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Engaging Library Staff to Envision the Hybrid Workplace Moving Forward

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Engaging in Informal Leadership: Benefits, Challenges, and Strategies

A Knowledge Share Session

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[Link to Presentation Materials](http://tiny.cc/engaginginil)
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What is Informal Leadership?

We find it useful to distinguish between being a Leader with a capital “L”—referring to someone who is in a formal leadership position, such as manager, executive, or supervisor—and being a leader with a lower case “l”—referring to someone who inspires individuals to follow a particular path.

To lead informally can mean many things: it is often ad hoc and temporary, it usually means additional labor above and beyond one’s job responsibilities, it very rarely results in more money or prestige, and it typically arises from a desire to get something done or to produce positive change.

Miles, L. & Markgren, S. (2023, forthcoming). Taking advantage of opportunities for informal leadership. In B. West & E. Galoozis (Eds.), *Thriving as a mid-career librarian: Identity, advocacy, and pathways*. ACRL Publications.

More to know about Informal Leadership

Tenets of successful leaders:

1. leaders are regular people, who do not know all the answers or do all the work
2. leadership is developed, it is not an ability you are born with
3. people who like to work with others, and are sensitive to their situations, make the best leaders
4. good leaders do not need to keep up a façade of independence, decisiveness, and poise

Sol Levine, "An Approach to Constructive Leadership," *Journal of Social Issues* 5, no. 1 (1949): 51.

Characteristics critical to successful leadership:

1. **vision** (of the library/organization)—know what it is, how it fits into the larger picture, and how to articulate this in order to inspire others
2. **courage**—being able to make hard decisions, being open to change
3. the **ability** to make things happen through others—being able to train and motivate others to act and work independently, thus increasing organizational effectiveness

Shirley K. Baker, "Leading from Below: Or, Risking Getting Fired," *Library Administration & Management* 9, no. 4 (1995): 238-239.

Our Stories

Linda

“I joined the faculty of a small academic library with a flat structure, where I found all of the formal leadership positions already filled. So, what is a librarian to do?”

Susanne

“For many years, I couldn’t imagine myself in a leadership position. It wasn’t on my radar. Things changed when I began to [want to] use my influence and skills for positive change.”

Benefits of Informal Leadership

- Skill development
- Expansion of one's professional network
- Formation of productive and collaborative relationships
- Increased self-confidence and self-knowledge
- Enhanced professional reputation
- Gratification as a result of positive impact and outcomes
- A revived sense of career direction
- Professional success and satisfaction

What's your level of IL experience?

Rate your experience with Informal Leadership on a scale of 1 to 4

1 = I am interested in IL, but have no experience

2 = I have a little experience (e.g., project management, etc.)

3 = I have done this more than once

4 = I have garnered a great deal of experience with IL

Ready...set...

1. *Pick up a card from the table based on the experience rating you gave yourself – hold it high!*
 - If you are a **1 or 2** → pick up an **Blue** card
 - If you are a **3 or 4** → pick up an **Yellow** card
2. *Gather at tables, ensuring that there are both less experienced participants (**Blue** cards) and more experienced participants (**Yellow** cards) at each table.*

Knowledge Share

Discuss the following prompts

Assign some folks to take notes on the note cards provided → *we will collect these and post all the notes to the shared folder*

1. Are there opportunities for IL in your library/department that you might not be cognizant of? (e.g., possibilities for interdepartmental collaboration, problems that may need addressing, etc.)
2. What skills or strategies contribute to successful IL? (and how can these be developed?)
3. What are the relationship challenges that can come up in IL situations? (and what strategies can help?)
4. What strategies can help informal leaders avoid burnout in IL situations?

Tell us: what have you learned about...

- Identifying opportunities for Informal Leadership
- Skills and strategies that help with IL
- Peer-to-peer and other relationship challenges with IL
- Ways to avoid burnout

Workshop

Goal:

To begin to develop a plan for your first Knowledge Share Session

First: imagine

Think of a topic for professional development that would serve your library and your colleagues.

Second: table talk

What are the logistics for setting up a Knowledge Share session? Think specifically about the PD topic you have chosen and get feedback from your table mates.

Third: journaling

What are the PROMPTS you will give your participants to bring out their experiences and questions for the Knowledge Share?

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A Knowledge Share Session

Thank You!

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Find slides and notes from today's exercises



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