Activity IV

Describe at least two actions that you, your staff, or your supervisor/Library administration should take to resolve or enhance the issue/behavior you mentioned:

1. The staff feels devalued because of their input is not solicited on decisions that affect their daily work and therefore no "buy in" is created with them.
    a. My action (as a Lead Librarian) – I can encourage and praise staff at my location for their efforts. I can allow them as much autonomy as possible and as much input as possible into how they do their daily work. I can support their ideas for change that is within our control.
    b. My staff's action – They can (and do) share their ideas with me and our manager. They are flexible and understand that sometimes our manager and I are just the messengers. For the most part, they shake it off, move on, and gain satisfaction from doing as much as they can to make our customers happy.
    c. My location manager's action – My manager is careful to present decisions in a positive manner. There is time for humor in staff meetings and we always end on a very positive note by reading the kudos from the kudos board that we give each other throughout the month, which always bring laughter, and create an atmosphere of cohesiveness. As someone who was recently new to the staff, I've been surprised how well this has worked and how willing the staff is to build each other up in this way.
    d. Library Administration's action- The administration can include front line staff in the decision making process when the new initiative or procedure will directly impact the front line staff. The administration can allow more transparency into the decision making process, when possible, and make sure everything is clear before communication of decisions begins. Currently, it feels as if less effort is being put into clearly communicating the message and more effort is being put into clearing up the confusion (usually via Ask Tim) that comes from a poorly communicated message.

       Some recent decisions seem arbitrary and reactionary. For example, a directive was recently received that branches are not to post signs that we will be closing for a holiday or other reason more than 1 day ahead of time. This means that if the library is to be closed on Monday, that signs will be put up no earlier than Sunday. Well, at our branch, we are much busier in the week than on a Sunday so the message doesn't reach as many members ahead of time. It felt as if that was a decision was made in reaction to

something that happened at another branch and instead of addressing that issue at that branch, a directive was made to all branches that 'this is how it is to be done'. This felt like micromanagement and as if individual managers are not trusted to do what they were hired to do. The recent decisions to staff libraries till 15 minutes after closing and standard closing announcements felt as if they were made in a similar manner.

Another example of a decision that would likely have benefitted from the input of frontline staff would be the move to the themed programming approach. This initiative directly impacted the work of the programmers at each branch, yet, to my knowledge, programmers were not involved in developing the themed approach. I was told about this new initiative three different times. First, my manager told me about it after it was announced at a regular Manager's Meeting. I had questions but he had no answers and let me know that many of my questions were asked and not answered at the meeting. Then I attended the YA Programmers meeting in April. Themed Programming was explained and the floor opened for questions and the common answer was 'that hasn't been determined yet' or 'we don't know yet'. That was a very tense meeting because to the programmers this seemed like a dramatic shift in how they would run their programs and most of their questions couldn't be answered. Then I heard about the Themed Programming approach again at the Children's Programmers meeting two weeks after the YA Programmers meeting and the message had changed drastically from "we are doing this" to "let's try and move this direction". Again, many questions were asked and specific answers were difficult to get. There had also been lots of suppositions made by the children's programmers based on what they had heard from the YA programmers so the meeting started with people in confusion and unsure about the 'what' and 'why' of this new approach.

2. The staff feels stressed and weary because of the speed of change. There is brief training at the beginning of a 'new' thing, but no follow up and then the staff feels like they just have to sink or swim and figure it out as they go.
    a. My action (as a Lead Librarian) – I can check in often with staff after new initiative is released and see how they are doing, if there are any concerns or problems or additional training needs.
    b. My staff's action – Ask for help and follow up training from the managers or request that the manager ask for more training from the system.

    c. My location manager's action - Provide the staff with training support and ask questions of other departments or superiors on behalf of staff. Allow time off desk for staff to work together to get more hands on practice and support each other.

    d. Library Administration's action – Provide follow up training after a new program or initiative is started to see if there is a need for further training and offer more training as needed. Communicate to the staff in words and actions that they are supported through new initiatives. For example, the training with the new accounting software was pretty brief and sometimes questions were not always answered. It would be time consuming but beneficial if staff from the Business Office would come out to the various locations or maybe regional meetings to see how things are going and provide follow up answers to questions. Many people are better able to articulate questions about a software program after they have used it for a bit. It is hard to anticipate what problems or questions may arise until the software is used.

3. Communication is poor and problematic in terms of multiple, sometimes unclear, messages, from various levels or departments, being heard by the front line staff about any given issue. In other words, the message does not come from the top down to the front line staff directly. It goes through so many layers and filters with other inputs before they hear it that the message is not clear.

    a. My action (as a Lead Librarian) – I can listen very carefully and take notes in meetings to make sure I get the message as clearly as possible. I can ask follow up and clarification questions in these same meetings.

    b. My staff's action – Because the problem does not lay with my staff, the only thing I would ask them to do is ask as many questions as they have to get clarification and I will answer to the best of my ability and knowledge and pass the questions back up the chain of command.

    c. My location manager's action – Bring information back to the staff quickly and communicate it clearly, referencing where he heard it and as much of the context as possible.

    d. Library Administration's action – It is difficult to make recommendations for how Library Administration could address this issue because I am not aware of how communication happens outside of my branch. My only suggestions would be that, when possible, decisions be written down and communicated via memo. (The 'telephone game' could be difficult to play with information in writing for all to read.)