
MAKING IT STICK WITH STAFF

How to Bring the Turning Outward Practice into Your Everyday Work (Or, How to Avoid This Being Just Another Project)

INTRODUCTION

Libraries have demonstrated immense innovation and creativity over the past decade. As the sector has faced unprecedented changes in the way patrons access and use information, libraries have innovated. As a library professional, you have likely added or changed your practice in one or more ways recently. This tool will help you tap that energy, experience and learning to bring the Turning Outward practices into your everyday work.

We also know that libraries face a lot of competing pressures. Just the day-to-day operating of a busy library with limited resources creates real tensions when you are trying to integrate something new. Often we do carve out space to try something, but it can be a challenge to make it part of everyday work. We know that many libraries have this experience with the Turning Outward effort.

WHY USE THIS TOOL?

Many libraries have learned about Turning Outward and have begun new efforts and practices. But going from an interesting project or experiment to making it part of regular practice requires additional work. If you want to deepen the Turning Outward practice in your institution, you can use this discussion to capture and apply knowledge you already have about creating change.

IN ORDER TO USE THIS TOOL EFFECTIVELY, WE ASSUME:

- You can identify innovations that once were new ideas that have now become part of everyday practice at the library (not Turning Outward innovations).
- You have conducted Community Conversations and created a Public Knowledge summary.
- You have worked on applying ideas from Community Conversations or other Turning Outward practices to your work.

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STEPS

- 1 Review the following discussion guide and consider the likely discussion.
- 2 Plan for a two-hour meeting with a relevant staff (and/or volunteer) team. Be sure to include key staff based on the discussion guide and likely topics for discussion. If you prefer, you can divide the discussion into two meetings — one section at each meeting. But we recommend not separating them by more than a few weeks.
- 3 Identify who will be the facilitator so they can review and prepare for the discussion.
- 4 Follow the discussion guide.
- 5 Plan follow-up discussions. Keep coming back to track your effort.

MAKING IT STICK WITH STAFF: DISCUSSION GUIDE

Section One: Reflecting on Successful Change – Before Turning Outward

1. Let's think back on our efforts overall as a library before we were oriented to the Turning Outward practices. We created new initiatives and institutionalized new ways of working as a library.

Let's create a quick list of new things that are now normal for us that weren't just a few years ago.

- Create a list on the chart under "Our Change Efforts."

Our Change Efforts	
<i>Ex. New library card procedures</i>	

2. Looking at this list, what made these changes happen?

- Take a little bit of time. Let people who were involved tell short stories.
- Listen for and record key elements or common characteristics that the group sees as necessary.
- Create a list on the worksheet under "Factors for Success."

Factors for Success	
<i>Ex. Included front-line staff in design and decisions</i>	

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3. When we think about the transition to making these earlier innovations a part of everyday practice, what made it difficult?

What might we do differently if we wanted it to be easier?

- Create a list of factors that made it difficult on the worksheet under "Watch Out For."

Watch Out For	
<i>Ex. Too focused on technology instead of people</i>	

4. Eventually, how did we know these weren't just special projects anymore? What was the signal that it was now part of how we do business?

- Create another list on the worksheet under "Evidence."

Evidence	
<i>Ex. Budget and staff positions matched the effort</i>	

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Section Two: Reflecting on Successful Change – Since Turning Outward

5. Now let's look at the work we have been doing with the Turning Outward training and tools. When we look at the "Factors for Success" list, how many of these would we say are part of our Turning Outward efforts?

- What could we start to do that would take advantage of what we know about making something a part of everyday practice?

6. Now what about the "Watch Out For" list? Is there anything more we need to do to avoid pitfalls from the past?

7. What about the "Evidence" list? Are we starting to see any evidence that suggest our new effort is becoming integrated in our work?

8. What do we think comes next? What do we want to agree to work on to get us moving forward? Where do we want this conversation to take us?

- Agree on steps, timelines and your next conversation to review progress.
- Be sure to have a plan to capture your lists so you can return to them over time and check your progress.

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PUSH YOURSELF

Note: This section can be a great way to keep yourself going. Some libraries use it for full discussions of 30-60 minutes as a follow-up and ongoing practice.

There are some organizational systems that you can observe to see if something is part of institutional practice. Consider these questions:

- Are Turning Outward activities impacting budget decisions?
- Are Turning Outward ideas or practices referenced when we are planning programs?
- Do job descriptions or staff performance reviews reference Turning Outward behaviors or thinking?
- Is the board involved in discussions about Turning Outward activities and how they affect the library?

You can also return to your lists and deepen your knowledge based on how Turning Outward efforts become everyday practice.

- What new factors for success have we learned?
- What is hard when making Turning Outward practices common?
- What can you point to that tells you that change is taking hold?