



Review

Lean Library Management

John. J. Huber. New York, NY: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2011. 195 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55570-732-3. \$65.00.

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John Huber begins by asking readers if they have an adequate budget to meet all their needs. This question quickly captures one's attention and establishes the goal of providing information that will enable librarians to effectively run their programs. On this he delivers. With economic hardships, competition, and decreasing physical space, librarians must continuously seek new ways of meeting the desires of their clientele. The author compares what occurred in the manufacturing industry during the 1980s to what libraries face today. Drawing on his experience as an industrial management consultant he proffers solutions using the concepts of "Lean" management. Lean management builds on earlier models, including total quality management, the Toyota Production System, and just-in-time manufacturing.

The eleven chapters or strategies address the themes of customer retention, resistance to change, delivery chain of service, performance metrics, service improvement, and pull versus push. The author gives specific scenarios from his consultations with the New York Public Library, the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, the Tulsa City-County Library, and Oklahoma State University. While the focus belongs to public libraries, academic and special libraries will find the information useful for evaluating and streamlin-

ing their programs. Most of the Lean application examples occur in the print-based environment. Only chapters nine and ten discuss the provision of media/digital resources, but the Lean concepts used to improve print-based services can also be applied in the online environment. Recognizing that a number of library competitors come from the media/digital industry including Google, Amazon.com, Netflix, and Barnes and Noble, the author suggests that libraries must retain and gain their clientele by offering better service, innovative programs, and access to the latest technology. These improvements must take place across the entire delivery chain of service. This means viewing all library departments as “a series of links in a chain that together provide a service or product” (p. 34). Huber also suggests strategies for overcoming resistance to change, like involving in the planning process those individuals who will be affected by the change. Library metrics or statistics should be measurable, related to customer service (speed, simplicity, and quality), and tied to the delivery service chain. Non-value-added activities should be culled from the process. Once these strategies are implemented the author suggests that costs will be reduced and library clientele will be “better served” because library budgets will be able to handle emergency requests. Finally, the book recommends implementing the precepts of “kaizen – making small continuous improvements to reap efficiency” (p. ix).

This book is essential for library directors, department heads, and librarians interested in creating a customer service focused environment.

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