Creating a FearLESS Culture

ACM InterActivity 2019

Stephen Ashton, Ph.D.
sashton@thanksgivingpoint.org

Patricia Brown
paybrown@thinkeryaustin.org

Ashlee Bailey
abailey@amazeum.org

Kate Treiber
ktreiber@prairieplay.org
A FearLESS Culture at Thanksgiving Point

ACM InterActivity 2019 | STEPHEN ASHTON, PH.D.
SOME CONTEXT
BETWEEN SLC & PROVO
TWO CAMPUS
FIVE VENUES

- Ashton Gardens
- Museum of Natural Curiosity
- Farm Country
- Butterfly Biosphere
- Museum of Ancient Life
Museum of Ancient Life
Farm Country
Butterfly Biosphere
Museum of Natural Curiosity
Ashton Gardens
CONSOLIDATION AND MISSION REFINEMENT

MISSION:
Thanksgiving Point Institute is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit farm, garden, and museum complex that draws upon the natural world to cultivate transformative family learning.
ONE Guest Service Department
ONE Education Department
ONE Exhibit Department
ONE Marketing Department
ONE Accounting Department
ONE Events Department
ONE Audience Research Department
ONE Property
ALL Working Together
HERE ARE SOME OTHER THINGS WE’VE DONE:
CROSS PROPERTY COLLABORATION

- Ambassador Program
- Directors’ Committee
- Cross Property Meetings
SEMIANNUAL ALL HANDS MEETINGS

• Celebrate success for EVERYONE
• Get everyone on the SAME PAGE
• We are ONE TEAM
CREATIVITY AND COLLABORATION

• Design thinking and Human Centered Design
• Practiced brainstorming
**The 7 Rules of Brainstorming**

1. **Differ judgment**
2. Encourage wild ideas
3. Build on the ideas of others
4. Stay focused on the topic
5. One conversation at a time
6. Be visual (represent ideas graphically)
7. Go for quantity
STILL A WORK IN PROGRESS

- Seeking to improve communication.
CULTIVATING A FearLESS CULTURE HAS HELPED US EXPAND AND CONTINUE TO DELIVER ON OUR MISSION.
Thinkery’s Mission

To create innovative learning experiences that equip and inspire the next generation of creative problem solvers.

Joyful learning through STEAM-driven play.

Play-based
Inquiry-rich
STEAM-focused
(Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Math)
Our History: Austin Children’s Museum → Thinkery

Established in 1983

Relocated in 1997

Opened newly constructed “Thinkery at the Meredith Learning Lab” in 2013
Leadership Changes During Transformation

• Significant senior leadership changes shortly before and after new museum opening.

• Multiple Interim CEOs 2014 – 2016.
Why Move Towards Collaboration?

Even within an environment of persistent, uninvited change, Thinkery enacted the vision of this new museum. It is a tremendously successful and beloved community treasure.

However, the impact of so much change was a siloed and stressed organization fearful of the next “big change” that might occur. Even so, a strong desire for a more collaborative work environment existed.
Goal of Collaboration

- Cultivate a sense of community in our workplace that moves beyond fear-based responses and compels our employees to go beyond the expectations of their role by absorbing as much organizational knowledge as possible to help drive the museum forward with informed and sound decisions.
Impact of Collaboration

Collaboration can:

- Make you look at the bigger picture
- Promote self-analysis
- Encourage problem solving
- Teach
Collaboration

Key missing ingredient: Shared identity and purpose.
A lack of shared identity and purpose contributed to:

- A lack of cohesion around mission and role in community
- A lack of understanding that we are, in fact, an educational institution
- A staffing structure that is costly and not fulfilling its goals
- Confusion around roles and responsibilities in galleries
Building A Collaborative Culture

Start at the beginning

Thinkery’s “beginning” was to develop a Statement of Purpose.

Time, attention and persistence

My daily reminder: This is the long game!

Deliberate and methodical work

Change how we lead the organization and make decisions.
Change how and what we communicate.
Creating the Statement of Purpose: Started with a small group of leaders, then expanded the circle of engagement.
Step by Step…

Step 1. Director of Learning Experiences and CEO drafted a research-based Statement of Purpose

Step 2. Conducted review and revision with mid-level leadership to create a second draft.

Step 3. Marketing/communications department revised the second draft to create a communications friendly, third draft.

Step 4. Conducted an all-administrative staff retreat to review, reflect and give input on third draft.

Step 5. Input from Step 4 utilized to generate a final document.

Step 6. In all-staff meeting, every staff member participated in 1 of 4 sessions with the CEO to review and reflect on the Statement.
Final all-staff review generated a sense of shared identity and purpose:

Joyful learning through STEAM driven-play.
AMAZEUM MISSION

To engage the imagination of children and their families through interactive exhibitions, programs, and resources while creating an excitement for lifelong learning.
Hershey’s Lab Workshop
3M Tinkering Hub
Your Space

Ground Rules
- Misery is Optional
- Share the Air
- Respectful Wrestling
- Be Raggedy
Idea lab

“the best way to have a great idea is to have a lot of ideas”
Team Huddles
Happy Amazeum Team Squad (H.A.T.S)

Goal: build a community on our team so that our culture creates a positive and healthy work environment where everyone feels valued
Team Development

The Amazeum Cornucopia

It is a perfect time to celebrate the abundance of talent, skill, hard work, ideas, empathy, joy and quirkiness that lives within our Amazeum team. Grab a marker, a post-it, and use a few words to describe your colleagues and how they fill our cornucopia. See the sample and get started.

Aim to add a note to everyone’s paper. Let’s keep it anonymous, too!
Thank you!

Ashlee Bailey
abailey@amazeum.org
Creating a Fearless Culture of Collaboration

Children’s Museum of South Dakota
ACM Interactivity 2019
MISSION
The Children’s Museum of South Dakota sparks imagination for all children and their grown-ups through play, creativity and discovery.
PLAY
How are my actions playful, welcoming and inclusive?
How do you Fika?
Team UP

Where am I leveraging the talents/skills of others?
Team . . . Collaboration . . . Synergy
Dream BIG . . .
Remain Open Handed

How do I manage the tension triggered by new ideas, innovation, change?
Remain Open Handed . . .
Framework Implications:

Accountability
Trust
Understanding
Productivity
Morale
Community Building
None of us is as smart as all of us. ~ Ken Blanchard

Thank You!
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