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The best way to predict the future is to invent it. - Alan Kay

Survival of the Fittest – Staying Relevant During Massive Change

There are profound benefits to gain from studying organizations that face bigger challenges than we do, with fewer resources, and yet achieve amazing success...lessons we can apply to our own situation and benefit with the competitive edge so desperately needed right now.

Imagine the “impossible challenge” of running the largest comprehensive public-access library, and actually increasing attendance in just over a year from 1 million to 3.5 million annually! This is exactly what the New York Library’s Bronx Library Center did in midtown Manhattan. How did they accomplish creating a library experience where people are flocking to use their resources when most stereotypical libraries are slowly dying from a lack of relevancy in today’s high-tech world where people can use their home computer to gather information anywhere on the internet?

Clearly, it requires redefining the library experience to achieve results that include dramatically higher attendance, and more importantly, more usage – with children under 18 actually checking out *four times* as many resources as any other New York library. Here’s how they did it:

Redefine Your Operating Model

First, the Bronx Library Center began by realizing that they are no longer merely in the book-lending business – they are in the learning and “information connection” business. Technology has dramatically expanded the means by which people learn. In addition to books, the public has shifted to checking out various electronic media, as well as accessing the internet from numerous computer centers throughout the building. It actually resembles more of a four-story internet café than an old fashioned library.

Understand Your Changing Users Needs

As technology and expectations of learning and social networking evolved, many libraries made the mistake of assuming the needs and expectations of their customers remained the same. Re-establishing relationships with them and adapting to changing styles by “walking in their shoes” is vital to survival when your value is determined by your customers. The focus here is to connect with

them in ways the competition (other information gathering/learning options) cannot.

Embrace Continuous Improvement

Next, the role and responsibilities of librarians needed to change. Instead of being collectors and curators of written documents, they have shifted to become facilitators of connected learning – helping bring the information alive using the many different media available. Librarians connect directly with scholars and now help provide context in a sea of data – an incredible need when there are millions of new sources of documents created *every day*.

Provide Real Value, Not Just a Commodity

Looking for what their customers could not access (or couldn't effectively access) and filling the gap with much-needed service and insights about the information helps the public transform data to meaningful content. When the librarians become trusted advisors and the library becomes a place for shared, multi-media experiences that help people learn and grow, the perception of that library's offerings became, as many stated "not like a typical library". When your customers become advocates for how you are different and better, you officially have a competitive edge.

Taking your business to the next level is never easy – especially when the pressure is on. The Fortune 500 is full of organizations who have *made* the opportunity (when their competition was desperately hanging on to "business as usual") to become the fittest in their industry when the circumstances seemed the most uncertain. From Google and Seiko, to CarMax and Methodist Hospital, there's a proven path for transformational breakthrough. The question is: who in *your* industry will become the most relevant superstar this time next year?

Getting these kinds of results doesn't happen by accident. It requires a tested approach and solid experience in guiding through the process. *World Class Benchmarking* is the very best option to deliver your breakthrough. Take action now, before your competition does.

Discover the resources available to you at our new website:
www.worldclassbenchmarking.com. We still have openings for our next open enrollment program (June 1-4, 2009) – or we can even bring these world-class insights right to your company!