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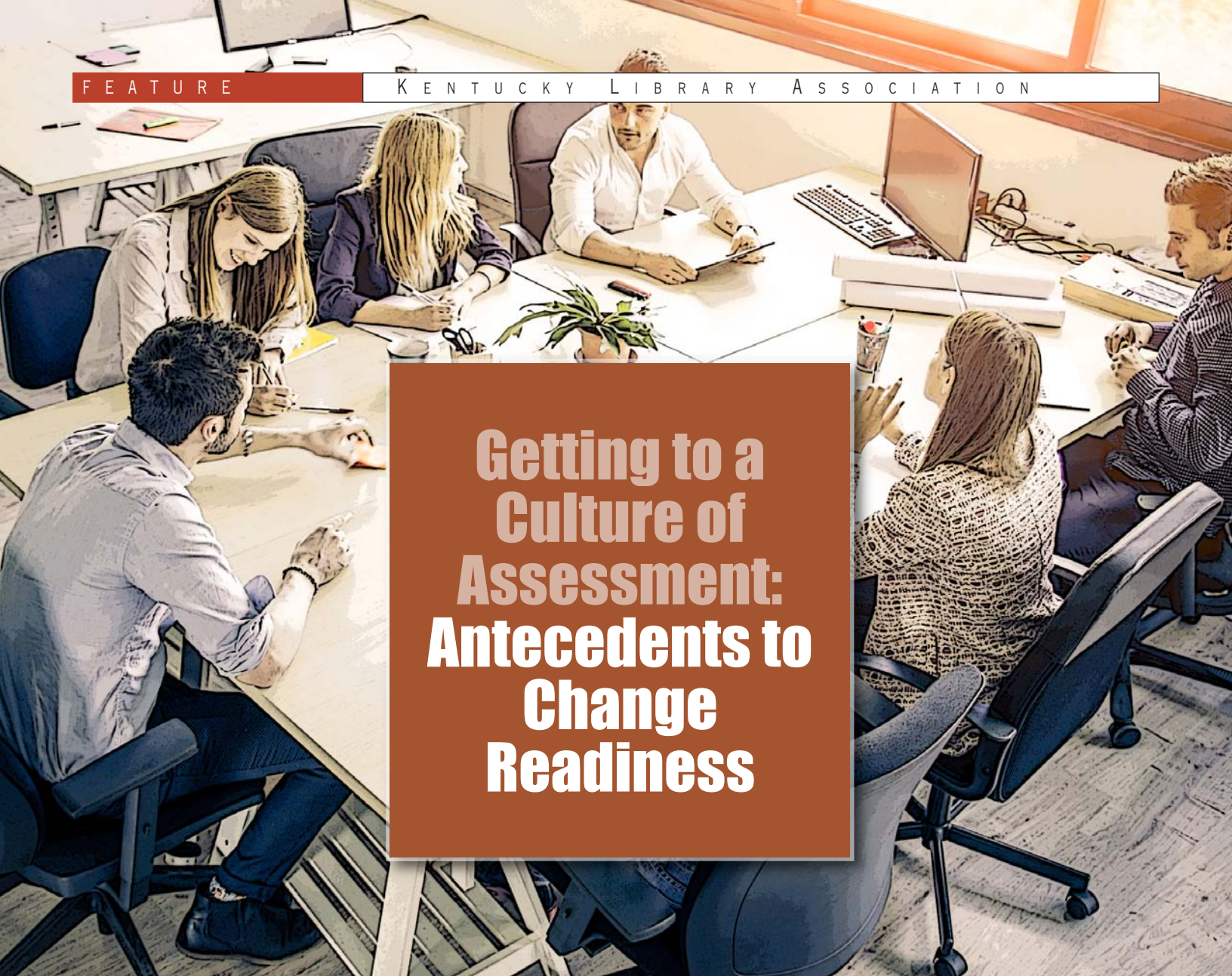


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Getting to a Culture of Assessment: Antecedents to Change Readiness

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ABSTRACT

Paramount to the success of any assessment initiative is an organization that supports and welcomes the processes that will influence meaningful change. To create this culture of assessment, librarians must generate stakeholder buy-in. By synthesizing the prior research in Business Management and Organizational Psychology, we propose antecedents to buy-in to creating a culture of assessment that can provide a theoretical framework for meaningful organizational change on any scale. We situate the conceptual antecedents to buy-in, *Management Needs* and *Employee Needs*, through a familiar tool for assessment librarians: *Suggestion Systems*.

Keywords: Culture of Assessment, Organizational Psychology, Management, Buy-in, Organizational Change, Suggestion Systems

As organizations navigate the waters of change, the concepts of buy-in and engagement comprise what Smith refers to as organizational “social energy” (410); he describes this energy as the attitudes, motivations, trust, and enthusiasm around change that is necessary for organizational change. By building a solid base of social energy, libraries can have employees who participate in “engaged change” – a model where “stakeholders are involved in determining the course of the change process,” which can be an “effective way of getting buy-in across the organization, mainly because there is cross-organizational input” (Cervone 62). Based on this elaboration of social energy and engaged change, we see a connection between buy-in, engagement, and a culture of assessment – specifically that buy-in and engagement are qualities necessary to beget a culture of assessment.

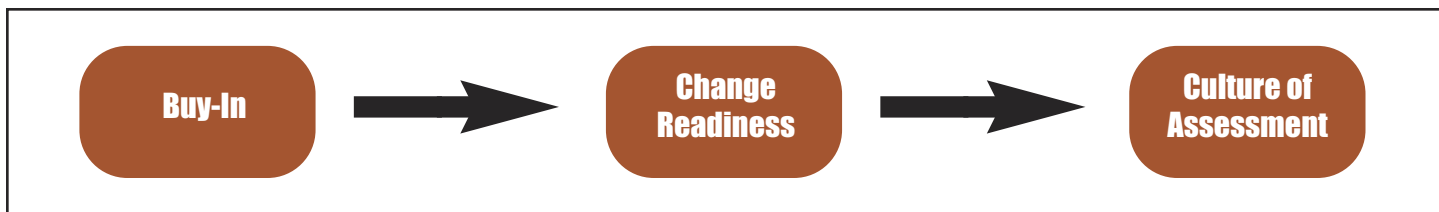


Figure 1. The path of getting to Culture of Assessment.

Much of the culture of assessment literature focuses on factors that encourage and promote assessment. Lakos, Phipps, and Wilson define a culture of assessment as:

an organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research, and analysis, and where services are planned and delivered in ways that maximize positive outcomes and impacts for customers and stakeholders. A Culture of Assessment exists in organizations where staff care to know what results they produce and how those results relate to customers' expectations. Organizational mission, values, structures, and systems support behavior that is performance and learning focused. (352)

Although recent work by Farkas, Hinchliffe, and Houk approach “culture of assessment” from the standpoint of librarians-as-educators, their research corroborates the work on factors that influence and facilitate assessment; they also address the importance of existing culture and the clarity of expectations when evaluating student learning outcomes (150). As such, their research is extensible beyond assessment of library instruction to assessment in libraries. As libraries continue to seek ways to demonstrate value, whether through librarians as teachers, the library as gateway to information access, or the library's contribution to institutional success, a key component to creating a culture committed to demonstrating value is by building buy-in.

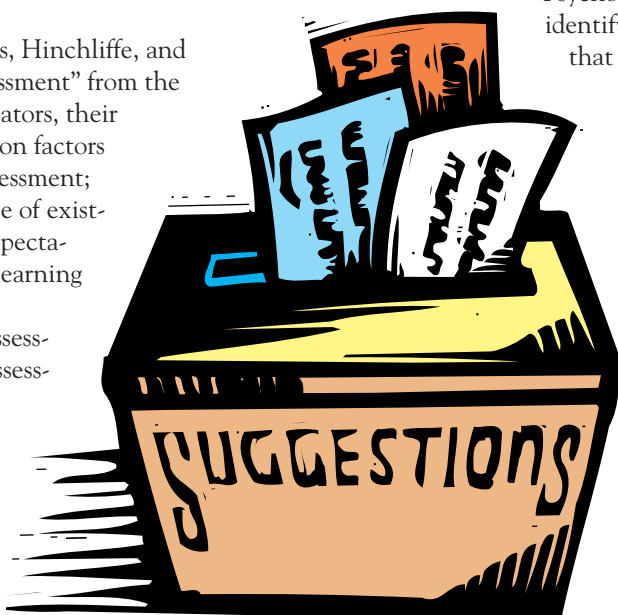
After reflecting on internal focus groups used to evaluate library spaces and services during a 2014 project, we noticed that though the internal focus groups were useful, more could have been done to increase buy-in and engagement amongst library employees beforehand. Focus groups are a type of suggestion system, i.e. a way to gather employee feedback, which can then be utilized by assessment librarians to inform evidence-based recommendations and decisions. In this article, we aim to develop the conversation on getting to a culture of assessment by identifying antecedents to buy-in that can increase engagement within library suggestion systems. This approach builds on earlier work by Lakos and Phipps, who identify openness, integrity, trust, and a well-articulated purpose from leadership as pertinent

to developing suggestion systems while on the path to culture. In an effort to enumerate these antecedents, we rely on Business Management and Organizational Psychology literature that concentrates on employee buy-in, change readiness, and organizational change; by focusing on case studies as well as theoretical and conceptual analyses, we begin to create Lakos and Phipps' environment where decisions are based on facts, research, and analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The exploration of Business Management and Organizational Psychology literature affords the opportunity to identify and synthesize the antecedents to buy-in that foster and support a culture of assessment.

Within this body of literature, the culmination of these antecedents is referred to as *Change Readiness* (Holt et al.; Parish et al.). One overarching need arises from this set of literature: generating employee buy-in; thus, the relationship between them can be represented by Figure 1.



This road map manifests within suggestion systems – specifically the suggestion systems that assessment librarians can set up to foster a culture of assessment, and provides the impetus for examining the antecedents to buy-in within assessment librarianship. *Suggestion systems* include focus groups in the assessment realm; within the literature we review, the term refers to systems by which employees can

submit suggestions to management for ways to improve efficiency; conversely, it can also refer to management responding to employee suggestions. Thus, the idea of a suggestion system implies a two-way form of communication. In addition to increasing participation in suggestion systems, we also examine the best way to bridge the communication gap between constituents and those leading the assessment: what needs to be in place in order to obtain more – and more honest – input? How can we engender a feeling of inclusion within employees? Through the definition and discussion of antecedents to buy-in, in the final section of this article we begin to explore concrete ways to positively impact employee participation in future surveys, focus groups, and other methods of data collection to create a culture of assessment.

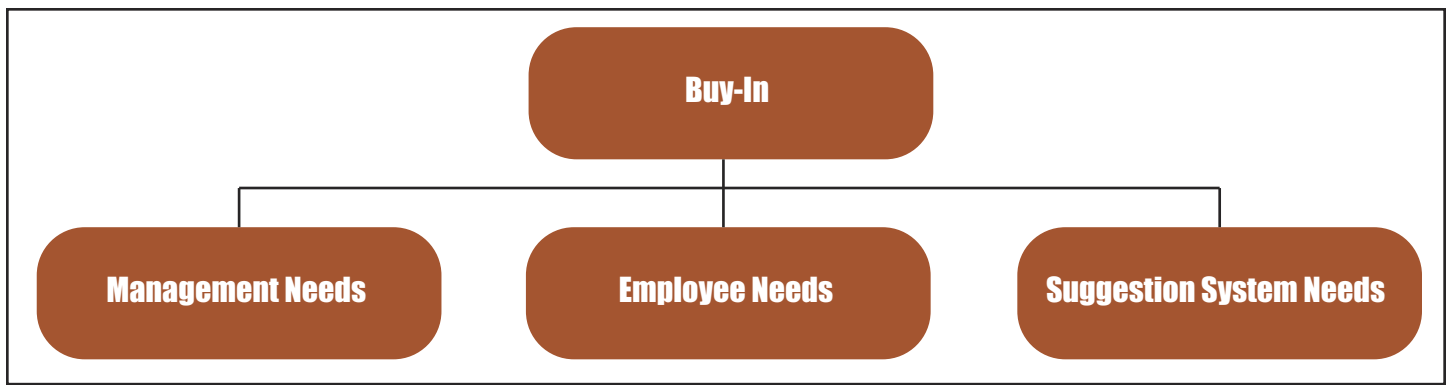


Figure 2. The relationship of the categories of the antecedents to buy-in.

GENERATING EMPLOYEE BUY-IN

Buy-in is identified as a necessary precursor for change throughout the literature (Parish et al; Bateh et al.; Chrusciel & Field; Holmes; Winchell). While coming to this conclusion in various ways (e.g. employee surveys, literature reviews, case studies, and experience in management) and researching various avenues (e.g. resistance to change, commitment to change, and success factors for change), all of these authors ultimately conclude that the nuances of their research foster a commitment to change. Whether it is explicitly defined as buy-in within the literature is moot because all of the factors *comprise* buy-in, given the result of change acceptance. With the following literature review, we synthesize and elaborate on all of these antecedents to buy-in because we view the resultant commitment to change as the way in which we can get to a culture of assessment.

Based on the evidence presented, we cannot expect feedback without employees believing in the need for change; this speaks to the need for management to generate employee buy-in. Chrusciel and Field report that by creating a “staff critical mass” (506), i.e., the smallest amount of buy-in, we can generate more buy-in. We identify three groupings of antecedents to buy-in (see Figure2).

To explain why we present the literature in this way, we must briefly digress; the structure of a library organization is often bureaucratic in nature – top-down. Given that the leadership of an organization usually has the final say in decision-making, we see *Management Needs* as the first place to discuss the antecedents to buy-in, because management will be in the position of fostering these antecedents within an organization. Next, we move to *Employee Needs*; this is not so much something employees need to generate within themselves, but a mindset and level of participation that management needs to cultivate within employees, based on their initial implementation of buy-in antecedents. Finally, we turn to *Suggestion System Needs*. The collective participation of management and employees in the suggestion system is a concrete way in which all of the antecedents to buy-in can come together; similarly, the discussion of suggestion systems within the Business Management and Organizational Psychology has a convenient parallel to the data collection methods of assessment librarians, particularly focus groups.

MANAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP NEEDS

Explaining something cyclical in a linear fashion is a difficult prospect, especially when each individual antecedent is no more important than the next. Each cog plays a critical role in moving the next along. While everything tends to blend when the wheels begin to move, it is integral to consider the bureaucratic nature of the library organization. Therefore, we begin our review of the literature with *Management Needs*, the part of the machine that can begin to power each individual wheel. While we see management ultimately sharing power (whether real or perceived) via the antecedents of *Participation in Decision-Making* and *Personal Gain* [for employees], the beginnings to buy-in and the resultant culture of assessment start with those who have decision-making abilities. Thus, we begin to move the wheels of buy-in with the following *Management Needs*:

Vision

Described as having a “plan of action” (Chrusciel & Field 507), vision is an antecedent to buy-in that requires direct communication that provides a rationale for the decision-making process (Bateh et al. 113). Moulton et al. suggest how to formulate an action plan for management’s vision by identifying current successes and understanding past successes (26), and is also echoed by Bernerth et al. in their analysis of organizational change variables (303).

Also important to vision is the need for it to resonate with employees and be accepted by the majority of the organization. Holt et al. identify one of five most influential factors of change readiness as a cohesive belief within the organization that the proposed change is necessary to progress (232). *Commitment to Change* (C2C), defined by Herscovitch and Meyer as a “force (mind-set) that binds an individual to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative” (as cited in Holt et al. 253), is heavily impacted by fit with vision and is achieved by defining rationale. In their analysis of a large non-profit organization and its employees, Parish et al. found that there must be harmony between leaders’ and employees’ vision for change in order to foster C2C within employees. An action plan can also serve as the procedural guidelines for the vision and rationale, providing what Chrusciel and Field refer to as a “flexible curriculum” (507), i.e. a course of action that anticipates potential barriers along the way in order to deal with them. In cases of incongruence, management must seek to

guide employee perceptions of the change process and build it into their action plan to achieve C2C.

The way in which the rationale for change is communicated to employees is also important to generating buy-in; this speaks to the need for a high level of Interactional Justice, which refers to the manner in which management delivers information about the change process (Bernerth et al. 321; Buech et al. 507). Bernerth et al. argue that high Interactional Justice can promote the perception of leaders as more credible, competent, and trustworthy (321). Additionally, management needs to communicate the benefits of the change to the organization as well as to individual employees (Bateh et al.; Moulton et al.) to increase what Chrusciel and Field describe as “personal gain” (508), which will be elaborated on in *Employee Needs*.

Communication

The emphasis on communication in the literature speaks to its importance in generating buy-in. Chrusciel and Field identify comprehensive communication as a critical success factor in organizational change. It is the mode by which management will share vision, issues, process, rationale, and provide access to all information regarding the change process. By emphasizing Interactional Justice in communication, management will optimize C2C (Bernerth et al. 321; Buech et al. 507).

A large part of being an effective communicator is being a patient listener (Winchell 36). Listening can provide management with the information they need to effectively facilitate the change process, as individual unit employees are more likely to understand day-to-day operations than management (Kesting & Ulhoi 65). Listening also uncovers information needed to manage the logistics of the change process and to ensure that those concerned with relationships and organizational structure feel the vision considers both of these aspects in the change process (Bateh et al. 114).

Transparency is another component of Communication that is documented throughout the literature, particularly with information exchange between leadership and employees about rationale, decision-making, and notice prior to implementation of changes as identified by Rhoades and Eisenberger’s meta-analysis of antecedents to perceived organizational support, or POS. Winchell describes transparency as a two-way transfer of organizational information (37). Transparency increases buy-in by enabling employees to understand management’s rationale for change (Holt et al. 234); on the other hand, foregoing transparency can cause trust violations and damage employee buy-in (Holmes 40). By enabling employees to contribute informed feedback and engage with the change process, transparency can foster credibility.

Credibility

While credibility is not explicitly discussed within a majority of the literature we examined, the belief in management and their leadership is a running theme through discussions of leadership effectiveness (Bateh et al. 114); transparency (see: *Communication*); and commitment to change (Parish et al. 33).

For the authors that do discuss credibility, Winchell details the need for leaders to assess their own credibility; believing in and demonstrating their credibility establishes leadership in the change process. Rovner adds that communication can bolster credibility (27).

Throughout the rest of the literature exists a string of disparate qualities that we have tied to a need for credibility in order for leadership to be effective with the generation of buy-in and the management of change. Therefore, while not explicitly discussed, we view a belief in management’s credibility as a critical factor because of the consistent discussions of trust and organizational justice throughout the literature (Clegg et al.; Bernerth et al.; Rhoades & Eisenberger). Building on Winchell but not directly discussing credibility is Holt et al.; the authors reiterate that a necessary component of change readiness is leaders internalizing the belief that they are capable of orchestrating the change. If we follow Winchell’s logic, this can lead to credibility, which will generate employee buy-in.

Suggestion Systems

While suggestion systems have their own antecedents for success (see: *Suggestion System Needs*), the systems themselves need to be set up by the leadership in the organization. Anderson and West posit that by creating a suggestion system, leadership can expect to (1) mitigate the risk associated with voicing opinions by fostering participative safety (as cited in Axtell et al. 265); (2) foster innovation that leads to an increase in the quantity and quality of employee-generated ideas (Frese et al. 1139; Kesting & Ulhoi 65); and (3) see an increase in ownership, which is found to increase C2C (Siegel & Kaemmerer 553; Parish et al. 32; Kesting & Ulhoi 65).

In her employee survey research, Rovner (26) emphasizes the need for employee feedback as well as the steps for facilitating employee surveys and ways in which to act on the gathered data. Focusing on service organizations, she conveys the need to respond effectively to the feedback from not only customers, but the employees that interact with those customers. She asserts that securing buy-in is necessary to retrieve meaningful feedback and can be done through a variety of mechanisms that relate to the antecedents of vision, communication, and credibility. Kesting & Ulhoi contend that creating a suggestion system can be a catalyst for overall employee participation by nurturing an employee’s sense of *Procedural Justice*, i.e. the level of perceived fairness based on the ability of employees to contribute their opinions (Bernerth et al. 306). This sentiment is echoed by Holmes as well as Clegg et al. in their call for management to closely listen and consider employees’ suggestions (referred to as “*Trust that Heard*”) in order to generate participation, which in turn generates buy-in (410).

Management Support

Similar to communication as an antecedent to buy-in, management support plays a concomitant role in the change process. In their development of a scale that can be used to gauge employee change readiness, Holt et al. found that management support is one of the five factors that play a critical role in gauging change

readiness (240). Similarly, Rhoades and Eisenberger show that management support is the second most impactful factor next to fairness on POS (700).

Like the other buy-in antecedents, management support cannot be implemented in isolation; it is necessary to foster transparency between employees and leaders, as it supports employee idea generation by giving employees leeway to step outside of their traditional roles in order to engage with the change process (Axtell et al. 268). Management support via communication and transparency can also encourage feedback by softening the risk associated with sharing opinions (Kesting & Ulhoi 75) and fosters C2C, a critical success factor to organizational change (Chrusciel & Field 514).

EMPLOYEE NEEDS

We see from *Management Needs* that the antecedents are all tightly woven together – seemingly one and the same, but each having a distinct role worth elaborating to ensure that no antecedent goes ignored and hampers the system of buy-in generation; the same principle applies to *Employee Needs*. The employee needs elucidated here are all intensely connected to *perceptions* – to the affective domain of organizational change. Ingrained within Business Management and Organizational Psychology constructs, we now seek to explain the emotional aspects of change that need to be created or tempered within employees to generate optimal buy-in.

Personal Gain

Another critical success factor for organizational change as defined by Chrusciel and Field is the perception of personal gain, a concept that relates to perceptions of fairness and justice. Cited as one of the five most impactful factors in assessing change readiness (Holt et al. 251), the perception of fairness can influence a person's motivation to become a part of the critical mass necessary to generate buy-in amongst hesitant employees; this provides an impetus for management to explicitly identify what employees seek to gain from the change process (Chrusciel & Field 508).

The emphasis on fairness as a component of personal gain is emphasized elsewhere; earlier work from Clegg et al. describes "*Trust that Benefit*" as an "expectancy that those managing the organization have one's interest at heart, and that one will share in the benefits of any changes" (410). This correlates to the submission of ideas and overall engagement in the process, which increases buy-in (Siegel & Kaemmerer 553; Parish et al. 35; Kesting & Ulhoi 75). Employees' positive perceptions of the suggestion system, or *Valence of the Suggestion System (VSS)*, are also components of personal gain as VSS is comprised of views that the suggestion system is relevant and beneficial (Buech et al. 519). The reciprocal relationship of personal gain and the other buy-in antecedents provide management with the impetus to identify what employees seek to gain in order to generate and maintain a high level of buy-in into the change process.

Affective Commitment to Change (AC2C), the inclination to support the change initiative, is found to have a significant

effect on an employee's C2C and a positive correlation to personal gain (Parish et al.; Herscovitch & Meyer as cited in Holt 253). Parish et al. find AC2C has a significant impact on the success of an implemented change process. While AC2C also positively correlates to improved performance, employees' perception of the success of the change process can address personal gain, which in turn positively affects AC2C and closes the cycle.

Other literature addresses personal gain in a way that highlights the benefits to the organization. Those concerned with organizational gain – as opposed to personal gain – will be more likely to buy in to the change if they are convinced that long-term benefits will outweigh the short-term costs of the change process (Bateh et al. 113). To accommodate these concerns, Winchell emphasizes the need to address organizational processes in order to improve organizational workflow. Leadership can also utilize this message of improved workflow to increase perceptions of personal gain amongst employees (Moulton et al. 26).

Emotional Perceptions

The literature on the antecedent of emotional perceptions focuses explicitly on the need to create the feeling within employees that the emotional consequences of change are positive. The literature addresses the following: AC2C; trust; perceptions of fairness; and organizational readiness. AC2C is found to have a significant effect on employee commitment to organizational change; additionally, AC2C influences perceptions of the success of the change implementation and the improved performance of the organization (Parish et al. 35). Management needs to influence employee perceptions about the change in order to manage employee expectations; specifically, employees need to be convinced that management's action plan can be implemented by everyone in the organization (Chrusciel & Field 509; Holt et al. 237). Holt et al. describe this belief in change as "self-efficacy" (237).

Trust, a component of emotional perceptions, is integral to buy-in as trust violations have been found to lead to resistance to change (Bateh et al. 113). Ultimately, trust ties back to a belief in the vision of organizational change and is affected by every Employee Need. Additionally, trust can be closely tied to fairness and organizational justice (Rhoades & Eisenberger 698); the fairness component of trust and emotional perceptions reiterates the importance of "*Trust that Benefit*" (Clegg et al. 410) and brings to light the relevance of *Distributive Justice*, i.e. the "comparison of an individual's perceived inputs and outcomes and those inputs and outcomes of a comparison other" (Bernerth et al. 305). Since trust violations lead to change resistance, managing emotional perceptions is an important antecedent for buy-in that influences change readiness.

Participation in Decision-Making

While referred to in the literature in different ways – autonomy; engagement; participation; leadership-solicited employee feedback; and the perception of being heard – greater participation is thought to increase employee satisfaction and acceptance of the

change process, and thus is closely tied to personal gain, one of Chrusciel and Field's critical success factors. The increased buy-in via personal gain generates participation and comes through a number of mechanisms: those who have the chance to voice their concerns are given the opportunity to influence the change; as well, those who voice their opinions often have greater access to information regarding the change (Kesting & Ulhoi 75; Holt et al. 252). By making room for participation in decision-making, employees can aid in the change process by contributing different and potentially new sets of knowledge and contacts which can boost morale, foster employee satisfaction, and positively affect AC2C (Kesting & Ulhoi 75; Parish et al. 35).

Procedural Justice is similar to the "Trust that Heard" (Clegg et al. 410) in that both exhibit the benefits of employee participation (Bernerth et al. 315). Components of Procedural Justice are those that concern fairness and relate directly to participation in decision-making; fairness is identified as an antecedent to POS in Rhoades and Eisenberger's meta-analysis.

Participation in decision-making closely relates to the following section *Suggestion System Needs*, but is important to mention here since the autonomy required for participation is something that needs to be delineated by management.

Holmes reasons that participation can manifest itself when leaders communicate by providing advice to employees on how to best implement change according to plan; in so doing, employees can feel they are a part of the change process. Autonomy enables employees to feel they have more control over their work lives, to devote time to engage in the change process, as well as feel they have the ability and right to participate in the process. Autonomy, as we will later see, is an important concept explained by Axtell et al. as a large predictor of motivation to participate in suggestion systems through the contribution of ideas.

SUGGESTION SYSTEM NEEDS

The process of creating buy-in is cyclical; buy-in generates more buy-in, thereby having a cumulative effect. The need for management to create suggestion systems amounts not only to the need for leadership to influence this cycle, but to create meaningful change in the organization. Soliciting employee feedback enables leaders to assess ongoing buy-in to the change process (Chrusciel & Field 514); additionally, employee suggestions can be integral to identifying processes that need to be changed within an organization as leadership tends to have incomplete information as to the daily routines of an organization's individual units (Kesting & Ulhoi 75). Further, employee suggestions tend to have a higher rate of buy-in than those suggested and implemented by leadership (Rovner 27). Lastly, Figueroa provides evidence that an increase in suggestions is positively correlated with an increase in quality of suggestions (as cited in Buech et al. 519). Given the overwhelming evidence on the benefits of a suggestion system, we propose the following antecedents necessary to create safe and meaningful suggestion systems for optimal buy-in:

Motivation to Submit Suggestions

Buech et al. suggest that motivation is a critical antecedent to engaging with an organizational suggestion system (519). Three factors influence motivation to submit suggestions: (1) In their analysis of improving submissions of ideas to suggestion systems, Frese et al. report that the ease with which they can submit suggestions makes employees more likely to submit suggestions; (2) Axtell et al. find that autonomy increases the likelihood that employees will submit suggestions in their analysis of a suggestion system; (3) lastly, Axtell et al. reveal that prior implementation of employee suggestions contributes to an increase of employee suggestions; in so doing, it encourages those already participating and provides evidence to others that leadership is serious about their input (265). The value of prior implementation is also reflected by Rovner, and by Clegg et al., who report that "Trust that Heard" (410) improves VSS (valence of the suggestion system), which in turn increases employees' motivation to submit suggestions (Buech et al. 510).

Buech et al. study two other sources of motivation: VSS and the Interactional Justice of the suggestion system (517). While this speaks to the following section on system responsiveness, it is worth mentioning that Interactional Justice positively correlates to motivation and that VSS mediates this relationship (Axtell et al. 265). Since VSS is affected by employees' perception that management is paying attention to their input, it is reasonable to conclude that management feedback impacts employee motivation to engage with the suggestion system.

System Responsiveness

System responsiveness is closely tied to motivation to submit suggestions; both must coexist to foster safe and meaningful suggestion systems. Given that Interactional Justice correlates to motivation to submit suggestions, a responsive system contributes to the need for Interactional Justice and is necessary to create a meaningful feedback space (Buech et al.). This ties closely to "Trust that Heard," something which gives the organization access to information that can improve performance and foster Procedural Justice (Figueroa as cited in Buech et al.; Bernerth et al.). Management is incentivized to ensure that system responses incorporate Interactional Justice, as it positively correlates with motivation to submit suggestions.

Valence of the Suggestion System

Valence of the Suggestion System (VSS) refers to employees' positive feelings towards the suggestion system and the perceived benefit of the system (Buech et al. 507). Not surprisingly, VSS has a close relationship with system responsiveness and an impact on motivation to submit suggestions. We view VSS as a need to creating safe and meaningful suggestion systems because employees' positive feelings towards the system are crucial for participation; it is also essential that employees see the suggestion system as beneficial, which in turn will also affect their motivation to engage.

While only explicitly elaborated within Buech et al., we view VSS as a separate need comprised of Interactional Justice and employee participation, each with their own antecedents.

While Interactional Justice influences VSS, employee participation and VSS have a reciprocal relationship. Valence can be improved through employee participation and ownership; it can also be a catalyst for increased employee participation through management demonstration of “Trust that Heard” (Clegg et al. 410), and lead to increased engagement with the system. VSS is not only necessary for creating safe and meaningful suggestion systems, but is critical for buy-in because it merges the antecedents of participation in decision-making and motivation to submit suggestions.

System Efficiency

The literature addresses the need to omit organizational barriers and system/suggestion inhibitors as they correlate with fewer submitted suggestions. Inhibitors refer to adverse organizational barriers such as difficulty of submission and the time-consuming nature of waiting for feedback, which can negatively affect motivation to submit suggestions. In their analysis of suggestion system submissions, Frese et al. find that system inhibitors are more damaging to the motivation to submit suggestions than even a lack of management support and system responsiveness. Comparably, Kesting and Ulhoi discuss the needs of the suggestion system to have its own action plan to highlight system efficiency: How will employees’ ideas be evaluated? How will they be implemented? Can the implementation workload be distributed? This speaks not only to system responsiveness, but to a system that has its own efficient workflow, policies, and procedures (78).

The common thread throughout the literature on System Efficiency is that organizational change requires a plan; this resonates with the antecedent of suggestion systems because of the influence of Procedural Justice on buy-in. As reported by Diehl and Stroebe, an increase in quantity of suggestions correlates to an increase in quality of suggestions ($r = 0.82$); thus, management should feel compelled to remove organizational barriers and reap the benefits of harnessing employees’ suggestions (as cited in Frese et al. 507).

Management Support

Finally, we return to management support, but this time with a focus on how leaders can support suggestion systems. In their development of an instrument to gauge change readiness, Holt et al. find that one of the most influential readiness factors is management support, i.e. “the belief that the organizational leaders [are] committed to the change” (251). Management support is necessary for employees to step outside of their typical role and contribute ideas using an employer’s time and resources; it also buffers the potential risk associated with sharing opinions (Kesting & Ulhoi 78). Giving permission to contribute purposefully generates employee participation by generating ownership and autonomy, which, as we have seen thus far, only serves to benefit the organization (e.g. Siegel & Kaemmerer 553; Parish et al. 37).

Management support focuses on the implementation of ideas rather than their submission (Axtell et al. 282), but this is still important as employees need to believe that the suggestion

system is relevant and useful in order to feel motivated to engage with the suggestion system (Buech et al. 508). Relatedly, leadership implementation of previous suggestions is integral in motivating employees to participate in the suggestion system, as it conveys to employees that leadership values their input (Axtell et al. 283).

By examining the underpinnings of a culture of assessment, we have sought to answer how an organization sets the stage for beginning to practice and embrace a culture of assessment. By focusing research on generating buy-in for organizational change, we suggest that buy-in feeds into change readiness and is the precursor to creating a culture of assessment. By exploring the characteristics of an organization that generate buy-in, we place *Management Needs* and *Employee Needs* within the context of *Suggestion System Needs*. This framework allows assessment librarians to explore concrete strategies for establishing the antecedents to buy-in and foster the ideal culture of assessment.

CONCLUSION

As libraries respond to a changing environment by establishing assessment programs, building buy-in is critical for creating the culture of assessment needed to establish and sustain those programs. By incorporating these antecedents to build buy-in for assessment programs, librarians can create Lakos’ and Phipps’ environment where the entire organization from administration to staff is engaged in and values the results of assessment, and the relationship between the assessment results and patrons’ expectations. By:

- Developing a strong vision and action plan for assessment;
- Defining and communicating a rationale for decisions about your assessment vision and plan;
- Fostering transparency by informing library employees about assessment efforts and listening to their feedback;
- Incorporating all levels of management (e.g. department heads and directors) to support and talk about assessment efforts;
- Creating safe spaces for forums; and
- Establishing personal and organizational gain from participating by incorporating feedback from the forums,

assessment librarians can generate buy-in, create a culture of assessment, and improve the likelihood of successful assessment efforts. The reviewed literature provides the evidence for the value of incorporating these strategies into assessment. By integrating these strategies, assessment librarians can create a culture that has a renewed commitment to data, inquiry, and reasoning. In so doing, they can improve the collection of meaningful data that is utilized to guide the library along the path of successful organizational change.

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