Philosophy of Management

Lindsay A. Davis
San José State University
Dr. Strum
LIBR 204-17
10 May 2010
superlindsay@ymail.com

Prior to taking LIBR 204, I did not have a personal style of management. Nor was I aware of management theories or the many publications that address management issues. Many people, even some aspiring librarians, do not know about the administrative aspects of a librarian's job. At the beginning of the term, a student in another class commented that she wanted to be a teacher but because too many politics were involved, she decided to become a librarian. The statement struck me as odd because one of the core classes, LIBR 204, is a management course that focuses on the intricacies of being a leader in an information service setting where politics abound. The qualifications earned by completing our coursework and our experiences may one day require or prompt us to take on leadership roles.

It is crucial that we consider various questions about how we personally like and do not like to be managed in order to develop our own style when managing others. When looking back to the work experiences we have had, it is easy to determine the good, bad, and ugly management practices and implement the positive techniques, along with those we have read in management theory and other literature, into our own personal management style. For example, one of the best jobs I have ever had—and also the one I stayed at longest—was as a writing tutor at my undergraduate university's writing center. The director employed many of the ideas discussed by Evans and Ward and the many management articles I read this term. Her approach is one that I would like to emulate.

The director made herself available to all staff, communicated openly and honestly about changes and problems, asked for staff input in certain matters, and fostered a feeling of community amongst the employees that was also in line with the Writing Center's mission to provide a safe, judgment-free environment for our struggling writers. At the end of every term, a potluck was thrown in appreciation of our work. Throughout the term, she provided feedback

and wrote encouraging notes and emails. There were several times when she collected student evaluations from tutees and cut out the positive things said about each tutor and placed them on a poster.   She definitely employed Stephen Covey's philosophy, as cited by Sue Glasscock and Kimberly Gram, "to always treat your employees exactly as you want them to treat your best customers" (1995, p. 101). Herbert E. Cihak writes, "It is the duty of a library leader to focus the spotlight on his or her staff. Praise and recognition are tools that are at the disposal of all library leaders" (1999, Reward section, para. 1).

This feeling of community was also enhanced by the consultative and participatory management techniques she employed. By asking for input or calling us to make a decision, and also encouraging us to work in teams to solve problems, the director made us each feel that we had knowledge to contribute. As Suzanne Bates (2009) writes, "Most people who work in your organization want to find a worthy purpose for their work" (p. 53).

The director also let tutors use any tutoring strategies as long as these fell within the Writing Center's guidelines that tutors do not edit or write on student papers but teach strategies on how to approach writing and think critically. We were not micromanaged. This is an area that I know will be difficult for me. The group projects in this class taught me that I need to place trust in others to get work done. I tend to worry that others will not follow-through, so I would rather take on a task on my own to ensure it gets done correctly. This is just not possible to do as a manager; I have to delegate tasks. According to a brief article by the ALSC Managing Children's Services Committee (2007),

One of the hardest things to get used to as a new manager is letting other staff complete projects…Explain clearly what you need to get done, give them a deadline, and follow up

with them to make sure that they understand the task. Be available to offer advice and answer questions; however, let them accomplish the task on their own (p. 54). Interestingly, when I took "The Evolving Leadership Practices Assessment" by the Olson Group, Inc., the results indicated that although I have a well-rounded, situational approach to leading, I could improve my sense of awareness and facilitation. In time and with more experience, it will become easier to delegate work.

Evans and Ward describe different management theories, and I subscribe to the human relations and contingency schools of thought. "From the mid-1960s to 1980, libraries and archives began shifting away from the director-controlled management approach…to a human relations management approach" (Evans & Ward, 2007, p. 27). This approach can be best described as a team-oriented style in which there is "democratic administration, participative administration, use of committees, and involvement (or apparent involvement) of staff in decision-making" (Ibid, p. 27). The connection between this behavioral approach to contingency theory—"that there are no universal answers"—lies in the characteristic of working with others, not so much over them (Ibid, p. 30). This combination also leaves the door open to change because contingency theory holds that "manager[s] must view each situation as unique and determine what steps are appropriate on a situation-by-situation basis" (Ibid, p. 30).

In the future, I would like to be known as a manager who is honest; flexible; available; one who supports the values of the organization; and one who makes employees feel that they are a valuable part of the organization. I want to be someone who recognizes "that people are the most important resource of an organization" (Evans & Ward, 2007, p. 35). I feel more positive about managing because I now understand what it is a manager actually does—accomplishing work through people.

Works Cited

ALSC Managing Children's Services Committee. (2007). Jumping in feet first: six points for

first-year managers. *Children & Libraries: The Journal of the Association for Library*

Service to Children, 5(2), 53-54.

Bates, Suzanne. (2009). Communication is the key to motivation. *Employment Relations Today*,

36(2), 53-58.

Cihak, H.E. (1999). Coaching library support staff: The three R's that count. *Library Mosaics*,

10(2), 10-12.

Evans, G.E., & Ward, P.L. (2007). *Management basics for information professionals* (2nd ed.).

New York: Neal-Schuman.

Glasscock, S., & Gram, K. (1995). *Winning ways: Establishing an effective workplace*

recognition system, *14*(3), 91-102.