



or 10 things that great libraries know and maybe you don't...

Karen Hyman, Nebraska Library Association/Nebraska Educational Media Association Conference, October 5, 2011

What gives your library the best chance of continuous success for many generations of technology, people and economic well-being?
What can jumpstart your library's moves to greatness?

It's a different world. Great libraries believe they can be better than they are and continually focus on making that happen.

1. **Great libraries have great leadership.** Leaders set an inspiring vision, are confident that they can notice and fix what doesn't work, take care of business, ask questions and listen to the answers, model the behavior they want from others.
2. **Visionary leadership relies on wonderful staff.** You want passionate, enthusiastic staff. How do you get them? Hire some. Inspire, liberate and cherish the staff you have. Your front line staff are your heroes. Make passion and enthusiasm driving values of your organization.
3. **Visionary leadership and great staff can create a great culture.** To build a great culture...involve staff, trustees and the larger community (users and non-users); set an inspiring vision; develop core competencies & expectations of everyone at all levels; reinforce the vision in job descriptions, hiring, assignments, library PR, website and everyday choices.
4. **The library belongs to the customers. Visionary leadership and great staff are there to make the experience that the customers love. There is no alternative.** If we are not the library that our customers want, that's our fault.
5. **Great libraries practice rapid recovery.** Good processes help people get more done. Bad processes try to prevent recoverable mistakes. (Courtesy of Netflix).
6. **Great libraries know the strategic value of their library to their community.** Develop and maintain connections with constituencies in the community and make sure they know how your library can address **their** problems.
7. **Great libraries seize opportunity.** Be ready when opportunity or trouble comes knocking.
8. **Great libraries have heart and soul.** Emotional bonding, a sense of humor and a heartfelt connection make it 3 times more likely that customers will stay loyal.
9. **Great libraries look cool.** Are there shortcuts to looking cool? Merchandise. Paint. Hang a banner. Put some big pictures of people on your website and in your library. Do a wordle at www.wordle.net Smile...now.
10. **Great libraries don't wait to be great. Things that might work in many settings...**
 - Make sure people know what happened to your services. Deliver that message in a positive, multifaceted, controlled manner.
 - Take advantage of any opportunities to restructure, reorganize and outsource. Plan NOW.
 - Make choices. Action increases energy and improves morale.
 - Look for and go with robust strategies.
 - Enjoy your accomplishments. The good old day could be today.

5 Things you can start today

- Set a simple, inspiring and usable vision, share it with your customers and potential customers, and make it the touchstone for all your other choices.
- Develop core competencies/expectations of everyone at all levels to match that vision in terms of enthusiasm, flexibility, etc. Define the job that you want done and celebrate what you want to foster. Practice rapid recovery. Notice what's not working and respond quickly to customer and staff feedback.
- Change your look. Increase the coolness factor of your staff, your space and your website.
- Go the extra mile. Put heart & soul and a spirit of fun into your library service.

Contact information: Karen Hyman karendhyman@gmail.com

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