

**SAA ARCHIVES  
MANAGEMENT  
ROUNDTABLE  
NEWSLETTER**

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**BOOK REVIEW**

*Harvard Business Review on Change*. Harvard Business Review Paperback Series.  
Boston, Mass.: Harvard Business School Publishing, 1998. 228 p. Indexed.

Archivists by nature like order and predictability. But how often do we view ourselves as agents of change? How frequently in our work do we venture into uncharted territory instead of following prescribed courses of action? Have we reached a plateau professionally where we have become the best we can be – or can we improve?

*Harvard Business Review on Change* examines the process of changing an organization – and why efforts to change it can fail. Change requires leadership. John P. Kotter, Konosuke Matsushita Professor of Leadership at Harvard Business School, reviews critical mistakes that leaders sometimes make. First is a failure to create an immediate impetus for change. Leaders must have a strong sense of urgency and a willingness to instill it in their followers. They accept the element of risk. Their task is to “make the status quo seem more dangerous than launching into the unknown.”

Those at the top sometimes fail to build a group of supporters for change. Leaders of change must carefully craft a coalition of backers who will provide the critical mass for it to develop. They supply the unifying vision that will spur the effort to change. An effort may also break down as a result of an inability to achieve immediate goals. Leaders therefore should start the ball rolling by creating immediate small changes that will serve as short-term successes, including rewards such as promotions and money, for those involved. They too must demonstrate how the proposed changes are rooted in the

organization’s culture.

Organizations that embrace change are fluid entities. Jeanie Daniel Duck, a management consultant, encourages managers to view them holistically, as dynamic entities. Her conception runs counter to the elemental view offered by scientific management theory of the workplace as a highly structured unit. Ducks compares the process of managing change to “balancing a mobile.”

Change begins at the top and flows downward as it permeates the organization. Those in charge – the persons who set the agenda for change – are responsible for providing the right example for their workers. Employees will believe in change only when they come to see that it will make a real, substantial, and positive difference to themselves and their workplace. Implementing change is predicated on trust; it means winning the hearts and minds of staff members. Any program must therefore take into account their feelings.

*Change* also addresses reinventing the workplace. Reinvention assumes taking risks; it is, according to Tracy Goss *et al.*, “not changing what is, but creating what isn’t.” Successful organizations learn from past experiences in order to discard present modes of functioning. The authors cite Motorola as a company that has been able to shed its context in the process of reinventing itself. Management is concerned with action; reinvention, in contrast, focuses on *being*. The process fundamentally changes the organization’s frame of reference, thereby

altering the behavior of its employees. The leader instills a vision that serves as a "magnetic North Pole" and guides the invention effort.

Roger Martin, a business director, examines changing the mind of the organization. Organizations must be self-critical if they are going to change. They must question the status quo; in doing so, they change with their environments. Rigid organizations resist change, become ossified, and wither. They fail to profit from past experience and close themselves to learning opportunities that would make them wiser. These organizations have rigid *steering mechanisms* (budgeting, hiring, training, product development, etc.) that ensure predictability but keep managers from receiving negative feedback that might result in change. Organizations receptive to change, by contrast, display flexibility. "Companies have to get used to the fact that the new competition will force them to 'burn themselves down' and rebuild every few years." This is a point well taken for a service profession such as ours.

Robert A. Schaffer and Harvey A. Thomson, management consultants, examine the fallacies inherent in activity-centered improvement programs as opposed to the beneficial results stemming from programs geared to achieving specific results. The latter approach produces measurable results rapidly. New procedures are adopted or abandoned according to how well they work. An organization embraces continuous learning as it evaluates new modes of operation according to their actual benefits. Results come quickly in a methodical way.

*Change* is an excellent resource for archives managers. Although we work in a service profession, we concern ourselves, in the same manner as business, with turning out a high quality product in timely fashion that satisfies the needs of our clientele. The principles and practices reviewed by the authors are readily adaptable to our work settings. They take into account especially our employees, for without their support and involvement, change cannot succeed.

#### KURTZ CONDUCTS WORKSHOP ON MANAGING CHANGE

At the Society of Southwest Archivists' annual meeting in Austin, Texas, Dr. Michael J. Kurtz conducted the pre-conference workshop, "Managing Change in an Archives Environment." Kurtz, Assistant Archivist for Records Services at the National Archives and Records Administration and Chair of the Archives Management Roundtable, conducted the half-day workshop on managing cultural institutions on May 28, 1999.

He and the workshop participants explored models for change-oriented leadership. Areas of discussion focused on the roles and responsibilities of leadership, decision-making and leadership, and issues unique to leading cultural institutions. Workshop participants also examined leading change in cultural institutions along four parallel tracks: social processes and culture; management skills and tools; team training and building; and strategy, plans, processes, and structure. Lively discussion and several small-group exercises contributed to a very stimulating session.



#### 1999 ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT ROUNDTABLE SESSION

Check out our session in Pittsburgh! We'll meet Saturday, August 28, 1999, 8:45-10:15 AM. Our speakers will be Dr. David Way, President, Newmark Consulting Group, Seabrook, Texas and Casey Edward Greene, Head of Special Collections, Rosenberg Library, Galveston, Texas. Way will review management practices appropriate for the new millennium, including transformational leadership and continuous quality improvement. Greene will examine managing incremental and radical change in an archives setting. The second half of the session will be devoted to developing session proposals to be sponsored by the Archives Management Roundtable at next year's annual meeting. Please join us!