

**USING PARTICIPATORY  
MANAGEMENT IN ACCESS  
SERVICES IMPROVES STAFF  
QUALITY AND PARTICIPATION  
IN DECISION-MAKING**

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# What is Participatory Management?

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Participatory management (often called democratic management) values the input of team members and peers, but the responsibility of making the final decision rests with the manager. This type of management boosts employee morale because employees make contributions to the decision-making process. It causes them to feel as if their opinions matter. When a company needs to make changes within the organization, the participatory management style helps employees accept changes easily because they play a role in the process. (Houston Chronicle, 2014)

Elements of participatory management include: participation in decision-making, autonomy of the worker, sharing of management information with all employees, economic return, and the right of the individual employees to appeal to some independent judiciary actions taken against them by their supervisor. (Segar, 1982)

# My Library Management Experience

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- 1975 – 1980 Reference Librarian, Olivet Nazarene University
- 1980 – 1985 Bibliographic Instruction Librarian, Pittsburg State University
- 1985 – 1986 Doctoral Program, University of Arkansas
- 1986 – 2009 Library Director, MidAmerica Nazarene University
- 2009 – 2014 Coordinator of Access Services, SUNY Oswego

# Different Management Styles (1)

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- Autocratic
  - Manager may be sole decision-maker
  - Manager does not care about opinions of subordinates
  - Decision may not reflect team's collective decision
  - Decision is made quickly
  - Motivates by threats and discipline
  - Works only when subordinates need close supervision
  - More suitable for a prison or the military
- Paternalistic
  - Manager makes final decision but tries to get subordinates support
  - Work-life balance is emphasized for high morale
  - Subordinates become dependent upon managers; limits creativity
  - Takes time for feedback to move between manager and subordinates
  - The “firm, but fair” manager

# Different Management Styles (2)

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- Participatory (also called Democratic)
  - Manager is open to subordinates opinions
  - Decision is made by majorities agreement (with manager's "blessing")
  - Communication necessary between manager and subordinates
  - Gives subordinations more satisfaction
  - Decision may take more time.
  - Motivates by rewarding team effort
  - Team much be competent, done correctly and on-time
  - Great used by most companies
- Laissez-Faire
  - Manager is facilitator; subordinates make decisions
  - Little communication between groups
  - Best suited for technology companies with highly motivated and creative subordinates
  - Can lead to conflict if one person tries to take control of project

# Benefits of Using Participatory Management

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- Increase of productivity
- Job satisfaction
- Motivation
- Improved quality
- Reduced costs

# Liabilities of Using Participatory Management

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- Decision-making slows down
- Security issue
- Resistance to change
- Workers tend to deviate
- Size of organization
- One stop solution
- Abuse of authority
- Misunderstanding participation

## Comments From My Staff (1)

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- Informal survey (2014) with my Access Services staff.
- What do you like about my using participative management?

“Gives me a sense of being trusted. I want to do a good job.”

“Freedom to make decisions and not having to run through a chain of command.”

“Being involved in decision-making.”

“A leader who is interested, involved and continually learning about his/her area. Also, a leader who has ideas for improvement and encourages the same from the team.”

“I like being self-motivated and work within my own time frame for required tasks.”



## Comments From My Staff (2)

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“What I like most about participatory management is that since I know what has to be done and what needs to be prioritized, I can work in the order I feel is best in customer service.”

“Open door policy...I think it makes it more comfortable talking with superiors.”

“Team concept.”

“Communication among the department.”

“Feel more comfortable in opening discussions with my supervisor who is open to accepting all suggestions and ideas for customer service.”

“A leader that shares ideas and seeks ongoing discussions with staff for implementations and improvements.”

## Comments From My Staff (3)

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- What do you like least about participatory management?

“I feel it does take away a bit from the whole office being on track with each other.”

“Unsure if I made the correct decision and afraid it may backfire.”

“I feel that after working very hard at a job, when someone else reports on it to committees, all of the effort that went in to it may not be understood.”

“Possible multiple decisions made about the same issue if communication is not shared properly.”

## Comments With My Staff (4)

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- Would you prefer a different style of management?

“No, I like participatory management. It best suites me as an employee. It is a trust relationship and requires me to do my best.”

“No, this is the management style I prefer. I don't feel degraded like I have experienced in other jobs.”

“I like this style of management as it emphasizes teamwork among staff.”

“I have seen the management styles used in the other library departments and feel our system is by far the best.”

# Using Participatory Management in Access Services (1)

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- Get staff to buy into program
- Meet with staff regularly to see what they are doing
- Have employees share with staff at monthly staff meetings
- Have an open-door policy
- Share management style with library administration and other librarians
- Set up work groups for staff to participate in (policies and procedures, student assistants and stacks management)
- Provide cross-training so that staff members know what to do if another staff member is absence

## Using Participatory Management in Access Services (2)

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- Provide annual retreat for fun, food and instruction
- No micro-managing
- Allow staff to suggest changes and try them if the group agrees
- Be prepared to allow time to make changes
- Be aware of any union restrictions
- Share library news with employees
- Provide workshops to train employees
- Provide incentives for work “well-done”
- Provide positive reinforcement through thank you notes, words of encouragement, etc.

# Issues Relating to Participatory Management

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- Introduction to staff
- Orientation
- Committees
- Roles
  - Library director
  - Management team
  - Department head
  - Staff members

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# Conclusion

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- Determine if you want to use participatory management in your Access Services Department and then go for it!
- Share this management style with other librarians.
- Let me know if you have actually implemented participatory management as I plan to write an article for publication and could use your comments.

# Bibliography

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Any Questions?

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# Contact Information

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