Back to the future: Managing change in a post-covid library

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Indigenous land acknowledgement

American University resides on Nacotchtank (Anacostan) and Piscataway ancestral lands. The Piscataway Conoy Tribe were forced off these lands in late 1660’s.

For more information on please go to http://www.piscatawayconoytribe.com/history.html
Audience question

I manage/lead at my unit/division/organization

- Yes
- Yes, & I identify as Black, Indigenous, & People of Color (BIPOC)
- No,
- No, & I identify as BIPOC
Goals for today’s session

● Introduction
  ○ 2020
● Begin with the past in mind
● Reflects on the present
● New beginnings
  ○ Organization development
  ○ Workplace safety
● Conclusion and Q&A
Uncomfortable conversation

- Lots to talk about
  - Past
  - Present
  - Future
Introduction
2020

- 2020 was the year of social awakening
- We educated ourselves by
  - Reading
  - Listening
  - building anti-racist libguides
  - Joining reading groups
  - supporting inclusive syllabi development
- We learned about our unconscious biases
Begin the past

- We can not return to what was
- BIPOCs and historically excluded population within our libraries are not returning their silent corner
- There is a strong push by library leadership to return to our traditional oppressed roles and spaces.
- Equity and inclusion is not a trend
Begin with the past

Lesson: we cannot continue to do things the way we’ve always done them

Reflection question for leadership (or to ask of leadership): How is leadership incorporating the learnings from the last year into this fall’s return to the workplace?
Reflections on the present

● Organizational decision making
  ○ Librarians/Library staff and equity
● How transparent was decision making?
  ○ down to the staffing levels during COVID-19?
● Did these decisions have an impact on staff morale?

Reflection question for leadership (or to ask of leadership): Is leadership taking the opportunities to improve staff morale, to team build upon the return to the workplace?
Reflections on the present

● Caregivers
  ○ Children (12 or under)
  ○ Elderly parents
  ○ High-risk
  ○ COVID long haulers
    ■ Disability protections

● Neurodivergent learners
  ○ Virtual support
  ○ High-risk staff

Reflection question for leadership (or to ask of leadership): How are leaders addressing these forthcoming challenges?
BIPOC trauma

- Racial inequality, Black lives, racial inequalities, Anti-asian hate crimes,
- Emotional labor; cultural taxation Impact on BIPOCs, labor, disagreements with statements, statements not equal org’l change what’s the point of statement, what’s the point of these new positions?

**Lesson**: Returning to “normal” is return to status quo for BIPOCs and other underrepresented populations

**Reflection question for leadership** (or to ask of leadership): are our workplaces safe?
Normalize mental health

- Managers and employers - prioritize the well-being of your employees
- Library Administration responses to ongoing crises - be intentional, conscientious and empathic.
- BIPOC identities are not set aside while we work

Artist: Liz Fosslien

https://www.jehanconsulting.com ~ expect a world of difference
Workplace safety

● Physical safety from harm (anti-blackness, anti-asian hate crimes, two recent examples) and potential covid impact
  ○ Risk - frontline staff (input from every level of org) esp with life on the line

● Psychological safety
  ○ Nooses, bananas, spitting, cotton flowers, offensive signage, and other inappropriate caricaturization
  ○ Meeting safety
    ■ Speak freely without consequence
Workplace safety

Lesson: Our workspaces have not been safe pre-covid and we cannot afford to continue to ignore these major safety concerns.

Reflection question for leadership (or to ask of leadership):

- How are you protecting your employees of color and historically excluded populations as return to the workplace?
- Is there a contingency plan?
- How have you communicated your commitment to a physical and psychologically safe workplace?
Anti-racist/EDI OD HR jobs

● Why are libraries creating these positions?
  ○ What exactly are the needs?
● What are the goals for this position?
  ○ Visualize what you want accomplished?
● Do these positions hold power to change an organization?
  ○ Report to Dean/Director/University Librarian
  ○ How is the position viewed
● An OD or EDI position? Both?
  ○ internal or external facing?
● Are these “glass cliffs?”
Anti-racist EDI jobs

**Lesson:** Know what your organization needs in this arena and what your organization is ready to do. This is inherently change management (OD) work.

**Reflection question for leadership** (or to ask of leadership): How is OD going to change your culture, your lack of inclusion, your faculty/staff divide?
Definition of Organization Development (OD)

Organization Development (OD) refers to the disciplinary field of scholars and practitioners who work collaboratively with organizations and communities to develop their system-wide capacity for effectiveness and vitality. OD is grounded in the organizational and social sciences.

What: through OD, we provide a presence to human systems. As a result, those systems are better able to:

- function effectively and optimally,
- grow and adapt intentionally to shifting circumstances,
- live and thrive through all types of change (e.g., planned, emergent),
- collaborate and make decisions,
- foster contact, understanding, and shared perspective across differences,
- cultivate and benefit from effective, aware and intentional leaders,
- unlock creativity and innovation,
- overcome challenges which, to the people in the system, might seem impossible, and
- work in ways that are sustainable and healthy for the system, its people and society.
More about OD

**How:** In our OD-related work, we recognize that How we go about our work is just as important as What we do. We pursue the Why and the What by:

- being and acting in service of the systems we support, even in challenging moments,
- supporting and elevating the human element in everything we do,
- bringing intentionality, discernment, and patience to whether, when, and how we engage,
- navigating the complexity of being both in the system and maintaining boundaries,
- consciously using our full selves and our presence and showing up as whole humans (e.g., with emotion, feeling, values),
- building equal partnerships with the people and systems we support,
- co-creating and discovering with people in the system,
- advocating for both diversity and inclusion and justice and fairness,
- bringing the courage to hold up the mirror and help people in the system see the whole system and themselves in new ways to better move forward,
- mutually learning and developing with the people in the system, and
- developing and enhancing capabilities within the system so we leave it better than when we arrived.
Statements & Recruitment

- Non-performative
- Support your BIPOC employees
- Support your BIPOC patrons
- Be aware that this is emotional labor

Dr. Monica Cox @DrMonicaCox · 17h
To the people in my org who felt the need to print my tweets out, report me, and criticize my Twitter usage, print this one out, blow it up poster size, and share it with ALL your friends.

1 million LinkedIn views
2 million Twitter views
1240 LinkedIn comments

Instead of showing me your diversity statement, show me your hiring data, your discrimination claim stats, your salary tables, your retention numbers, your diversity policies, and your leaders' public actions against racism.

End performative allyship.

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Conclusion

● Collective lessons learned or still learning?
● Continue the conversation over on the Ghouse ASERL Padlet:
  ○ [https://padlet.com/nghouse1/gafo9uulvdm99t6l](https://padlet.com/nghouse1/gafo9uulvdm99t6l)
    ■ This Padlet will be removed on Thursday, October 28, 2021
Questions?

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