



Pivot, and Pivot Again: Ever-Nimble Library Leadership



WHAT'S A PIVOT?

“ the art of recognizing that the pursuit of a specific idea, direction or product - in which you've invested significant time, money and energy – is no longer the correct path to follow.”



STRATEGIC PIVOTING TIPS

1) HAVE AN IDEA COMPOST PILE

When ideas fail and people aren't happy, don't throw everything out; keep the insights that you've gained along the way. Recycle: mine old ideas for new ones. “Accepting the metaphor of composting ideas makes it easier to accept the perceived cost of failure.”

2) KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Know your audience/users well enough to figure out what's important to them and how to make library resources, services, and spaces fit into their world. Then, you'll have an intuitive sense for when it's time to pivot (or not).

3) FAIL EARLIER AND MORE OFTEN

Develop an experimental mindset at your library. Spend time testing (lots of betas, prototypes, etc.) before launching a resource or service. Early pivots are better than late ones.



A FEW PIVOTS AT MCQUADE LIBRARY

In response to **space repurposing** in library...

- Help Desk Experiments (sharing space with IT, loaning ipads)
- Taking reference and instruction on the road
- Research Center → moving to consultation model
- Speed weeding

In response to **evolving curricula**...

- STEMsmart Teachers project <https://sites.google.com/merrimack.edu/stemsmart/home>
- Rethinking liaison program
- Collection Development Policy revision

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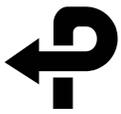


In response to **changes in the student body**...

- Mindful McQuade <http://libguides.merrimack.edu/MindfulMcQuade>
- New services and spaces for graduate students (in progress)

In response to **administration changes**...

- Avoiding TL/DR!
- Educating various administrators about library
- Seizing new opportunities such as Provost Innovation Funds



WHAT WE'VE LEARNED

Be open to pivots by listening to your community, embrace criticism, and institutionalize feedback sessions. All of the above will help you recognize the need and correct timing for pivots.

How, Wow, Now activity

<https://public-media.interaction-design.org/pdf/Now-Wow-How-Matrix.pdf>

Stand-up Meetings

https://wellness.ucr.edu/Standing_Meeting_Guidelines.pdf

Leaders can turn externally-driven change to benefit of the library. Pivoting well can keep your library positioned for success and growth.

Your library could experience a **culture pivot**: “Swiveling the collective philosophy, mindset, and behavior of an organization onto a different axis.”



SOURCES

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