Building Credibility
Establishing respect and trust takes time. The Assessment Team is building credibility through participation in high profile projects, delivering projects that fuel planning, decision-making and change; showing a willingness to assess our own activities and admit what isn’t working.

Library Staff Buy-in:
Building broad-based support for a culture of assessment at Washington University Libraries in St. Louis

Key Questions:
1. Who should be on the Assessment Team?
2. What are the team member roles...
   Coach? Consultant? Contractor?
3. How do we select appropriate projects and activities for assessment?
4. How do we bridge the skill gaps—on the Assessment Team and across the larger organization?
5. How do we communicate consistently and often?

Converting the Skeptical
The Assessment Team is shaping away at the holdouts by recruiting the skeptical for short-term projects with clear relevance and pay off.

Assessment is in Everybody’s Job
A recent challenge we’ve faced is convincing staff that they are already including assessment in their work. We’re validating the grass roots successes by showcasing them at the Dean’s monthly meetings. We’re also updating job responsibilities to include assessment.

In answer to these questions we developed:

The Assessment Team, led by the Assessment Coordinator, functions as a clearinghouse for projects, and a hub of assessment information and training. There are twelve appointed members ranging in level from paraprofessional to associate dean, and reflecting the broad range of functions within the libraries. At each Dean’s monthly staff meeting time is reserved to cover assessment topics. This provides a steady channel of communication and reinforces support from the top.

The Challenges
Getting Started...
How are we doing?

By the Numbers
Using the Assessment Activity Forms as an indicator, we found...

Number of assessment projects: 28
Surveys: 9
Interviews: 37
Focus groups: 4
Usability sessions: 8 projects, 49 sessions
Number of individual staff involved in these sessions: 122
Number of users we connected with on these projects: 673

88% of library staff have been directly involved in an assessment project.

The Culture of Assessment Survey 2009, 2010
The surveys were based on the work of Lakos and Wilson (1998)
What we found...
- There is a growing awareness of assessment activities and programs, based on the overall decline in the number of ‘Don’t Know’ responses.
- Scores remained steady, slightly down from the first survey. It is possible that one year is too short a window for drawing conclusions on the level of change.

How far have we come? The staff weighs in...
- “It’s not uncommon to learn from mistakes. We’re more confident about making sure that nearly everything we do has a measurable impact on library users.” (Cataloger)
- “I think as we nurture our culture of assessment, we are also reenergizing our commitment to users and to user-centeredness. We are covering new challenges. We focus our attention on our habits and challenge ourselves to think about what would work better.” (Training Coordinator)
- “One of the main drivers of library innovation is knowledge of our users. I think assessment provides the insights to make better decisions—and leads us to continuously re-think our services, transform collections and rethink spaces.” (Dean of the Libraries)