

**Managers Versus Leaders:**

Why Public Libraries Need Staff Who Are Both

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For any workplace hierarchy to succeed, an organization needs leaders and managers to direct staff towards the goals of the organization. These two positions are not, in all cases, synonymous, and may not always need to be. Being an effective manager does not necessitate being an inspiring leader, and strong leaders do not always have appropriate managerial skills. Finding both a good leader and an effective manager in one person can be difficult but beneficial to organizations. Such a person can streamline functions and build a strong staffing model. This is an especially welcome trait in hiring leadership or supervisory roles in public libraries, where staffing models are often minimal and less departmentalized than many private or academic institutions.

Managerial skills are required for overseeing day-to-day operations of a library in an efficient way. “Leadership [skills are] required to set a vision for libraries to evolve and adapt to [new] challenges” (Henricks 2014, 285). It is not impossible for people with either managerial skills or leadership qualities to learn skills and mechanisms to be more successful in their weaker characteristics. Online classes, the prevalence of “life hacks” on the internet, and mentorship of successful people with the skills being sought can be helpful in strengthening weaknesses learning to better balance both abilities together instead of simply accessing presenting one. Highly organized but introverted people can fake a charismatic persona to charm peers into seeing them as a leader, and leaders can practice organizational skills in order to better manage.

In her 2013 article, Christina Neigel explores gender roles in library leadership, but her article breaks down not only the gender stereotypes that play into upper management of library systems, but skills and characteristics that are sought. She explains that “functionalist management practices do not leave adequate space for recognizing service that is grounded in *how* help and support is delivered in addition to what the help *is*” (525). An effective manager

may realize what services are needed in an institution to better assist customers and may come up with a solution, but a true leader can ensure that service is implemented positively in a way that best serves both customers and staff. An effective manager may not entirely see the need for both, or perhaps not have the skills to encourage staff to give new services or procedures a proper chance before writing them off- and a disimpassioned staff is a sure way to kill off success of new services. Staff will either not advertise new services, leaving customers unaware of their existence, or assist customers with such things in a negative manner that creates a poor impression. These may not be the motivations behind complete failure of a thing—it is not impossible that something may be utilized and adequately accessed by customers who discover and navigate them on their own—but it can certainly prevent it from being considered *successful* in a true sense of the word.

“...Management can be understood as a way of removing practitioners from [satisfying] ‘front-line’ work that is informed by a value of caring that relinquishes control over ‘expert knowledge’ for the purpose of empowering others” (Neigel 2015, 525). A manager may manage- but the level of caring that is required to truly lead others by empowering them goes beyond properly filed paperwork and following protocols. The title of Simon Sinek’s 2014 book *Leaders Eat Last: Why Some Teams Pull Together and Others Don’t* says it all in the title: leaders care enough to let their peers go to the table first and be taken care of. Leaders empower their staff to work hard and work smart by ensuring they are taken care of. A manager may ensure the schedule has enough people in the building to run, but a leader ensures the available staff will be engaged and helpful to customers, building back the sense of relevancy for libraries that has been lost in many communities. Having a manager who can run the day-to-day tasks and another person who can act as leader can be a sustainable staffing model but having a leader in the

position of manager ensures that staff feel empowered to discuss a schedule change for personal reasons, which can lead to a sense of loyalty to the leader who attempts to accommodate their needs outside of work. These needs must be weighed against the needs of the organization (a managerial skill), of course, lest it instead create a sense of discombobulation from an inconvenient change causing inadequate staffing or overstaffing.

What is it that makes leadership qualities so attractive? In a *Journal of Library Administration* article, Susan Henricks and Genevieve Henricks-Lepp summarize a 1990 article by Warren Bennis. They state, “Bennis (199) sees exemplary leadership as providing a sense of purpose, generating and sustaining trust and candor, and fostering hope. The author writes of the importance of character, which is not only ethical but part of being a ‘fully integrated human being’” (Henricks, 2014, 280). An ethical leader who can foster hope shows staff looking up to them a positive light through which to view change, which can foster trust and encourage an acceptance of change (Ford 2008, 363). This trust and relationship between staff and management encourages smoother transitions, better customer interactions, and a positive work environment that wants for sustainable practices and long-term retention of employees. An employee who is appropriately managed may show up and find their job palatable. An employee who sees their manager as a leader becomes loyal and likes (in some cases *loves*) their job and wants to continue that cycle of a positive work environment.

Librarians are better equipped to handle inevitable change when they have appropriate leaders, who have the appropriate skills to lead *and* disseminate relevant information to staff (Neigel 2015, 522). They are better equipped to move forward and create a sustainable environment by inspiring new leaders to step up when those changes take away their current leader, rather than crashing and flailing because their mere manager moved on and no one else is

prepared or inspired to step up and be in charge in the absence of any leadership whatsoever. “Within libraries, an effective leader supports and develops training for librarians and library workers” (Farrell 2016, 725). By encouraging other employees to reach their potential through training, a true leader is further instilling trust and positive relationships between themselves and staff. Since managers are often in the best position to facilitate further training opportunities for staff, we find ourselves with yet another reason why having both a manager *and* leader in one is far more beneficial than having two separate people who are each capable of only being manager or leader.

In any workplace environment, we need both leaders and managers. We need those who can inspire, and those who can keep us on track. The most financially responsible, and ideal, situation would be to have a person in power who is both- a manager who can lead, or a leader who manages. While organizations that may have business models can afford to have more departmentalized staff and separate leaders and managers, public libraries rely on a sustainability of spirit to continue to succeed, and typically on a minimal staffing model, making a manager-leader combination the most beneficial addition to any team.

Growth of a public library depends on goodwill with customers, and this starts with having an engaged and positive staff. Staff who are managed can be content- but staff who are lead can be happy and *passionate*. Staff who see both a leader and manager want to come to work and want to work hard. They want to live up to the expectations of their manager-leader, and they want to continue the positive momentum that a manager-leader can build. Anyone can look at their own work history and analyze their previous managers. There are managers and there are leaders. But the ones who can successfully do both are the ones we remember and the ones who have the most impact on staff and their working environments. It is the manager-

leaders that inspire, encourage, and see potential developed into an organization's sustainable future.

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