

Service Visibility: Newfound Library Impact through Systematic Co-design

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Organisation: Vantaa City Library

Country: Finland

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Education, General public services

Type: Communication, Organisational Design, Public Service

Launched in: 2012

Overall development time: 1 year

Link to the innovation's website

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Description

The City Library of Vantaa, Finland, has a systematic and continually evolving innovation process, based on the concept of co-designed service visibility. Since the breakthrough of online streaming and sharing systems, libraries have seen a decline in their influence. In Vantaa, managers and staff have successfully turned that situation into a new advantage, by combining the desires of existing customers and those who do not normally use libraries. We have significantly increased both customer satisfaction and the social impact that libraries have for community well-being through high-quality services, efficient self-service opportunities for customers and by co-designing personalised services and spaces that are still in contact with service staff. The large success of these changes is shown in customer satisfaction, reduced costs, and a much higher return on investment.

Why the innovation was developed

- To rejuvenate libraries' significance in society.
 - To better serve customer needs.
 - To establish new services useful for people who have low or no need for traditional library services.
 - To simultaneously increase customer satisfaction and the use of self-service systems.
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Objectives

Improve effectiveness, Improve service quality, Improve user satisfaction

- Increasing the relevance of libraries for community members.
 - New self-service opportunities that really benefit the customers rather than just enable the reduction of staff.
 - Higher customer satisfaction.
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Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, General population, Students, Young people

- Existing library patrons.
 - New, potential users of libraries.
 - Communities needing a higher return for their investments in public libraries.
 - Community youths looking for spaces that feel like their own.
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Existing similar practices

Library service improvements

In other countries' public administrations

Public libraries around the world

Similar designs have been used to increase patron visits to libraries around the world, but we do not believe to the systematic co-design extent utilised in Vantaa.

Results

Efficiency

- In Hakunila, reduction of staff costs by 20% while retaining service quality level.
 - In other locations, reduction of staff costs by 10% while retaining service quality level.
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Effectiveness

- In Tikkurila, 16% increase in patron visits and 300% increase in patrons spending time in the re-designed music and media department.
 - City-wide increase of 14% in visits and 3.6% in loans; the reversal of a previously decreasing trend.
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Service quality

Accessibility:

- Creation of inviting service complexity, which eases access to staff and services while retaining spaces as private-seeming.
- Increased appreciation and use of self-service systems.
- Improved use of libraries as also youth and community spaces.
- Superior partition of library spaces through co-design, enabling customers' simultaneous use of the spaces for multiple, even conflicting tasks.

Responsiveness:

- Ability to provide useful services simultaneously for pre-existing and new customers.
 - Increased relevance of public library services to previously almost "lost" customer groups, e.g., youths and young adults.
 - New community perception of public libraries as continually relevant, despite competition (e.g., streamed music, Wikipedia).
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User satisfaction

- Systematic collection of feedback on customer satisfaction is due in 2015. Staff from the participating libraries have already now reported receiving three to four times more positive customer feedback than before the changes.
- Significant increase in customer satisfaction, through processes revealed during co-design.
- Significant increase in customer satisfaction, through processes revealed by intentional service visibility.
- Significant increase in customer satisfaction, by enabling community members to co-design the spaces to feel like their own spaces.

Development

Design

- The design was initiated by directors of two libraries with support from the director of the library services in Vantaa, and implementation assistance by one department manager trained in service design.

Design time: 1 year

Testing

- No testing was used due to the fact that the innovation was centered on ongoing co-design with current and potential customers.
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Implementation

Tools used:

- Customer surveys, non-customer surveys, creative workshops with locals within the spaces chosen for re-design.
- Consultation with architects specialising in service space design; use of semi-transparent spatial design, to grant simultaneous privacy and staff contact.
- Recruitment of unit managers versed in co-design and change management.
- Recruitment of area residents in each re-design, to work as both co-designers and innovators.
- Co-design of library spaces to reveal actual service quality to customers.
- Increased transparency of services the patrons might particularly appreciate, including back office processes that improve the customer experience.

Resources used:

- In Hakunila, work by library manager, seven staff members, and numerous volunteers; EUR 105 000 in material and consultation costs.
- In Tikkurila, work by department manager, three staff members and one cultural producer; EUR 7 000 in material and consultation costs.
- In Pähkinärinne, work by two managers, two staff, three youth workers, and volunteers; EUR 89 000 in material, design and consultation costs.
- Support work by director of library services, directors of youth services, and deputy mayor.
- Most costs in all processes were covered by co-designed re-use of existing materials, spaces, and staff expertise.

Implementation time: 2 months

Diffusion

- Documentation of work processes, shared with other libraries and youth service providers.
- Lending of experts involved in the co-design processes, to teach people in charge of other similar projects.
- Production of several international articles promoting the techniques and results discovered during the process.

Diffusion time: 6 months

Challenges and solutions

- Local resistance to changes in libraries and/or youth spaces; solved through involving the locals in all changes.
 - Very limited resources; solved through sponsor-supported innovative re-use of existing material.
 - Differing views on what was optimal for all; solved through active co-design between staff, architects and community members.
 - Customer unawareness of service quality; solved through systematic visibility of provided services.
 - Perception of self-service opportunities as reduced service quality; solved through increased staff-customer interaction explaining the improvements.
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Partnerships

Vantaa Youth Services

Other Public Sector

Co-design together with youth services staff and local youth, to create youth-friendly library spaces.

Ministry of Education and Culture

Other Public Sector

Funding assistance for the re-design of Hakunila and Pähkinärinne libraries.

Corporate sponsors: Tikkurila Oy, Isku, Vantaan energia

Private sector

Sponsorship of paints, key furniture and additional funding.

Citizens of Vantaa

Other

Hours upon hours of active involvement by community members to co-design the libraries into continually valuable spaces and service providers.

Lessons Learned

Lessons Learned

- By strongly involving both existing customers and non-customers in the re-design of libraries, customer satisfaction can be significantly increased.
 - Re-design of public spaces is an integral part of improving the perceived quality of their services.
 - Library re-design is very cost-effective, if done through the co-designed use of existing spaces and materials, supported by key new acquisitions.
 - Co-designed libraries are able to not just retain, but actually increase their value for the community.
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Conditions for success

- Change management willing to engage in radical service innovation together with current and potential customers.
 - Innovators (either staff or consultants) able to inspire community members to partake in the co-design.
 - Enough funding to enable community meetings and the tuning of existing spaces and materials.
 - Organisation-wide willingness to actually engage the public, instead of just using small, heuristically convenient sample groups.
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