

Professionalism, Part 2

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I have found no greater satisfaction than achieving success through honest dealing and strict adherence to the view that, for you to gain, those you deal with should gain as well.

—Alan Greenspan

Help your brother's boat across and you will reach the shore.

—Hindu proverb

A tale is told of the librarian who never makes it to a meeting on time—even meetings called by said librarian. The regularity of this behavior and the clear lack of concern for the effect of this behavior on others have convinced everyone that this is deliberate. Many interpret it as both rude disregard for others and a passive-aggressive way of showing self-importance. Colleagues and staff have grown accustomed to either turning up late themselves, or bringing work to occupy the downtime. Grumbling is common, and the general feeling is that said librarian has either no concern or respect for others.

What is the result of this type of behavior? Or the type of behavior that cuts others off while talking, or shows boredom, disdain, or lack of consideration for another's thoughts? Or the body language that sends negative messages? Is there a threshold beyond which it is difficult or impossible to cross the created chasm of "I'm better than you and can play by different rules?"

Our beginning quotes make the importance of mutual respect and support clear. In the library with its increasingly expensive resources and constantly growing demands, as well as limited budget and staff, cooperation and collegiality are crucial. Yet, behaviors and attitudes that divide colleague from colleague, librarian from staff, and employees from customers can be very detrimental.

There are many aspects to professionalism. It includes—in addition to professional degrees and training—attitudes and behaviors. Positive, constructive interactions, and creating and maintaining an environment that encourages, motivates, and nurtures growth, mutual respect, and

shared mission, are integral to those who call themselves professionals. While the topic is a little nebulous, there are a number of resources and fields of study that can provide a basis for developing the type of workplace that respects and supports all.

Sharing the Big Picture Puts Everyone on the Same Page

"The Leadership Pill is a fun parable that underscores the need for leaders to show integrity, build a culture of partnership, and affirm people's sense of self-worth by letting them know they are important."¹

Literally, this is a story of a pill to create leaders. The story includes focus groups, marketing, correct dosage, testimonies, and a "pill-free leadership challenge." This challenge is between two teams. One uses the pill, and the second has an effective leader who uses the principles of leadership. The point of the book is that there is no magic pill that will turn a manager into an excellent leader. Just as in sports, ethical principles, training, practice, and concern create a better leader. The book can be read in less than an hour. Do not read in public, as the frequent smiles often will progress to laughter. This is fun reading with a punch because the point is so accurate. Excellent topic for a brown bag or small-group discussion. A must read.

Leadership Is Not Something You Do to People, It's Something You Do with Them

Recently an attendee at a conference raised an interesting point—how does an institution stop the steady migration of qualified librarians after only two to four years? While some factors are relatively immutable (weather, location), others can be addressed and changed. That's the goal of *The Engaging Leader*.² Gubman bases his book on the sports arena. If winning is based on talent, he states, "talent is wasted when it's not engaged."³ His advice can be summed up as:

Engaged followers should be your goal, and the goal of every leader. Engaged people are more



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productive, produce higher quality, and show higher rates of retention. They display more pride in their companies and share their pride with others. They build customer loyalty. They attract other high-caliber people. You need all of these things to win.⁴

He divides leaders into two types—those who are drivers, and those who are builders. Drivers characteristically put results first, stress economic value, make decisions, focus on what and when, have a short-term focus, are critical, crack the whip, and are in your face. Builders put people and process first, stress organizational capabilities, involve others, focus on who and how, have a long-term focus, stay behind the scenes, and are more positive.⁵ Either type can be successful, provided there is some degree of flexibility. The characteristics that factor into this success include trust, patience, and communication skills.

Not everyone will recognize or appreciate the sports examples and framework of the book, but those who enjoy it will learn a great deal about building a winning, well-functioning team in the library. Excellent, fast reading, and very worthwhile.

The Enthusiastic Employee states, “Managers at all levels often spend an inordinate amount of time with ‘difficult’ individual employees.”⁶ But what about the rest of the staff? Sirota, Mischkind, and Meltzer present an interesting look at the premise that staff performance is not always at the highest level. There are ways to turn staff into the enthusiastic employees of the title. This can be done by giving employees what they really want. The book is based on thirty years of research on employee attitudes and data drawn from a database of approximately 2.5 million surveys generated from organizations in eighty-nine countries.⁷ The authors disagree with many current ideas on the lack of employee loyalty, such as the emphasis on higher needs (self-actualization) over more basic needs (pay) and the importance of minimal management. Instead, they conclude that the major reasons people keep their job or leave their employers are equity and fair treatment in these arenas—physiological (safe environment), economic, and psychological (respectful treatment); a sense of achievement drawn from challenging work and the acquisition of new skills; recognition; and camaraderie or positive interactions in the workplace.

Each of these reasons is explored in detail in later chapters. A total picture is presented in the final section, “Bringing It All Together: The Total Organization Culture—and How to Change It.” The book should encourage managers to put some of the ideas to work. Bullets are used to highlight important points. The role of face time, respect, positive personality, and sincere partnership cannot be overemphasized. Highly recommended.

Praise Is the Easiest Way to Let People Know They Are Appreciated

Motivation and Work Behavior is a textbook that covers a number of aspects of motivation in the work environment.⁸ These include popular theories as well as recent research. The authors discuss six conceptual approaches (intrinsic motivation, equity theory, organizational justice, reinforcement, goal setting, and social cognitive theory and self-efficacy), and such aspects of motivation as social, cross-cultural, and personal differences. Lastly, they review the role of rewards, punishment, and creativity. Each chapter begins with a short introduction followed by several articles, most of which were previously published in major journals, that develop the topic. There are extensive references and case studies for further discussion. An excellent text. Many managers may want to scan the table of contents or the index and pick those chapters to read that strike a cord. At least give the introductory “Motivation in Organizations,” and the concluding chapter, “Motivating Creativity and Innovation,” a look.

The Power of We is about a leadership principle “based on putting aside our individual concerns in order to work together toward a greater good.”⁹ It embodies collaboration, teamwork and positive behavior. Tisch sees this as a return to the golden rule of “do unto others as you would have others do unto you.”

By empowering partnerships you gain friends and allies; reduce obstacles as well as time and energy devoted to conflict; gain a “positive, ethical, and friendly place to work, which attracts better employees”; and create an overall better work environment.¹⁰ Partnership requires genuine commitment, creativity, compromise, consistency, flexibility, and fairness; all behaviors most workers would appreciate. These ideas are developed in subsequent chapters. The style is first-person narrative. It is easy reading, with a number of tips in highlighted boxes. Each chapter has an illustrative profile to emphasize its message.

The epilogue includes twelve tips:

1. Never start a paragraph with I: Copernicus proved it—the universe doesn’t revolve around you.
2. Listen carefully: You never learn a thing while your mouth is open.
3. Make it a win/win situation: You can’t have it all—where would you keep it?
4. Do your homework: What you don’t know can hurt you.
5. Be media savvy: Your fifteen minutes of fame is coming—are you ready?
6. Be creative: Learn to think upside-down, inside-out, and sideways.
7. Empower others: You can’t perform a symphony if you’re a one-person band.
8. Reinforce the brand: Build the legend of you.
9. Take a job, any job: Don’t be afraid of starting at the bottom—you’ll have nowhere to go but up.

10. Pay attention to detail: Perfection is in trifles—but perfection is no trifle.
11. Network, network, network: You've got something in common with everybody.
12. Be good to people: It's the golden rule, stupid.¹¹

These tips sum up in a short, humorous manner the gist of the book. Tisch's personal account of the aftermath of September 11, 2001, and the power of we that was demonstrated then is extremely convincing and touching, and strongly illustrates his point. This is practical, down-to-earth advice from a leading businessman who has a lot to say to every manager as well as those who are managed. This is a must read.

Leadership Is the Process of Getting Everyone to the Place They Are Supposed to Go

The subtitle of *When Fish Fly is Lessons for Creating a Vital and Energized Workplace from the World Famous Pike Place Fish Market*.¹² This alone might be enough to encourage people to read this book. What can we learn from a large fish market in Seattle famous for tossing fish to and fro? A great deal. The authors take a serious subject and use first-person storytelling with humor and lots of fish allusions to show "what it meant to be world famous was to make a difference in the people we touched."¹³ If that can be said about a fish market, how true that can be for a library. As the saying goes, give a person a fish and they eat for a day, teach a person to research fish and they can have a career! Yokoyama pledged to make a difference in the lives of the people who come in to the fish market, empower the people he works with, and "demonstrate what is possible when you empower your employees."¹⁴

The book's chapters discuss getting the entire staff to buy into the vision and become part of the team; the importance of being, in contrast to merely doing; and the importance of what Yokoyama calls positive intentions. He states, "Our secret to success lies in our commitment to being who we say we are. Just be it."¹⁵ It is also important to have productive communication. Yokoyama notes that when "staff is listening to make a difference and acting from that intention, they have the authority as co-owners of the vision to do what it takes for the customer."¹⁶ Feedback should be given and received graciously.

The chapter titled "Turning Workplace Challenges into Breakthroughs: Unsnagging the Line" is must reading. This is an excellent book. It is short, very easy to read, and humorous, yet delivers advice that should be heeded by all.

Stating "we think of ourselves as undercover business therapists" Crowley and Elster have written a book to help deal with "the psychological challenge of working with oth-

ers."¹⁷ The chapter "Change Your Reaction or Change Your Life" focuses on unhooking, the act of managing oneself and taking control of one's work life. This can be done physically, mentally, and verbally. Results can be a calmer attitude and the release of negative emotions. By behaving differently, we can help change the work environment. Examples include not participating in gossip or other negative behaviors, or responding to a workplace situation without anger or judgment to solve a problem rather than place blame. Considering the alternatives indicates how beneficial this can be. Other chapters cover boundaries, roles (including the martyr, hero, and caregiver), and working with different management types.

There are exercises at the end of each chapter. The book includes easy-to-read, short, anecdotal descriptions of people and situations, including a library example. It might open your eyes to better understanding those around you and provide some excellent personnel strategies. Excellent, entertaining, and informative.

Trust Is What Happens When Values and Behaviors Match Up

The ROI of Human Capital describes "human capital as a combination of factors such as the following: the traits one brings to the job: intelligence, energy, a generally positive attitude, reliability, and commitment. One's ability to learn: aptitude, imagination, creativity, and what is often called 'street smarts' . . . One's motivation to share information and knowledge: team spirit and goal orientation."¹⁸

Although his book is set within the corporate context, there are applications and information that have relevance to the library. Fitz-enz states:

Today, the availability of information changes the relationship between worker and supervisor. It shifts power to the keepers of knowledge, no matter where they sit on the organization chart. This demands a new form of leadership. Leaders have to create conditions in which new visions, concepts, and languages for workplace relations can emerge.¹⁹

While this is true in the corporate work, it could be said to be totally ingrained in the library world. Read for an intriguing look at an important topic. The book contains a great deal of useful information to address the crucial area of people in the workplace. While it is easy to focus on hardware and systems, the real software—people—are at the core of everything. As he states, "The only thing that is more satisfying than seeing data that show our accomplishments is having our supervisor see the results of our labor and compliment us on a job well done."²⁰ The book can help this become a reality.

Each of Us Has the Power to Recognize the Goodness in Others

Tell Me How I'm Doing recounts a story about training sessions for a group of managers.²¹ During these sessions, dialogue, stories, metaphors, and training tricks demonstrate the value of feedback. The coach states feedback "is the foundation of all interpersonal relationships. It determines how people think, how they feel, how they react to others, and to a large extent, it determines how people act in their daily responsibilities."²² The dimensions of feedback are to have a plan, be specific, focus on behaviors, be balanced and relevant, use effective styles, describe feelings, and listen.²³ There is clear discussion of the four types of feedback: supportive, corrective, insignificant, and abusive. This book provides practical advice and realistic examples. The interventions described in this book may be more than you or your organization need, and the personal aspects of the story may make it seem a little like one of those television help shows, but the underlying theme can be very useful. Constructive, respectful feedback is a skill all should understand.

Why Pride Matters More Than Money studies organizations to see "what motivates people to form emotional attachments that go way beyond the amount of monetary compensation offered."²⁴ Katzenbach "explores how leaders at any level in almost any organizational setting can motivate higher employee performance by capitalizing on the anticipation of feeling proud and making others proud, too."²⁵ Stories about people and companies, illustrative sidebars, bullets, and case studies are informative. The type of pride that "goeth before a fall" does not apply to this book. The author rather endorses a constructive pride that can be the difference between the well-functioning, respected unit and a dysfunctional, much-avoided unit. Easy to read, and well worth the time and effort.

The Quest for Loyalty pulls no punches. Cook starts the forward with "My business philosophy is simple: If you can't keep the customers you have, you don't deserve any new ones."²⁶ Developing employee and customer loyalty is directly relevant to the library. Investor loyalty could be interpreted as alumni and donor loyalty. He continues by stating that the goal of the employees dealing with customers is "to create apostles, to do whatever it takes to make customers very glad that they use our products. . . . Your job is to make them feel so good about working with us that they'll go out and tell five friends."²⁸ Isn't that really what we want—employees so committed to the goals of the library that our patrons do exactly that, market our phenomenal resources and services for us?

Loyalty has changed and it needs to be earned constantly. It is easy to lose loyalty and difficult to retain. While this book is written with a for-profit company focus, there is still a great deal that can apply to libraries. In particular, read "Trust and the Virtual Organization," "Service Comes First," "Zero Defections," and "Why Satisfied Customers

Defect" as well as the four chapters in Part V, "Tools for Building Customer Loyalty," especially "Do You Want to Keep Your Customers Forever?" Very interesting book with much that can be reinterpreted for librarians.

Leading with Integrity Means Being the Person You Want Others to Be

It might be almost ten years old, but Abbott's article is worth reading.²⁹ This review of the library profession still reverberates and presents an interesting look at what makes a profession, how librarianship fits into the schema, and where we are (still) going. He states, "The future of librarianship thus hinges on what happens to the perpetually changing work of the profession in three contexts: the context of larger social and cultural forces, the context of other competing occupations, and the context of competing organizations and commodities."³⁰ The changes in the profession are continual, one of the dependable aspects in the profession. It would seem it is also one of the strengths. Very thought-provoking and worthwhile reading.

The message implied in our opening scenario about the self-centered librarian was that it is not important that all of us gain, that all of us get our boat. Only the boat, the gain of that one late person is important. However, the wealth of resources included here indicates that this is a short-sighted and unproductive attitude. In the library world we have lots of boats to get across rather perilous water. Pulling together strengthens us all. Pulling together may be the only way to get to the other shore safely. And as the recently retired Greenspan states so eloquently, it is personally satisfying to aid in the success of others. We all gain, the library gains, and the customer is the ultimate winner of a united, supportive workforce, whether we label them professional workers or not. Professionalism is not only an academic preparation; it is an attitude, an environment, and a way of behaving.

Author's note: All headers are taken from The Leadership Pill.

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