CRITICAL ISSUES OF MUSEUM LEADERSHIP NOW

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LUNCH WITH NEMA: JULY 30, 2014
GRAB YOUR SANDWICH AND MEET

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FROM WHERE DOES AUTHORITY FLOW?

- Create an internal structure that allows for creativity, collaboration and building confidence.
Restructuring came from big budget cuts

Result was the organizational structure had to change

Cross-functional teams emphasizing transparency, input, and communication

Board and Director at the base, not at the top

http://artsfwd.org/silo-busting/
Is success scalable?

- Adapt ideas and information from across the museum spectrum and from the nonprofit and for-profit sectors
- Consider the large impact of small-scale change
• Summer School: Slightly Twisted Learning – Roving Office Hours

• Staff bring their offices to the galleries

• Visitors can sit with the Director, a Registrar, a Curator, or a Program Producer to get a grasp of future of museum.

• All questions welcomed.
WHERE’S THE SPACE TO SHARPEN THE CREATIVE EDGE?

- Encourage experimentation (and its related failure)
Each year, the Great Jack O’Lantern Blaze draws thousands of visitors to HHV’s Van Cortlandt Manor over a 25-day period in October.

An art installation, Blaze is a trademarked event utilizing hand carved pumpkins arranged to highlight the architecture and history of the site, and an original music soundtrack.
What qualities support leadership and sustainable institutions?

- Know that leadership is about embracing change.
- Agile museums make change management a priority while expanding skillsets of staff and volunteers.
- Develop more than one course of action, use multiple vocabularies.
- Be prepared to switch plans, interchange project elements and rethink objectives in response to shifting realities.
• Merger occurs in 2008
• Saves struggling theatre and strengthens the artistic mission of children’s museum
• Museum integrates theatrical elements into regular programming
• Museum director had vision for the positive impact of the merger, seeing the two organizations as “totally compatible”
DO YOUR EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS REFLECT YOUR COMMUNITY?

HOW IMPORTANT IS THAT?

• Explore the beauty of a big tent
• Complementary ideas and voices make for richer outcomes
• “The most important book a museum director can read is the US Census” – Arnold Lehman
ISABELLA STEWART GARDNER MUSEUM

- Embraces the standards and benchmarks of the Commonwealth Compact @ UMass Boston
- Annually measures and reports progress toward diversifying staff and board
- http://www.umb.edu/commonwealth_compact
WHAT PLACES YOUR MUSEUM AT THE CENTER OF CIVIC LIFE IN YOUR COMMUNITY?

• Why is your museum important? Necessary? Loved?
CHATTANOOGA MUSEUMS COLLABORATION

- Three institutions
- One goal: function more effectively and efficiently
- Improved quality of administrative functions
- Raised visibility and fueled additional collaborations
- City involvement and funding
WHAT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO YOUR MUSEUM’S FUTURE?

• You are part of your museum’s continuum.

• Video: George Sparks, President & CEO, Denver Museum of Nature and Science, http://tinyurl.com/ltkgqdd
Consciously think about who will follow you, both individually and collectively

Providing opportunities for staff to grow and lead

Be upfront and open about what change will mean for the organization

Hire people who can push you and being able to replace you
• Leaders act on what they see and hear.

• They encourage their museums to be platforms for dialogue, diverse participation, and authentic experiences.
Oakland Museum of California

• More than 3,000 visitors participated in testing and evaluating new ideas, 60+ staff members, and more than 100 consultants, designers, convening participants, and volunteers to revision the Gallery of California Art

• Has led to organizational restructuring

• http://artsfwd.org/how-visitors-changed-our-museum/
IOLANI PALACE

• A symbol of a white colonization, Executive Director Kippen de Alba Chu regularly engages native activist groups.

• “No one should underestimate the power of building bridges,” he says, “even if, at the time you build one, it’s almost like a bridge to nowhere.”