

PLANNING PAPER
LIBRARY MANAGEMENT

B+

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a well researched & thought out
paper overall. a little weak
in the area of application
of plan

In this paper, I shall examine planning as it relates to the operation and management of libraries. I shall also describe and discuss three different types of planning processes, Strategic Planning, Management by Objectives (MBO), and Organization Development. From there, I shall elaborate on my projected career plans and discuss which planning process(es) I would use and how I would go about implementing such a plan for the library in which I intend to work.

Of all the functions carried out by library managers, none is as important as that of planning. Stuart and Eastlick define it in the following manner:

Planning is... the process of getting an organization from where it is to where it wants to be in a given period of time by setting it on a predetermined course of action. It is deciding what to do, how to do it, when to do it, and who is to do it. 1

From this definition, it is rather clear that planning is, above all, a very important thinking process which managers must wade through. The main tasks which confront library managers are those of setting goals and objectives (usually ^{but not always} written in the mission statement), and of devising *MS is separate from goals & objectives* plans for attaining them, given restrictive budgetary restraints. Successful library managers are effective planners. They assess their goals and objectives, plan their budgets, and try to devise the best ways to meet both. In addition, they successfully fulfill other duties, such as delegating authority and tasks, writing work schedules, etc. Without planning, library managers would surely be overwhelmed. The guidance and organization which such a process provides is thus, crucial to the success of the library. Unfortunately, not enough planning is ever done, primarily because it is time consuming and it requires commitment and flexibility.

Many people have written about planning, and consequently many theories exist that try to explain it. For the purposes of this paper, I shall only discuss three such theories, the first of which will be Strategic Planning.

According to Steiner, strategic planning is "the process of determining the major objectives of an organization and the policies and strategies that will govern the acquisition, use and disposition of resources to achieve these objectives." ² What the process entails is having an orientation toward the future. Library managers who plan strategically must take into account the dynamic, changing nature of the environment and the organization of which they are a part. They must plan ahead and plan systematically. While doing so, they should weigh possible alternatives and attempt to assess all the possible outcomes of their decisions. Strategic planners know the importance of setting goals and objectives. Most of their decisions should be made with them in mind. Within the strategic planning process, it is usually top management and sometimes middle management that develop the plans and make the decisions. Theoretically, these should be based on objective evaluation as a result of gathering data, and not on subjective evaluation.

In sum, strategic planning is future oriented. It looks at all the possible alternatives, assessing future threats as well as opportunities. It is also a process that begins with the setting of organizational goals, continues with the defining of strategies and policies to achieve them, and ends with planning that will implement such strategies. Strategic planning, according to Steiner, is not only the above, but ^{also} a "philosophy dedicated to acting on the basis of contemplation of the future." He also views it as "the systematic and more or less formalized effort of an organization to establish basic purposes, objectives, and policies and strategies and to develop detailed plans to implement those policies and strate-

gies, and to achieve objectives and basic company purposes." 3

In contrast to strategic planning, management by objective combines institutional and individual goal setting with the decision making process. What distinguishes MBO from strategic planning is that whereas strategic planning is usually a top-down approach, MBO involves both management and the individual employee. Within this process, objectives for an organization are created according to a team approach. Both the superior and the employee communicate and come to some type of consensus concerning what the goals and the objectives of the organization and the employee should be. These must be measurable, with time limits, and they must require realistic action. After all this is set up, the employee goes about completing the necessary tasks needed to achieve his/her goals. Periodically the employee and the manager should meet to evaluate the employee's performance. This feedback is a very important part of the communications process. When the time arrives to assess the employee's final performance, both the employee and the manager theoretically should give input concerning the employee's success. The manager then appraises the employee's work and judges him/her accordingly. In order for this approach to work, there must be, above all, clear communication among all parties. Also, those who have been assigned tasks must have the freedom to act; that is, the employee ought to be able to use his/her own judgment concerning the best way to achieve the given set of objectives. However, at the same time the employee must be responsible and accountable.

Advocates of MBO argue that it improves communications, increases mutual understanding, improves planning, and among other things, promotes innovation within the organization. Others argue, however, that MBO can very easily be subject to abuse by authoritarian managers. It is evident that managers must trust their employees and employees in turn, must

must be responsible people. Mutual respect is a must in this approach.

The last type of planning process which I will discuss is organizational development. According to O'donnell, "organization development places particular stress on humanistic values."⁴ It is a problem solving approach to management and planning which focuses on the values and attitudes of the individual members of an organization. In this approach, participation and de-centralization are emphasized. As opposed to strategic planning, organizational development concerns itself with the internal dynamics of the work environment. Its objective is "action, planned change, a coordinated attack on organizational ~~interpersonal~~ problems." ⁵ *Problem solving oriented*

Planning comes into the picture in organizational development when it is perceived that there is change needed in order to move the organization toward a goal or objective. According to Johnson, "the first stage in the planning process is the problem identification phase. The second stage involves the development of operational criteria that can be used to judge when the organizational goals have been achieved. Stage three involves a search for possible alternatives that will move the organization toward its goals, and thus solve whatever problems exist. Here, the individual members of the organization participate in such activities as role playing and symbolic model building. The fourth step in the planning process is to evaluate these alternatives against the criteria that have been agreed upon for achieving the organizational goals."⁶ From here, a suitable alternative is selected and implemented. If it doesn't work out, the entire process is begun again. All the while, feedback is given in various forms to the members of the organization in terms of how well or poorly an alternative plan is working.

In sum, organizational development is problem solving oriented, holistic and humanistic. Unlike strategic planning and MBO, it emphasizes

the importance of interpersonal relations and their effect on the organizations overall success.

Turning to what I plan to do, it is my hope to enter into an academic library as a reference librarian. If I were ever put in a management position within such a setting, the type of planning process I would implement would have to depend of the setting itself and the dynamics of the management/employee relations in existence at the time of my arrival. It would also depend a great deal on the tasks set before me. I really don't think that any of the planning processes which I have discussed is inherently any better than any other. Each operates best, I presume, within certain work environments. I think that I would keep in mind the benefits and drawbacks of each theory and try to use those aspects of each that would benefit the library in which I worked, and the people in it the most.

Personally, I think that organization development theory contains some very useful principles that can be implemented at all times. For instance, I think that it would be crucial for me to be able to relate to my staff on a friendly and open basis. I know that from my ten years experience in the grocery business that work output on the part of the employee depends heavily on the employee's perception of his/her superior's attitude and feelings toward that employee. As an employee myself, I know that I do my best when my boss is friendly and courteous toward me. If he gets pushy or nasty, it affects the quality of my work. *True for most people*

There are also other reasons why I would utilize the humanistic aspects of organization development theory into my planning. Most people spend a majority of their lives at work, interacting with their fellow employees more often at times, than with their own families. I think that it would be important for the library setting to be comfortable and stable. If people working within such a setting are always at each other's throats or always putting others down, then the quality of the service will not

be very high. I think that simply by doing my best to be as empathetic and supportive as possible with my staff, the library will run quite smoothly. I feel that it will be up to me to set an example for everyone.

Although I like the principles entailed within organization development theory, I tend to think that it focuses too heavily on solving problems that already exist, and that it doesn't focus enough on the future. For that reason, I think that strategic planning and MBO both offer useful principles. If I were to manage a department in a library, I would surely do my best to integrate future planning with humanistic theory. *Good thought*

Turning to how I would implement a plan in an academic setting, I guess that first of all, I'd have to acquaint myself with the setting and the people in it. While doing so, I would evaluate both the good and the bad aspects of the way things were run. I would also read the mission statement of the library in order to ascertain what goals and objectives are written in it that concern my particular department. From that point, I would ~~sit down and evaluate what I have read and seen, and come up with a plan of action of my own.~~ Within such a plan, I would include revised goals and objectives, if I thought they were needed, and I would include a strategy by which I would get to know my staff better. I would do this so that I could figure out whether it would be necessary to delve into some of the more time consuming principles of organizational development. I think that I could accomplish this by either informally interviewing each employee or by giving them all questionnaires, to find out what they perceived their jobs to be, how well they liked what they were doing etc. If things seemed to be operating smoothly, I'd use the MBO approach and sit down with my staff and together with each person come up with definable objectives which that person would work on. I would try to be as open as possible and would encourage the same from ^{each of} them. On the other hand, if

the department was in a shambles, I would seriously consider implementing some of the principles of organizational development, and attempt to work things out from there. Although the latter approach would be very time consuming and costly, I think it would be well worth the effort. After I have figured all the above out, I think that I would have to use some of the concepts from MBO and strategic planning to be on top of the situation. Quite a bit of what I'd do would depend on the size of my staff and the extent of my department's responsibilities. I think that the larger my department is, the more I'd have to rely on planning strategically. Optimally, it would be nice to ~~manage~~^{manage} only a handful of people. That way it would be easier to encourage communication, which would in turn create a more effective department.

In conclusion, I think it is fun to speculate how I would implement a planning process. I know that some kind of planning would be a vital necessity, but until I am actually in a management situation, I don't know what I would really do because too much would depend on what was there before I arrived. All in all, each planning process which I have discussed has its advantages and disadvantages. I only hope that I'll be wise enough to be able to use the best of each in my own way and to the best of my ability.

ENDNOTES

1. Stueart, Robert D. and Eastlick, John Taylor, Library Management, 2nd ed. (Littleton, Colo.:Libraries, Unlimited,1981) p. 32.
2. Stueart and Eastlick, p.33.
3. Steiner, George A. Strategic Planning: What Every Manager Must Know (New York: The Free Press,1979)pp.13-15.
4. Koontz, Harold and O'donnell, Cyril, Essentials of Management (New York: McGraw-Hill,1978)p.359
5. Handbook of Work, Organization, and Society, Robert Dubin, ed. Chicago:Rand McNally, c.1976. pp. 628-629.
6. Johnson, Edward R. and Mann, Stuart H. Organization Development for Academic Libraries, (Westport, Conn.:Greenwood Press, 1980) p. 10

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