

Forum on Public Libraries

Perth 25 October 2005

Notes to accompany Presentation

Christchurch City Libraries was successful in securing funding for the development of new libraries and the redevelopment of existing branches, as well as for internet and electronic services which saw it at the leading edge of public library development in New Zealand. At one point 10% of the rates funding of Christchurch City Council was spent on libraries. How was this done? What was the formula? As is often the case there was no one reason, but a mix of actions, circumstances and luck that combined to deliver a golden age of library development for Christchurch city.

I believe there are seven areas that a public library manager needs to attend to if they are to be successful in securing the funding for library development.

VISION

- You need to know where you are going and what you want to achieve
- Leadership to articulate and drive this vision
- Know the sector and where it is heading
- Know the environment – political, social, economic
- And tell the compelling story

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS

- Important to get to know the decision makers
- What are their agendas and interests and how to hook your initiatives to this
- Provide opportunities for engagement
- Build trust – always act ethically
- Do it again every three years (or whatever your political cycle is!)
- Also build relationships and alliances with your corporate/council colleagues – they can be your best advocates

COMMUNICATION

- Vital to provide quality information and data to back up your case
- Present your ideas, funding bids, plans in a variety of ways to spark interest
- Watch the language you use – talk of “investment in the future of people” rather than “the cost of providing services”
- Be clear about the logic chain that ties your initiative to council goals
- Never over promise!

BUILD STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT

- Your customers are your best advocate – try closing a branch library and you will find out just how vocal they can be

- Value the feedback you get from customers and use it to help drive business improvements
- Take Friends groups seriously
- Consultation is an effective way of building community support – Deborah Jacobs of Seattle Public Library turned a community around in 4 months by listening to what they wanted from their libraries and secured a multi million redevelopment vote which had been turned down previously by the voters

PEOPLE AND CULTURE

- Your people are your most important asset
- Develop a culture focused on customers – we are in the people business!
- Encourage innovation and creativity at the local level at the same time as you set the overall direction for the service
- In larger libraries your middle management level is crucial to the success of your business

INNOVATE AND CHANGE FOR EFFECTIVENESS

- Nothing stands still so change and development are part of the way we do things
- Not all your funds come from new money – look for ways to make your existing funds work harder or differently
- In Christchurch we changed the way we selected, acquired, catalogued, processed and distributed a major part of our collections, saving around \$400,000 in operational funds
- These savings enabled projects to be developed without needing to go to the funder for every small initiative.

DELIVER!

- Deliver what you say you are going to – within time frames and budgets
- Success builds success!
- Build on your successes and keep the momentum going
- Celebrate initiatives – involving funders in these

“There is no substitute for the kind of judgement, tempered by experience and leavened by professional values and ethics, when it comes to dealing with decisions...”

June Garcia and Sue Sutherland

Public library administrators in the political arena. P6

www.public-libraries.net/html/libraries_and_society.html

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