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# The ART of People Management in Libraries: Tips for Managing Your Most Vital Resource

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***The ART of People Management in Libraries: Tips for Managing your Most Vital Resource.***

**James McKinlay and Vicki Williamson. Oxford, UK: Chandos Publishing, 2010. Pp.**

**xxii+289. ISBN 1-84334-423-8.**

*Kelly Blessinger, Louisiana State University*

This human resource centered book consists of 8 chapters, an epilogue, bibliography and index. The book was co-written by James McKinlay, a professional consultant with thirty years' experience and Vicki Williamson, the current Dean of the University of Saskatchewan Library. This book was written with current leaders and those aspiring to be leaders in mind. The authors stated that this was not intended to be an academic work but instead was written in a conversational style with real world examples. While admitting that they didn't have the prescription for every situation they noted that there were things that seemed to be universally effective and ineffective in work settings. Each chapter concluded with a summary of what was covered and tips under the "ART" acronym that stood for Attention, Results and Technique to recognize the needs, give tips for achieving success and to provide techniques that have been useful over time. The authors stated that the main purpose of their book was to maximize libraries impact through people to secure libraries' relevancy.

The authors stressed several issues that are important for those in leadership positions to keep in mind. One reoccurring theme was that employees need to be engaged and that it should be a goal of library management to create a motivating environment. It is important for leaders to regularly involve their staff by seeking input and feedback. It is also important for managers to hold employees accountable by having a system of corrective actions and rewards. In their years of experience, they stated that they had encountered many situations where a staff member left over what were a series of seemingly small incidents that they felt as though their management did not bring an acceptable

resolution. If the managers had resolved these issues instead of letting them go, they possibly could have saved the time, money and effort of recruiting and training a new person to fill this job. The authors also discussed the importance of succession planning by grooming internally for leadership positions.

In Chapter 3: *The rules of the game have changed*, the paradigm shift between the old way of thinking, and the new way, where changes have been made in regard to working conditions, employee expectations, benefits and business conditions. Trends in the business world were recognized and applied to library settings. Issues such as changes in demographics, social trends and technology were discussed and expounded upon. The modern day employee will most likely not working their whole career at one institution and this shouldn't be expected. A new definition of "loyalty" can be defined instead of by years, but in how much they contribute while under your employ, even if this is a short time. The authors stated that "It is clear that employee expectations have changed dramatically. A job has to provide more than just gainful employment. Personal satisfaction, an improved work-life balance and the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution – both at work and in society – will be the hallmarks of the new workplace of 2015."

There were three chapters devoted to systems thinking. Systems thinking can be translated to holistic thinking, how everything is interrelated and interconnected. Chapter five broke down systems thinking into four primary concepts that managers could understand and use in their organizations. The authors suggested creating a systems plan by deciding what is important to your mission or goals and starting with the desired outcomes before you start. They suggested holding planning meetings and discussions when laying out a detailed three year business plan. Engaging the staff and involving them in the process will create more buy in. The authors stated that staff tend to focus more on goals that are measurable or can be assessed so their successes are tangible. It is important to lay out initiatives for each year of the plan. The authors recommended some "quick win" goals early on to help the staff stay motivated. The authors also stressed the importance of a plan for implementation so the plan is not put on the back burner after it is created. They stated that this is often why strategic plans fail. They stressed that managers and others should be held accountable in regard to progress with the plan. It is also of the

utmost importance to keep everyone informed of progress being made. Communication and feedback are vital components after a systems plan is laid out.

Chapter 7, *Leadership in HR management practices – the people edge competencies*, gave the example of a company that could be defined as ‘Employers of Choice’ due to the excellent relationship they have with their employees. They stated to become ‘Employers of Choice’ leaders should strive to create an atmosphere that people enjoy working in, where employees are treated with respect, where there are high levels of trust and accountability, where employees are encouraged to develop skills and are challenged and recognized. The authors went on to give six core competencies for leadership which build on each other and include 30 specific skills.

In the eighth and final chapter, *Ten critical HR issues within libraries*, the authors give a thorough explanation of the ten most critical issues facing libraries and recommendations for handling them. Issues covered that were of special interest to this reviewer included shifting organizational culture/culture of empowerment, generational differences in the workplace, the entitlement mindset and establishing career management and succession management systems. The section on organizational culture focused on how the work atmosphere now is far less rigid and jobs are more fluid. Instead of the top down approach, new ideas and input are encouraged and valued, contributions are acknowledged and employees are invited to expand their job roles by taking on new tasks and projects.

The section on generational differences gave descriptions, working styles, and the motivation of the four generations that may be working together today (Veterans (1922-43), Baby Boomers (1946-1964), Generation X (1960-1980) and Generation Y (1980-2000)). Each group was heavily influenced by the state of the world in their first twenty years of life. The entitlement mindset, while most often associated with the younger generation, can also be seen in older workers. This mindset could describe both young people who are frustrated that they aren’t moving up into supervision immediately out of college and older folks who feel like they should be guaranteed a job while at the same time providing minimal output. Finally, in succession planning, the issue of all the baby boomer retirements was addressed. It is important for institutions to have a succession management system in place to develop current staff with

leadership potential to be managers when these positions are vacated. Overall, this book was well organized and written and will be a helpful addition to any manager or would be manager's library. Recommended.