



Mission and Public Expectations



MuseOps Example: Force Field Analysis

2018



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Context

Current Situation

- For the past few decades, a regional historical society with a \$120 million budget and 300 person staff has focused on its fine and decorative arts collection – mounting award-winning exhibitions and attracting out-of-state and international visitors.
- A milestone anniversary of a tragic and controversial local event is upcoming. Though maintaining the only local collection of significant artifacts, the historical society has not mounted any exhibitions or programs about the anniversary for several decades – arguing that the event is a small part of the larger regional history.
- Local leaders and community advocates have publicly expressed their expectation that the historical society will mount an exhibition and present programs about the event. Some government officials have publicly discussed reducing funding to the historical society.



Context

Objectives and Approach

- The historical society must address the public expectations and communicate a strategy for the upcoming milestone anniversary.
- The historical society could continue its non-exhibition/commemoration tactic, or it could develop an exhibit and/or programs. It will have to publicly communicate its decision and the rationale thereof.
- A Force Field Analysis will help the staff identify the factors involved in the decision regarding a strategy for the milestone anniversary and its commemoration. Those factors can then be shared when the historical society announces its decisions.



Data Review

- Documents
 - Museum mission and collection
 - Local news coverage
 - Public commentary
 - Articles about past commemoration of the event
- Interviews
 - Local historians
 - Government officials
 - Museum staff



Force Field Analysis: Refocusing on Mission

Driving Forces

- Community support is strong.
- The historical society has key artifacts in its collection.
- The mission does include interpreting historical events.
- Funding from local and state government may be jeopardized if the historical society does nothing.
- Local professors and historians are available to assist with interpretation and programs.

Restraining Forces

- The historical society has had a consistent, logical reason for non-commemoration of this event.
- Out of town and international visitors, who are a significant percentage of attendees, may not be interested in the exhibitions or programs.
- The curatorial staff lacks expertise in the topic area.
- This event continues to impact town citizens, who may not support the society's interpretation and may withdraw their financial support.



Paths Forward

- As a public trust, the historical society must develop and communicate a detailed rationale for whatever decisions it makes. If the community does not understand the historical society's actions in this instance, faith and trust in the historical society may diminish.
- Ignoring the public discussion and reissuing past statements could negatively impact the historical society's reputation.
- The historical society should embrace this opportunity for public dialogue and examination. Regardless of its decisions, the opportunities to form new or stronger relationships with community members exist.