

Xchange Meeting July 18, 2016

Morale impact initiatives

Activity I

Describe three issues/behaviors you and your staff feel are positively impacting staff morale

****Note – Information below was provided from Ralph Ellison staff prior to Xchange meeting***

1. Sense of teamwork with RE staff to cover excessive staff shortage and the willingness and understanding of other locations to offer support staff
2. Forum to ask questions (positive); Fear of retaliation or being targeted for posting questions to forum although anonymous option is available (negative)
3. Open door policy with manager (Michael Gillespie) and supervisors at RE

Activity II

Describe three issues/behaviors you and your staff feel are negatively impacting staff morale

****Note – Information below was provided from Ralph Ellison staff prior to Xchange meeting***

1. Staff shortage -lack of adequate staffing which has resulted in staff burnout that impacts quality customer service.
2. Lack of input on decisions made by administrative staff to changes that directly impact front line staff, but does not impact administrative staff.

Example:

- a. Staff members were told that their schedules would change with the added 15 minutes. Front line staff did not have a chance to voice their opinions or concerns about this change which impacts them directly. For instance, adjustments needed to be made to morning processes and procedures because circulation clerks relied on that additional 15 minutes to complete all morning tasks; staff members had to make adjustments to transportation schedules (for those relying on rides or public transportation); adjustments needed to be made to babysitting and daycare schedules; adjustments

needed to be made to those leaving work to rush off to attend evening classes, etc.

3. Lack of support from administration

Examples:

- a. During the first week of June when the AC was out staff members were asked by an administrator, "Is it just uncomfortable or is it really too hot?" Staff members felt that this questioning of their level of comfort showed a disconnect and lack of concern. Also during this period of one week without air, staff would have liked to see an administrative team member come to the branch to show a level of support or concern and evaluate the 'discomfort' personally.
- b. Staff members at RE have been told repeatedly that low circulation numbers for the branch outweigh the overwhelming gate count numbers resulting in the metrics created for staff distribution. Staff would like the administrative team to listen to their concerns regarding this:
 - i. Other public library systems previously weighed staffing on circulation numbers in years past however as things have progressed to a more digital age, circulation numbers are no longer the primary determining factor—given the decrease system wide and worldwide - but gate count numbers are now equally considered.
 - ii. RE computer usage is the highest throughout MLS and RE library members require 2 or 3 times more hands-on instruction when using the computer because of their lack of personally owned advanced digital devices. This requires more staff to assist library members and provide them quality customer service.
 - iii. InterReach and programming impact - Additional staff would allow more programming to meet the needs of library members. Currently, staff are stretched thin to cover the information desk, juggle patrons with needs at the public computers, and cover circulation breaks. Because of this, programming and interReach are pushed to the wayside as staff are merely trying to maintain the desk during open hours.
 - iv. RE staff members have received support from MLS staff members who have come to help out during extremely critical staff shortage days. MLS staff members from other locations (including managers) have also voiced their concerns about the staff shortage at RE and have even offered to share staff from their locations who 'spend the day looking for work to do.'

Activity III

In your group, discuss the issues/behaviors each of you listed. Identify the three (positive or negative) that you all agree should be resolved or enhanced.

1. Staff need to feel that they are heard and that their opinions matter
2. Increase front line staff to meet library M & M
3. Collaborate w/other staff levels

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. Staff members want to feel that their opinions matter and that they have input on decisions which directly impact them
 - a. *Your Action:* Continue to encourage staff to provide their input on the forums available and reassure them that retaliation will not be tolerated
 - b. *Your Staff's Action:* Participation in forums to express opinions about policy and procedure changes
 - c. *Your Supervisor/Library Administration's Actions:* Staff members would like a brief one-on-one with Tim, not regional directors, Kay, or other administrators, but a 'Talk with Tim Time' which can be a timed session that allows them to freely talk about the topics that concern them the most.
*MLS is at a critical point right now; dedicated, hard-working, long term staff members who have never voiced a complaint during their tenure at MLS are now becoming vocal about many of the issues that are starting to arise within the system.
2. Increase front line staff to meet library unbound and M&M. Not doing so will result in continued burnout of staff leading to a negative impact on M&M.
 - a. *Your Action:* Keep staff informed about where we are in open positions and what we are doing to try to get them filled. Cover the desk as much as possible in order to provide off desk time for staff—unfortunately this impacts time needed to conduct interReach and programming.
 - b. *Your Staff's Action:* Patience (as much as possible)
 - c. *Your Supervisor/Library Administration's Actions:* Regional Directors should take one full day each month, to work at their regional branches

in order to better understand the staffing challenges, better understand the needs of their library branches, better understand the staff in which they supervise, and better understand the regions (communities) they are responsible for. This one full day would not be spent in the office, but on the front lines at the reference desk, outside doing rotational grounds upkeep, conducting rotational monitoring of the bathrooms, doing room set-ups and breakdowns, and all of the other duties assigned to the teams in which they supervise. This would not only show the staff a sense of support from administration, but it would also lessen the disconnect between some administrators and the day-to-day challenges faced by their library locations. Is this unheard of or impossible? No. Surprisingly other organizations require their regional directors (regional managers, district managers, or whatever the title assigned by the organization) to spend 'on desk' time at their regional branches.