

Building an integrated work force through shared values: the Worcester Library and History Centre

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1. Introduction

The Worcester Library and History Centre (WLHC) is a groundbreaking partnership between the University of Worcester and Worcestershire County Council, who are responsible for providing the County's public library service. The Centre, which is due to open in a landmark new building in July 2012, will be the first of its kind in Europe in terms of the scope of services offered and the level of integration planned (www.wlhc.org.uk). All Worcestershire residents and University of Worcester staff and students will have access to a fully-integrated public and university library; the records and archives held by the Worcestershire Record Office; the Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeology Service and the Worcestershire Hub Customer Service Centre, which provides a first point of contact for council services

The project partners have an ambitious vision for the new centre (Worcester Library and History Centre Design Statement, 2007, pp13-19), and have worked together with stakeholders to identify the main areas of activity that need to be undertaken over the next two years to prepare staff, services and service users for the move to the new building. These areas of activity have been grouped into eleven themes, called Workstreams, each of which has its own vision and action plan and reports regularly to a coordinating Service Development Board.

2. The staffing challenge

It was recognised early on that the staff working at the WLHC will be critical to the success of the project. The partners are working to provide an impressive building, full of innovative ICT opportunities, exciting events and activities and a wide and accessible range of resources and services. But these may well be overlooked or devalued by visitors if they do not receive a genuine welcome and excellent customer service. This belief is supported by Bundy's review of joint use libraries, which concluded that ultimately it is the staff who make partnerships work, and that staff resistance to working together is one of the chief reasons for failure of joint use facilities (Matthews and Calvert, 2007). To add to the challenge, it is central to the WLHC vision that all services are fully integrated. This means in practice that rather than having separate desks for each of the services in the building, there will be 'roving' staff on each floor. Customers will be able to approach any of these members of staff, regardless of the nature of their query, and receive appropriate assistance whether that is a direct answer to their question or referral to a relevant specialist. This is a similar approach to that adopted at Newcastle's new City Library (Foster, 2010).

The staff who will be responsible for providing this positive experience are currently working within the specialist services that will be coming together in the new Centre. By the time of opening, all the staff, regardless of their background, will need to view themselves as 'WLHC staff', with a single purpose and vision, and appropriate knowledge of all service areas. This will be a challenging concept for some staff as they currently have their own specialist knowledge and skills which they are understandably proud of and keen to retain. The move will require them to work closely together with colleagues from the other services, and will expose them to

different customer bases than those they are used to. Calvert (2010) describes this as one of the most demanding roles in the profession. However it is encouraging to note that staff at Newcastle are positive about their new way of working despite initial concerns. They are now successfully handling greatly increased numbers of enquiries and customer satisfaction is high (Foster, 2010).

The Staffing and Volunteering workstream has the job of bringing the staff together from all the participating services, and helping them make the transition to the new working environment. Over the next two years, there will be the development and articulation of a number of policies and processes, for instance a well developed volunteers policy with associated processes for recruiting, monitoring and supporting volunteers. There will also need to be a considerable amount of training and support to give staff the skills and confidence they need to succeed in their roles. In addition, to support the roving staff and reduce the need to take customers to specific points in the building for assistance, support systems such as knowledge bases and communication technologies are being explored.

But before any of the specific training starts, the process of developing a sense of common identity as 'WLHC staff' is already underway. The importance placed on this is reflected in the first part of the Staffing and Volunteering workstream's vision:

"by the time of opening, there will be a sense of being one integrated staff body with shared values and commitment to the vision of the WLHC and a clear customer focus"

3. Progressing the Vision through shared values

This vision statement contains a number of concepts and processes which fit together to provide a model for achieving staff integration over the next 2 years. This is shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.

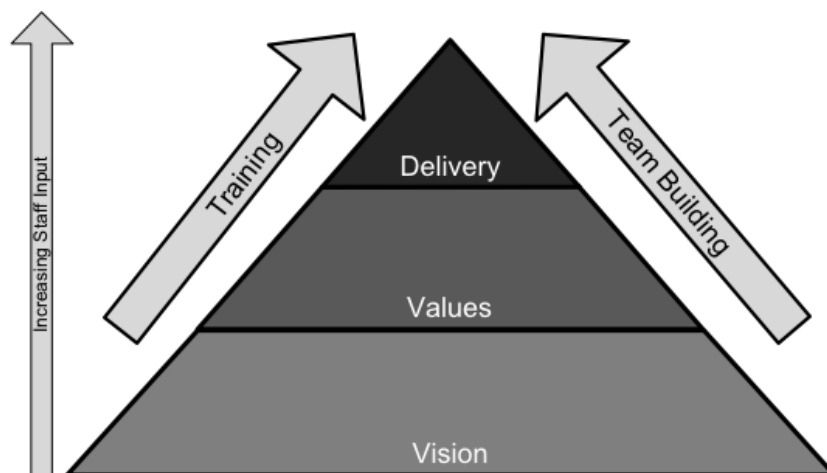


Figure 1 Model for achieving staff integration

Underpinning the whole change management process that will be taking place is the need to keep communicating the overall vision of the WLHC and helping staff understand it and their role in fulfilling it. Kotter (2006) observes that successful

organizational change is strongly associated with a clear picture of the future. To emphasise this, he describes a company that provided no vision for change, but issued thick paper manuals of the processes that would be used to achieve change. “Not surprisingly”, Kotter writes, “most of the employees with whom I talked were either confused or alienated”. (Kotter, 2006 p. 244).

One way of helping staff engage with an organisational vision is to develop and articulate a set of core values. Core values can be described as principles that guide an organisation’s conduct (JISC, 2009). They should describe the priorities, and guide the behaviour and attitudes of the staff working within the organisation. They are important because they “can support a mission statement, guide the day-to-day operations... and help...develop a sense of direction and purpose among its employees.” (Lawler, 2006, p.551). It has been argued that where values are embedded in a company, they can also lead to greater employee loyalty and more adaptability to change (Ibid, p.552). For instance, Levi Strauss extensively promote their mission and values on office and factory walls and are regularly listed as one of the best United States companies to work for. (Lawler, 2006, p.552). Where there are clear vision and values providing a framework for everyday behaviour, decision making can be delegated to those staff who are dealing regularly with customers, increasing their job satisfaction. (Davidson, 2005, p.34).

For all these reasons, therefore, the concept of values is viewed by the workstream as an integral part of building an integrated work force. Calvert (2010) refers to the difficulty of merging staff in joint use libraries, and the tendency for them to maintain their old loyalties. There is some indication in the literature that although librarians from different sectors share many of the same values, e.g. service to the user, they may prioritise them differently (Calvert, 2010). By establishing jointly agreed, core values early in the process, we provide opportunities for staff to understand, engage with, and ultimately deliver the project vision; to think ahead about the way they will be behaving and working together in the new building and to start developing the new culture they will be working within.

However, workstream members believe that just telling staff about the vision and imposing values would not be enough to bring the staff together and create a sense of involvement and ownership in the project. To achieve this, we wanted to give staff a way to input into the planning process and become increasingly involved as time went on. This concept is indicated by the density of hatching in Figure 1. The value of actively involving staff is confirmed by Lawler (2006), who has looked at examples from many companies, and concludes that involving staff is the key to making corporate mission and values statements have impact. The Co-Operative Group in the UK used a rebranding exercise to successfully engage staff; it had the added benefit, very relevant to the situation in Worcester, of developing contacts between staff in different parts of the business. “People felt that although they belonged to a large, diverse operation, they had common goals” (Morgan, 2006). Conversely, Davidson (2005, p.262) claims that two major pitfalls to implementing successful vision and values programmes are lack of consultation, and failure of management to listen to staff. Aiken and Keller’s review of change management literature considers that managers “too often neglect the thoughts, feelings and beliefs that, in turn, drive behaviour.” (Aiken and Keller, 2009).

Once it had been decided to develop a set of core values, it became a natural way to involve the staff who will be working at the WLHC. A series of cross-service workshops was developed with the aim of developing the values, and at the same time starting the team building process.

The workshop objectives were:

- To provide an opportunity for front line staff to contribute to the development of service standards for the new Worcester Library and History Centre.
- To help staff appreciate the importance of shared values in service delivery.
- To give staff the opportunity to learn, informally, something about other services that will be in the new building.
- To allow staff from different workplaces to meet in a relaxed environment and get to know each other.

The output from these workshops would be the staffs' own ideas about shared values that could be developed by the workstream and then forwarded to the Service Development Board with the recommendation that they be adopted for use in future recruitment and staff development activity related to the WLHC.

Although not formal objectives, the workshops had the additional benefit of requiring the staff to understand and focus on the overall vision of the WLHC and gave them a chance to articulate some of the concerns and questions they had about what the changes would mean for them.

4. Format of the workshops

The workshop programme was developed following discussion with a member of the University's Leadership Development Unit, who also facilitated the sessions. It was repeated three times in order to give as many staff as possible the opportunity to attend. Invitations were sent to all staff with a strong customer focus within the public and university library services, the University IT service, the County Record Office and History Centre, the County Archaeology service and the Customer Hub. Numbers were capped at 30 per session to maximise interactivity and participation of all the delegates.

An ice breaker activity gave delegates an initial chance to learn a bit about each other, and was followed by a brief presentation about the nature and importance of values. Examples from various well known companies were used to demonstrate how well thought out values can be specific, inspiring, and reflect the sector and nature of a business. For instance, most delegates guessed that the following statements were some of Google's core values (Google, 2009):

There's always more information out there
The need for information crosses all borders
You can be serious without a suit
Great just isn't good enough

Delegates were then reminded of the WLHC vision, and divided into groups to discuss what they thought the staff values should be. This was left completely open for them to decide themselves, with no suggestions or guidance from managers or the workstream members. In order to provide a focus of their discussions, each group was asked to produce a poster with images to illustrate their key values. These were presented to the other delegates who each voted for the three values they thought most important. The workstream facilitator drew the session together by analysing the results of the voting to identify the most popular values. Delegates were then told what would happen next, before the session closed.



Plate 1
One of the posters



Plate 2
The same poster after voting

A record of each workshop captured all the suggested values, grouped into themes, and the result of the voting (see table 1 for an example).

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Cool + Classy	Iconic & Sustainable	Sustainable / Ethical Enduring values Green Forward looking	Welcoming Open Arms - Inclusive
Innovation	Inclusivity "All in the same boat" Provide a consistent service	Accessibility Tolerance / co-operation	Team Work Open mind to "other ways of doing things"
Welcoming &	Aspiration	Inspirational	Community

Friendly	Challenges & opportunities	“life changing” Customer experience	inclusion Wellbeing - Fun
Global scope / local relevance	Individuality within teams	Quality of Life Wellbeing / enjoyment	Life Long Learning: provides challenges supports aspirations “A bridge to Culture”
Integration	Traditional Values Continuity of service Smooth service	Life long learning opportunities	Customer Service “ultimate satisfaction guaranteed”
Excellence & learning	Communication	Inclusivity “Something for everyone”	
Inclusivity	Secure / comfortable	Connectivity # World # Community # Information Access to resources	
Social Inclusion / Enjoyable / Fun		New Technology Embrace new technologies Open to new experiences	

Most voted for values:

Cool, classy but fun

Respect for differences within a consistent framework (users & staff)

Staff Team work providing a seamless user experience of varied services

Secure / comfortable environment

Inspirational / Aspirational

Life Long Learning

Team working valued

Open Mind – new perspectives - changes

Table 1 : outcomes from one of the workshops**5. Feedback from the workshops**

Delegates from the workshops were invited to complete a short survey via Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com) and 33 of the 73 attendees did so.

Overall, feedback was very positive, with some thoughtful comments made. It was clear that many delegates had particularly welcomed the opportunity to meet with staff from other services and would like to have further opportunities to do so.

Suggestions for future meetings included further work on the vision; discussion of working practices, both current and future and where staff would be located; how customer services would be delivered and managing teams made up of staff from across the organisations.

Other positive aspects commented upon were the opportunity to participate and be consulted, the activities themselves, and the informality of the sessions, particularly the lack of 'management speak'. Some delegates were less keen on the format of the activities, and some would have liked more time to chat and get to know each other.

Delegates were asked what would make them feel that their views had been acted upon; there were relatively few responses to this question but there was agreement that seeing a written values statement based on their work would be valuable.

Feedback relating to the specific objectives of the workshops is shown below in Table 2.

Objective	Very or partially successful
To allow staff from different workplaces to meet in a relaxed environment and get to know each other	91%
To provide an opportunity for front line staff to contribute to the development of service standards for the new Worcester Library and History Centre.	84%
To give staff the opportunity to learn, informally, something about other services that will be in the new building.	79%
To help staff appreciate the importance of shared values in service delivery.	94%

Table 2: Quantitative feedback on the workshop objectives

It can be seen that the workshops were highly successful at introducing the concept of values to the staff, and as a first opportunity to meet each other. Most attendees felt it gave them an opportunity to contribute to service standards. No time was formally given to discuss each others services, but the format of the activities, particularly the group discussions seems to have successfully provided a way for staff to glean some useful information.

6. Building on the values and next steps

The outcomes from the three workshops were analysed and used to construct a single set of values. These were discussed and considerably amended by the Staffing and Volunteering workstream members, who wanted to find a visual way of presenting the information as well as keeping the language informal as this had been appreciated during the workshops. The draft document was then sent to the Service Development Board for further discussion and approval. Figure 2 shows the final

version. This process all took place within a couple of months, so that delegates would be reassured that their work had been taken seriously and acted upon.

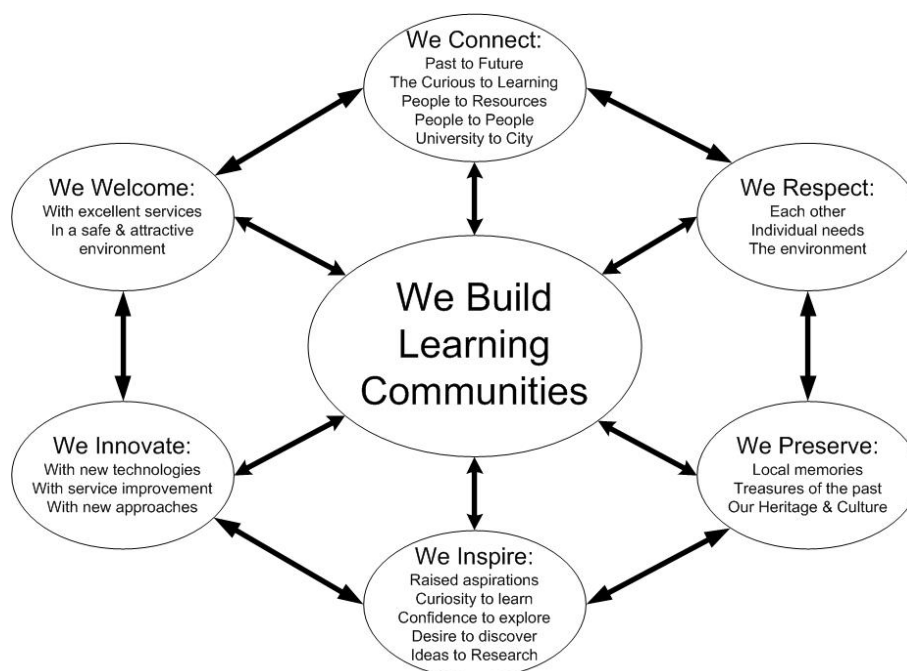


Figure 2 WLHC Staff Values

The values were circulated to all the staff who had been to the workshops, and subsequently to everyone who will be working in the new centre, with the opportunity to feed back comments.

In the same way that reminding people of the vision helps them to engage with it, so there needs to be an organisational commitment to constantly reiterate values and to demonstrate them in practice. For instance, Johnson and Johnson, the pharmaceutical company, have the value "our first responsibility is to our customers". Adherence to this value was demonstrated when they withdrew all relevant products from shops when there was a possibility they had been tampered with. Levi Strauss demonstrated their commitment to their value of respecting their employees by not using suppliers with poor work conditions (Lawler, 2006, p.552), even though this impacted on their profitability.

The values are now routinely referred to in job adverts and included in staff induction materials, in order to start embedding them well in advance of the opening of the new library.

Once the values had been agreed, a session was set up with service managers, again facilitated by the Leadership Development Unit. The aim of this session was to start identifying the behaviours we would expect of staff if they were 'living out' the values. This work is still in the early stages, but two levels of behaviour have been identified, described as 'expected' and 'desirable'. A sample is shown in Table 3.

Values:	Expected Behaviours	Desirable Behaviours
We Welcome:		
Excellent Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meet agreed SLAs, customer service behaviour standards etc. to meet basic customer expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Exceed customer expectations by suggesting alternative solutions, referring on problems etc
Safe & Attractive Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take personal responsibility for helping keep the building environment attractive ▪ Be aware of and promote customer and staff safety throughout the opening hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continually refresh the look of the building e.g. through imaginative displays ▪ Anticipate and be able to proactively deal with challenging customer behaviours
We Respect:		
Each Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be polite and supportive, listen to each other at all times ▪ Recognise and show respect for each others' specialisms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop rapport and relationships ▪ Work effectively together ▪ Actively find out more about each others' specialisms
Individual Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recognise customers as individuals and treat them fairly and with dignity ▪ Build individual relationships with customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Proactively meet and develop means to support needs
The Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work within stated guidelines ▪ Take personal responsibility for aspects you can control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Challenge and improve guidelines

Table 3: Sample Values and generic behaviours expected of all staff

All service managers are currently in the process of discussing the behaviours document with their staff, and personalising it to reflect their team's priorities and specialisms. This is in recognition of the staff concern to maintain a sense of identity and having their specialisms recognised within the larger entity of the WLHC.

Further work is underway to look at other ways to embed the values and make them an integral part of the staff culture at all levels. This is a vital part of the process, if they are to have a long term impact, as discussed above.

Now that the groundwork has been laid, attention is turning to developing a training programme, the final strand in the model (figure 1). It was important to consider values first, since it is those that will drive employee behaviour. However, it is recognised in change management literature that building skills and talent ('capability') are also vital for change (Aiken and Keller, 2009). The training programme itself is another opportunity to involve staff and give them a degree of ownership. So rather than imposing a training programme on the staff, it is intended to develop it with them. BP took this approach when designing a training programme for frontline leaders and found that managers who have gone through the programme perform significantly better than those who have not. This is attributed to the fact that psychological studies have shown that people are far more committed to the outcome when they are able to make choices for themselves (Aiken and Keller, 2009). So for the WLHC, work is currently underway to collate and understand the kinds of daily tasks and enquiries dealt with in the individual services. Workshops are planned for the autumn at which this information will be shared with the staff, and discussions held to establish the training they perceive they will need, and the ways in which this training might be delivered. This will be in the context of the values established: so, for instance, it will be expected to encompass customer service training (*We welcome*), training in supporting customers with disabilities, or young people (*We respect*) and training in the confident use of the technologies installed in the building (*We innovate*).

7. Conclusions

The Worcester Library and History Centre offers exciting opportunities to provide the people of Worcestershire with seamless access to a wide range of services. However, this vision will require staff to be fully committed to the concept, and demonstrating this by the way they deliver customer service. In order to achieve this, they will need to feel part of the integrated entity, whilst retaining personal pride in their specialisms but being open to the need to attain new knowledge and skills.

The concept of core values provides a way to influence the future culture of the WLHC and give staff a common framework to work to. Involving the staff in the process of deciding the values was a valuable way to start the process of forging them into an integrated team and becoming a part of the project. Positive feedback has encouraged the workstream to continue the collaborative approach whilst developing a training programme.

Work continues to be done to ensure that the values become embedded in the organisation and genuinely affect the everyday attitudes and behaviour of staff at all levels.

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