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Ideal Vision

Introduction

This public library is located in a small Southern city with a population of about 80,000 residents. The community the library serves does not only serve city residents, since the county and city share their public services. So the actual total population of people served is approximately 231,000. The average family income is \$43,000 with a family size of four members.

Decide what you want

When my employees come into their job at the public library in the morning, they unlock the door and are greeted by the vibrant indoor plants that surround the door. These plants obscure the magnetized machines looking for books that were not properly deactivated. A small fountain quietly murmurs to itself just beyond, surrounded by overstuffed cushions and low couches. Later in the day, customers will rearrange and lounge over the cushions as they flip through prospective materials that they might want to take home. Every two weeks on a rotating schedule for employees who want to earn some extra money, the cushion covers are taken home and washed to be brought back the next morning before opening. The rest of the library is full of nooks with plenty of side tables and overstuffed chairs to encourage patrons that this is a place

where they can come to relax. Shelves are no higher than six feet tall and stools are sporadically spread out amongst the aisles to assist patrons who need a little help to get to the top shelves.

As the employee heads towards the kitchen to put away their lunch, they boot up the computers as they pass by. After putting their lunch in the fridge, they go to their office that they share with another staff member. They hang their coat on the door before checking and replying to internal emails for twenty minutes. They may even bob their head to their music, allowing themselves to get energized for the day ahead.

Thirty minutes before the library opens, the second staff member shows up as they unlock the door to let themselves in. The two librarians chat as they prep their workstations for the day. They hang today's delivered newspapers on the rack and quickly disinfect the public computers. Then at nine o'clock, one librarian opens the door. The other takes up residence at the front desk, which is fifteen feet inside the front door. While waiting for patrons to come in, this librarian works on conserving damaged materials or doing paperwork on the computer. When a patron comes in, they look up and cheerfully welcome them into the library.

Throughout the day, patrons come in and utilize the services provided by the library. These services include reader's advisory, reference, information about the local community, assistance with using the computer and the catalog, story time at ten thirty, and whatever special programming the coordinator has set up for that tri-weekly scheduling period. The main focus of this library is technology, so users often choose this library when they have technology related questions. Sometimes there is a disgruntled patron may become confrontational that the librarian will not break copyright law for them. The manager overhears from her office and will sweep in

to handle the situation by backing up and supporting her staff. A copy of the library's policies and the law is supplied for the patron if they so choose.

One hour lunch breaks are staggered throughout the day so the library always remains staffed. The time given allows the employee the freedom to eat on site or leave to run their own errands. If an employee works a full eight hour shift, they are also granted two fifteen minute breaks.

The library closes at nine o'clock and the librarian locks the front door but waits in the doorway, watching to make sure all the customers make it to their cars safely. The janitor has already slipped into the build half an hour before to do the daily maintenance cleaning. As for the librarian and the assistant, they finish their tasks, write emails, and rearrange the cushions for tomorrow's patrons. At ten o'clock, the janitor, the librarian, and the assistant librarian leave together and lock the library up. At eleven, the parking lot lights go out, shrouding the library in darkness. No one is here and there is no need to waste power or contribute to light population for an empty building.

Overall, the library's performance goals are to meet the needs of the community in the most efficient, well-thought out and caring manner as possible by the library staff. General observations of staff-customer relations is the guiding model to make sure the library continues to provide consistent, attentive service as they assist patrons. The goal here is that patrons' time is valuable and the library staff acknowledges this so they seek to educate, assist, and answer inquiries as speedily as possible.

Discover what the customer wants

The needs of this library's customers will be found out using a variety of methods that seek to attract responses from customers depending upon their chosen means of communication. First, there would be an internal spreadsheet which the librarians will update to add customers' complaints, concerns, and compliments. Each week the administrator will set aside time to review these entries. If the concern is decided to be valid that can be immediately put into place or corrected, the administrator will assign the task to an employee to be completed. Once the task has been finished, the employee will log in with their personal user ID and sign off that the task was completed. The employee will be encouraged to add a comment of no more than a few lines about the conditions they found and corrected or any further suggestions to prevent a similar situation from arising again. This system of signing off and personally acknowledging that the task has been completed will create an environment of personal responsibility. The documentation of completion will give the employee the security to show that they did complete the assigned task and follow through with letting the administrator know they completed their assignment. This system also creates a record to show how the library is addressing patrons' concerns and correcting them to be reviewed at the quarterly meetings of the library's accomplishments.

Other ways to discover customers' wants is to have a suggestion box in case a customer feels too shy to directly discuss their concerns with the staff. Also there will be a permanent location on the library's website that encourages feedback from users. Suggestions from either one of these forms will be added to the internal database to be addressed. Issues that cannot be immediately taken care of will be addressed at either the weekly meeting or if it is a more long-

term concern that will take time to consider, the suggestion will be discussed at the quarterly meetings.

The second major way to determine the users' wants will be through an annual brief survey with an open survey window of four weeks. It will be implemented in a similar fashion as the user feedback system discussed above. Signs will be placed in appropriate locations throughout the library (in two areas so users do not feel embarrassed picking up the questionnaire immediately in front of the librarian) with the surveys on the table. A locked box will be next to the same so users can submit their completed forms with confidence that their answers are anonymous. The annual survey will be highlighted on the front page of the website to attract online visitors to respond to the questionnaire. The final way will be to hand out copies of the survey along with the book receipt to users as they check out their books. It is very important to be non-intrusive in this method. Under no circumstances does the staff member want to come across as if this is an ordinary, unsolicited attempt to raise funding from the user. A simple remark such as, "We're doing our annual survey to ask patrons how the library is meeting their needs. This is a copy of the survey that I've included with your receipt. If you have time, we would appreciate you filling it out and then dropping it in that box (point to the appropriate location) the next time you come in. Your response lets us know how we can better serve you!"

The last way to gather information about customers wants is to contract a company to find out more in depth responses from our users and people who are currently not utilizing the library's resources. This survey will be done every three years. Between these different methods to gather customer feedback is to discover where our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) are and how we can address these areas. Another goal that is to be reached is

that by doing the surveys in-house as often as possible, the library will be saving money and be able to respond faster than if there was a third party involved.

Deliver the vision plus 1%

The one percent that constantly drives this vision is the need to be service-oriented. In particular at this library, that would consist of being technology driven. Librarians would be expected to remain up to date on technology and information trends by reading library and technology websites when work is slow. Our customer base ranges from being technology challenged to those who can operate system networks. While there is no expectation for every staff member to be able to build computers and write computer programming, they will be trained to handle all the software and hardware the library offers so they can assist users in an efficient manner. The ideal library staff are well-trained professionals whom the public can rely on to answer their questions with ease.

The 12 Questions

As a true believer of the 12 Questions system from *First, Break All The Rules*, my ideal library would use the questions as a framework in which to hang the employer and employee relations policy upon. So the first thing as administrator of this library, before I do anything else, is to decide what information is necessary for my employees to feel informed, confident, supported, and encouraged to grow in their positions.

For the new employee, they need a clear and comprehensive copy of the details of their job description. The administrator or their supervisor will sit down with them and discuss the details of the job description so the employee fully knows what is expected of them. This meeting will also include a discussion about the mission of the library and how their job

contributes to the overall theme of being service-oriented. At this time, the employee will be encouraged to ask for help or insight whenever they needed. We are a close-knit team here committed to providing efficient and knowledgeable service to our users. As information professionals, we have to feel secure in knowing that we will never have all the answers so it is okay to ask for help.

Next, the employee will be given a mentor whom they can rely on to provide them with excellent one-on-one training and advice about starting at this library. This trainer will be evaluated in a 360 manner (as seen in *Toxic Managers*) to ensure that this person is the right person to be assisting new employees get settled in and feel comfortable.

Evaluations will be done on a bi-annual scheduled basis so that employees continue to get solid feedback and support on how they can best contribute to the library and community as well as the library assisting their own personal growth as a professional. On a less formal scale, good work will be recognized and appreciated in a way that is most satisfying to that particular persona on a continuous basis. This may be in the form of compliments, recognition for exceptional work at meetings, etc. However, this library will not have a wall of plaques. I have found in my personal experiences that this is demeaning to other members of the staff who may not understand why they are not chosen. This can lead to negativity and lowered work production as feelings are hurt. However, milestones will be recognized. For example, if a staff member has just completed additional training or education, a number of years worked, or a major happy life event has occurred for them, the staff will support them and celebrate their accomplishments. This will typically consist of food since meal times can strength bonds!

To continue the theme of professional growth, employees will be encouraged to become active, contributing members of the library profession. One way to facilitate this is to give paid time away from regular duties so that a staff member can work on a paper for publication. However, in order to curtail abuse, employees who seek to use this particular means of professional growth support will be expected to report and show progress on their work. Also ideally, each staff member would be funded for travel and attendance fees to attend two library or technology conferences of their choice per year. Staff will be encouraged to share at the next meeting what ideas they brought back from the experience that could benefit someone else or the library as a whole.

Finally, once a year, the entire library staff will have a year in order to regroup. This retreat would last two nights and three days at an affordable location. The daylight hours will be used to discuss opportunities for improvement that they have discovered since the previous meeting. The second day will discuss how we can address the needs expressed the previous day. On the last day of the retreat, staff will discuss plans for the upcoming year as well as how we're doing on long-range goals and strategies. The evening hours will be open so that staff can enjoy themselves and relax in the manner that best suits their interests.

Describe the role the following tools will play in your ideal vision:

Strategic planning's role in this ideal library has already been stated in that the library is very driven in goals and objectives to be service-oriented. By having a clear vision of the library's mission to serve the community above all else, all planning of the library's activities, funding and resources can be determined by "how does this benefit the community?" This style of planning seems overly simple, which is the point. A library's mission should be similar to the

rules for creating a perfect logo: can you draw it with a stick in the sand? Now, adjusting that rule to a library's mission, it becomes a question of whether you can recite the primary goal in one sentence.

However, planning complicates things a bit further when you have to make decisions about what activities, resources, etc. will actually be of use to reach everyone in the community, not just the active members who already participate in the library program. So one aspect of strategic planning for this library would then involve finding new ways to market the library's resources and services. By thinking ahead like so on long range projects, the library can continue its core mission while simultaneously having a detailed plan that the next person could continue if needed.

The library has recently added the fountain and the cushions for lounging, so they are included in the past year's budget. The document on the next page is the most recent report that we have. By having a budget planned, the library can stick to the principal of "pay as you go" to avoid going into debt. Notice how the staffing is the most expensive part of the budget.

In the previous pages, we have discussed how the needs assessment and evaluation will be implemented. The role of assessment and evaluation in the overall structure of the organization is that it creates a way to keep track of how the library is faring in fulfilling its mission. Without these tools, our capacity to evaluate our effectiveness for the community would be limited.

Quality control in this library will be through soliciting continuous feedback from the customers. The system previously described in detail covers several aspects for this safety net: in person, via a suggestion box, and online. Between these three areas and the process set in place

to address concerns on a weekly basis, quality control is assured as a record is kept and accountability is maintained.

The Four Keys

Interviews are ineffective ways to gain insight on a potential employee. They serve to make the candidate nervous which leads to parroted responses gleaned from every person they have ever talked to about what it takes to get hired. Instead, I advocate for having a conversation with perspective employees. Discuss the library's mission and goals in brief and ask the candidate their thoughts. Other topics for discussion can be about the library profession and how other experiences the candidate has had led them to their decision to apply for this position. The interviewer can also talk about their own experiences as they worked their way up the ladder.

The goal of looking for talent is to look beneath the sanitized and perfected facts presented in the candidate's resume. What you are seeking is the cover letter stuff. Things that a rattling off of facts cannot show you. For instance, you cannot find out if someone is sincere and thoughtful through looking at a list of references. You want them to be able to demonstrate it naturally through casual conversation so that they can reveal their personal interests and talents without the superficial strain of the traditional interview. The interviewer would ideally not be writing things down, but keenly listening, interacting, and being in the present with the candidate. What this meeting should do is form a whole picture of a person and that cannot be accomplished if both parties are being distracted by note taking.

In order to define the right outcomes, the administrator and all staff must first know what the goals are and how the outcome will be assessed to see how well it meets the written objectives. Employees will already know the overall mission of the library is and what their job

Salaries	Rate	Benefits	Annual
Director	\$ 83,500.00	33%	\$111,055.00
Assistant Director	58,800.00	33%	78,204.00
Employee 1	51,400.00	33%	68,362.00
Employee 2	37,000.00	33%	49,210.00
Employee 3	48,000.00	33%	63,840.00
Employee 4	31,500.00	33%	41,895.00
Part time employee 1	28,700.00		
Part time employee 2	16,000.00		
Total	354,900.00		
Technology	Cost	#	Total
Computer Stations	\$ 956.00	17	16,252.00
Databases	8,000.00	1	8,000.00
Software Upgrades	6,100.00	1	6,100.00
Building Services	Cost	#	Total
Add ceiling fans	\$ 207.00	4	\$ 828.00
General Resources	Cost	#	Total
Cushions	\$ 25.00	30	\$ 750.00
Indoor Fountain	2,399.99	1	8,000.00
New Materials	8,000.00	1	
		Total	\$452,496.00

duties are during the meeting after they were hired. So the goals that are being focused on will be the ones decided in both the short-term and the long-term.

Aside from the daily activities that occur with running a library, staff will need to know the plans for the next few months as well as where the library is headed in a couple years. The decisions on these goals will be discussed at staff meetings throughout the year so that everyone is involved and knows what objectives the library is trying to achieve. It will be stressed that micromanaging is unacceptable because what we are looking at here are to make sure deadlines are being met and steps are being made towards accomplishing the goals of the library. If an employee is having trouble achieving their part, as per the overall culture of the library, they are encouraged to discuss it with their supervisor and ask for help.

The strengths of the library personnel is what the supervisors, the administrator and the culture of the library will focus upon. Attention will be maintained during interactions and during evaluations on what activities employees find to be most enjoyable and suitable to their interests and skill range. At this ideal library, the last thing we want customers encountering in their interactions with employees are unhappy or disgruntled people who hate their jobs.

One aspect that we do not want to encourage at this library is for employees to be constantly striving to be on top of the ladder regardless of whether or not they actually have the temperament, skills, interests, or ability to do that particular job. So in order to combat that impulse, each job will be valued and appreciated for the contributions that that position contributes to the mission of the library. This will be done continuously as employees are encouraged and praised for what they do every day on the job. At staff meetings and the retreat, each department will be recognized for what they do and how each area is interdependent on the

others. What we are at this library is akin to members of a ship where we all need to work together if we are going to keep our library afloat in a sea of competitors.

In addition, the professional and personal growth encouragements listed in other sections of this paper highlight the particular ways that employees will be given the tools to do well in their job. Through a thorough understanding of what their job description is, opportunities for professional growth and carefully evaluated praise and assessment, employees will know that their job is important to us all. In fact, their job is so important that we are willing to invest in the continuous development of them in their position so that they can become an expert in their field. However, this does not mean we will discourage employees from wanting to learn about other potential areas of interest in the library. Staff will be granted opportunities to shadow, discuss, and get hands on experience in what their coworkers do if they so choose.

How To Contribute Without Being In Charge

As a new graduate, I will be coming face to face with staff that may individually have more years of experience than I have in years being alive. However, I can offer fresh eyes and experiences that the library did not possess before my employment. So, the first valuable thing I can do in creating raving fans and a better atmosphere is to be positive. I need to facilitate a positive relationship not merely between myself and external customers but also between myself and staff members who do not have the formal education that I possess. I need to recognize that these coworkers are my peers and they have much they can still teach me in how to be a contributing and successful member of this library.

Secondly, once time has passed and I have formed a strong bond with my coworkers and hopefully my administrator, I can try to find opportunities to discuss the hiring practices with my

boss. Unless I have the fortunate experience of not being subjected to a traditional formal interview, I will probably find areas of improvement that could make the job interview and training more efficient and useful for new employees.

Third, I intend to take initiative in fostering better customer service for our community. I have four years of retail experience so I am well-aware of the treatment our patrons are receiving from other businesses and also the attitudes that service workers have after repeated abuse by the community. I hope that by helping to eliminate some of the more negative aspects of library to patron experiences, we can cultivate a user base that is more receptive to the library employees being kind, service-oriented people that they can trust. This truth I hope will engender the community to want to support additional funding and a kinder interaction with others in the customer service business. In short, I would like to see a revolution where service providers and clients treat other as equals that they respect.

Conclusion

The keys to creating a world class library in this small Southern city is to always keep the library's mission in mind: be service-oriented. The books read in the Library Administration and Management class (*Raging Fans, First Break All The Rules, Creating the Customer Driven Library, and Toxic Managers*) have taught me to think not only from an employee's point of view but also to think of the big picture and the long-range plans that ultimately drive a library's focus. The lessons about how to hire talented employees that are happy in their jobs blends right into creating an environment that customers wish to return to and therefore creating raving fans who will then go on to share and embody every library's goal: reach more people. The job of running a library is not a task to take too light-heartedly as you have many stake holders to keep

happy while you strive to be true to your own mission. However, the most useful lesson of all from these books may be in that if a person is making everyone else miserable, get rid of them. Everyone will be happier for it.