragement.

Not all staff can change into super idea people. Not all staff can turn the corner and become ideal intrapreneurs. However, many can learn these skills. By using the techniques spelled out above, present staff can be encouraged to "dream". Organizations also need people who are not risk-takers to provide the stability on which creative people can build. Tolerance for each other is needed, and the contribution of those who are more traditional must be valued also.

THE UNCOMMON LEADER

Example is probably the best teacher. Therefore, a very important role of the director is setting the example of the intrapreneurial spirit by being an uncommon leader. An uncommon leader, according to Darling, possesses the following characteristics:

- They help people develop a strong sense of personal worth.
- They give more to their job than the job is ever able to return to them.
- They have a sense of mission.
- They are facilitators for creative change.
- They tend to be result oriented, not

Developing the Entrepreneurial Spirit

activity focused.

- They desire to serve the customer.
- They are able to release power in other people.
- They never make a decision that someone else can make.
- They do what they do with excellence.
- They act like they are in control.
- They act as though the success of the organization depends on them.
- They tend to look at the job description, then tear it up and go out and do the job.⁷

Gilbert asked over 2000 executives, managers, and supervisors in government and business to identify the characteristics of the best boss one could ever have. Their most frequent responses about their best boss are as follows:

Is supportive; a partner in problem-solving; can be trusted to be supportive of staff when with others; is a team builder; is a teacher; is committed to the development of his or her workers; has high performance expectations; gives subordinates the opportunity to be responsible; delegates; gives clear work assignments; keeps commitments; sets a good example; is competent; is committed to the goals of the team; is available when needed; is a good listener; is fair and objective; is an advocate for staff; shares performance information with staff; seeks staff input

before making decisions; is a good role model; is inspirational; charismatic; has vision; has a good sense of humor; and believes in me, respects me.⁸

Another approach to what Darling calls the uncommon leader might be interpreted as what Burns called the "transformational" leader. According to Burns, this type of leader motivates us to do more than we thought we could do. This type of leader inspires us toward greater levels of performance. S/he also unites us in grand purposes and touches our will to give.⁹

CONCLUSION

The director's role in developing an entrepreneurial spirit in the library is an important and challenging aspect of his/her job. This paper has touched on five ways in which the director can help accomplish this: understand the value of having creative people in the organization; recruit creative people into the organization; create an environment which encourages risk-taking; encourage present staff to "dream"; and set the example of being an uncommon leader. One of the exciting parts of being an administrator is watching members of the staff draw upon the powers within them and accomplish at a level of excellence of which they are proud and of which the organization is proud. Using the techniques and principles described in the paper will work. If practiced sincerely and persistently, the director will move the organization toward the acceptance and practice of entrepreneurial thinking.

NOTES

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