Organizational Culture and Organizational Change: How Shared Values, Rituals, and Sagas can Facilitate Change in an Academic Library

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Organizational culture is defined as the shared norms, values, and beliefs of an academic library. Values are the building blocks of organizational culture and are derived either from the organization's leaders or from organizational traditions with the latter making for stronger and more enduring values. The culture of a library expresses itself through symbols, sagas, rites, and rituals. By understanding the culture of a library, one gains an understanding of the underlying values and assumptions of the organization and what motivates and drives the behavior of those within the library. Change in an organization creates uncertainty in an organization. This uncertainty creates fear among those in the organization making change management very difficult. Building change on and around the core values of the library's culture makes implementing the change less uncertain and unpredictable thereby making the librarians and library staff less stressed and fearful. Emphasizing an organization's values, especially how the change will enhance those values, strikes at the very heart of those within the organization and makes them more open to and accepting of change.

Organizational Culture

When asked to describe the library, different groups on campus will respond in different ways. Students may note the computers and quiet study rooms; faculty might mention ILL and the online journals; and librarians may point to the organization and collection of scholarship. All of these descriptions are true, but they are only part of what the library is. Any organization is more than simply their mission statement and services offered. Organizations are societies complete with their own values that dictate behavior and norms that provide a frame for members to interpret reality (Morgan 1997). In other words, all organizations, no matter their type, grow and nurture their own culture, an organizational culture.

Culture is an *en vogue* term in much leadership literature of the day, but the phrase is usually given superficial treatment. When an organizational leader speaks of the need to develop a "culture of sustainability" or a "culture of ethics," this is not the same as the deep, complex concept of organizational culture. Organizational members tacitly understand their own culture but usually can not convey verbally what their culture is and what it means; they just understand how things are done. Through shared values, heroes and heroines, rituals and ceremonies, and a cultural network organizational culture creates a sense of identity, community, and sense of belonging amongst its members (Deal and Kennedy 1983 and Jordan 2003). Culture provides meaning to the work of the organi-

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zation by allowing members to be part of something larger than themselves, ensures members abide by organizational norms, and frames the outside world so its members can more easily interpret reality (Smircich 1983). Culture provides sustainability to an organization and maintains social cohesion and solidarity amongst those in the organization (Cartwright and Baron 2002). An organization's effectiveness is influenced, either directly or indirectly, by its culture and the prevailing mindset and overall happiness it engenders amongst the organization's employees (Gregory et al. 2009).

Organizational culture emerges from the external environment, history, and day-to-day operations of the organization. The interactions of the organization and its members shapes and molds the culture as does the longevity of the organization, the richness of its shared history, how well culture is taught to new members, and the values and beliefs of its founders. An organization without a long history, strong founding values, or steadfast personnel will have a weak culture (Schein 1990). Values are the foundation of organizational culture and are the strongest when they have stood firm over the course of an organization's history. No matter how well meaning, values imposed from the top of an organization are the weakest ones in an organization.

The "old guard," seasoned members of the culture, teach the culture to new members. Teaching organizational culture begins with the hiring process and is carried on in a plethora of ways, both formal and informal, including training workshops, HR programs, employee stories, and ceremonies (Goffee and Jones 1998 and Schein 1990). How well new members learn the culture determines the future strength of the culture. The culture becomes stronger when it is learned and accepted completely, and weakens over time when newcomers are only partially taught the organization's culture.

Organizational culture is expressed through cultural artifacts like symbols, rites and rituals, and sagas. Jordan (2003) defines a symbol as any object that represents another object which holds a deep meaning for the culture's members. Librarians value books because they are symbolic of information, and access to information is a deeply held value in librarianship. A symbol can take any number of forms other than the physical including logos, slogans, and images. Jordan (2003) argues symbols are the most important

part of any organizational culture as all cultures are composed of symbols. A rite or ritual has a manifest purpose in the normal day-to-day operations of the organization, but they also fulfill a latent or symbolic role by reinforcing the values of the organization through the active participation of its members. Sagas are organizational histories that blend fact and fiction to explain the current beliefs and norms of a culture. Sagas often arise from an organization in chaos and tell how the members banded together to save and advance the organization. Sagas are crucial to understanding an organizational culture as they provide a glimpse into the past.

Organizational Change

Efforts to initiate change in organizations are largely unsuccessful (Higgs and Rowland 2010). Change is complex and failure can occur at many levels. Change agents can bring about their own downfall through a lack of communication and the mismanagement of employee trust (Ford, Ford, and D'Amelio 2008) or by trying to undertake too much change at once. Most change efforts, however, are unsuccessful because of resistance, either active or passive, of those within the organization. People resist change for a variety of reasons. Employees may actively work against a change initiative because they feel they have no stake in the change process, do not want to take on the increased work change creates, are concerned about their lack of needed skills to thrive in the organization after the change, or are worried they might lose their jobs (Kanter 2012). Change means the elimination of the status quo causing individuals and groups to lose their power in an organization. These employees will work against change to ensure they keep their power. Mostly change creates uncertainty, and people organize their lives in such a way so as to maximize their day-to-day consistency. A large amount of congruity allows one to see life as "orderly, predictable, familiar, and safe" (Bailey and Raelin 2010). Change makes life seem less safe and orderly, thereby causing those undergoing change to feel threatened.

The literature is filled with tips and advice on how to manage change and overcome or diffuse resistance. Some of the most familiar methods include implementing change slowly, understanding the reasons behind employee resistance, engaging everyone in the organization, instituting a system of incentives and punishment, and personnel turnover (Hansen

2012 and Askenas 2011 and Musselwhite and Plouffe 2011). Of course leadership plays a large role in the level of resistance and the success of change. Leaders who are act as role models during change, play a visible role in the change effort, and communicate honestly and completely are often more successful at managing change (Musselwhite and Plouffe 2011 and Merrell 2012).

Decreasing resistance to change is important because the attitudes of those within the organization greatly influence the success of a change project. Two kinds of commitment to change exist: "affective commitment" and "normative commitment." Affective commitment is tied to the employee's perception of how beneficial the change will be, usually to the employee. The foundation from normative commitment comes from the "sense of obligation" an employee has to the organization. Normative commitment is more strongly associated with positive attitudes for change, meaning an organization with high normative commitment is much likelier to experience successful change (Shin, Taylor, and Seo 2012). Other studies have shown a strong fit between employee and organization can lead to "stronger commitment" by and higher retention of employees during change (Meyer, Hecht, Gill, and Toplonytsky 2010). An organizational leader and change agent are able to foster higher levels of normative commitment and better fit between employee and organization through organizational culture.

Organizational Culture and Organizational Change

When it comes to change, organizational culture can be a fickle mistress. Culture can both help and hinder the change process; be both a blessing and a curse when it comes to successfully undergoing change. As was earlier stated, organizational culture consists of the values, norms, and beliefs of its members. Culture provides a sense of identity and the chance to belong to something bigger than oneself. Organizational culture gives its members the certainty and consistency they desire. Any attempt at change within the organization may be seen as a threat to the culture and the employee's identity. Challenges to an organization's culture are met with strong and immediate resistance. To be successful, therefore, a change agent needs to use organizational culture to his/her advantage. Change should be tied to the organizational values; specifically, how this change will make the values the organization holds

deeper and stronger. By strengthening the values, the change agent is making the culture more robust. Further, since values are the foundation of organizational culture, a culture's members hold its values dear. By linking the change to strengthened values, members are more likely to be accepting of the change. Change should also be linked to the positive future of the organization. Those members who are deeply committed to the culture of the organization are also deeply committed to the organization itself. By emphasizing the growth and sustainability of the organization, employees' normative commitment is strengthened.

The sagas of a culture are also particularly valuable during change. Most sagas start with the organization in chaos and tell how it overcame obstacles and bested competitors. The heroes of the past can be used to illuminate the path of the future. Emphasizing how the organization has overcome greater difficulties in the past gives resolve to those in the present situation. Those who are still in the organization who helped overcome great difficulties in the past can be held aloft as heroes in the organization who can provide support, comfort, and advice. Rites and rituals also play a crucial role in organizational change. Rituals perform two crucial tasks: provide certainty and allow for celebration. As was discussed earlier, resistance to change comes about in large part because of the uncertainty change creates. During times of great turmoil, a ritual provides a consistent event around which people schedule their lives giving them a sense of security. No matter how much change and chaos is taking place around them, the knowledge this event will always be at the same time and place gives a person reassurance and comfort. Throughout the change process an organization should celebrate accomplishments and tell success stories (Kanter 2010). This helps those in the organization know their efforts are working and being noticed and gives encouragement to move forward. A ritual is a great time to celebrate these successes. Perhaps it is a weekly donuts and coffee get together or a monthly faculty meeting; whatever the venue the change agent should use the time to create a sense of safety and celebrate the efforts and accomplishments of everyone in the organization.

Organizational Culture and Organizational Change: An Example

At a large urban academic library, a new director's task was daunting. She replaced a director who held

the position for over 20 years, during which time the library changed very little. As a result the library was out-of-date, inefficient, and inexperienced with change. The new director needed to bring the library up-to-date in its practices and procedures while also streamlining and combining many job functions and processes. This meant fast and radical change in the library, an already difficult feat made even more difficult by a lack of people and resources. The new director did many of the standard change agent moves including engaging the librarians and staff and opening up lines of communication, but her best move was to make the change about the values those within the library held dear. While the culture of the library was not deep and robust, several important values were widely held across all departments and positions.

Values

An important and strongly held value in the library, and probably in many academic libraries, was service. Librarians and staff in Public Services, Technical Services, and IT all thought patron service was their main priority. When the new director began changing work flows and procedures in Technical Services, she did not emphasize how much faster the work would get done. Instead she talked about the increased service this would bring to the students, faculty, and staff of the university. The quicker the new items moved from Acquisitions to the shelf, meant the quicker a faculty member could read about the latest research in his/her field. The new director redesigned Public Services merging several point-of-service desks into one, centrally located desk. Again, the emphasis was on the increased service this arrangement would provide. No longer would a confused undergraduate wander around the reference stacks looking for help and leaving the library in frustration. Anyone who now entered the library clearly knew where to go to ask for help.

Freedom and professional autonomy were another shared value of the library. The old director had been a top-down, autocrat who did not share any decision making duties and was not transparent in his decision making. The new director wanted to create a more bottom-approach to decision making in the library. Previously, faculty meetings were called and run by the administration, so the new director handed all the responsibility of those meetings over to the librarians. Along with this move came an increase in faculty governance. The librarians were asked to develop or re-view policies and procedures for promotion, training, new hires, and sabbatical. The staff were also asked to participate more in decision making through the creation of a Staff Development Day. The library staff were charged with deciding on a topic for a day long training session, scheduling the session, booking the room, and inviting the speakers and trainers. These changes strengthened the shared value of autonomy and also made the librarians and staff more active in the running of the library. The Staff Development Day also provided much needed professional development while bringing the people of the library together. This is important because the last shared value of the library was its people. This value was celebrated and enhanced through several rituals, both old and new.

Rituals

Many of the people in the library had worked together for several decades. They valued the time spent with each other and relished any chance to come together as a group to talk, eat, and celebrate each other. Due to recent building renovations, heavy workload, and personnel turnover, the librarians and staff were coming together less often to the regret of almost everyone. The Staff Development Day was one way for the people of the library to come together. The new director set aside a coffee break once a week for the staff to meet and speak with her about the changes in the library, happenings on campus, new grandchildren, vacation plans, or whatever else the staff wanted to discuss. This new ritual not only celebrated the people of the library, it helped foster trust and openness between the administration and staff. The biggest and most loved ritual in the library was the holiday party. The party was a lavish affair bringing together librarians, administrators, staff, and retired employees. While everyone enjoyed the chance to eat good food and take the afternoon off from work, the party was also a celebration of the people of the library. The new director wisely used this as a chance to recognize the great work done over the previous year. The librarians and staff felt the recognition given them was meaningful and special. These rituals also had the added benefit of being a constant during a time of change; they were also held at the same time each week, month, or year.

Sagas

The librarians and staff were full of stories about the library. Many of the staff started working at the library

the day it opened its doors. The two main sagas of the library tell of the library's beginnings and a major renovation to the buildings. Taken together these stories tell of humble beginnings, enduring hardship, but ultimately rising to prominence through hard work and perseverance, exactly what was needed to successfully complete the changes currently underway in the library. Many of the staff were working in the library during the renovation and some were even there during the beginning. They are encouraged to tell their stories as a source of inspiration for their colleagues.

All of these changes mean more work and uncertainty for the librarians and library staff, and while some pushback to the changes occurred, the vast majority gladly went along with the changes because they realized they would be enriching and strengthening their shared values and culture. While many of the librarians and staff had complaints about the library, overall they felt a strong commitment to see it grow and succeed. This is the power of organizational culture and its shared values, beliefs, and norms.

Conclusion

Organizational culture and change are both complex and difficult to grasp. Organizational culture can both advance and impede, help and hinder. Change brings uncertainty and with uncertainty resistance. These two can work together, however, to help implement change. Resistance can be overcome, at least in part, through the use of organizational culture. If the change strengthens the underlying values of a culture, then members of the culture are more likely to accept the change. The use of cultural rituals and sagas also helps to make change more palpable to an organization. This does not mean completing a successful change project will be easy, nor is understanding an organization's culture. But the leader who works to understand the culture of his/her organization can use that knowledge to facilitate change and better run the library.

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