



Information Overload

Issue 8, April 2003

Welcome

We will be looking at the issue of teamwork, and why it is so important for organisations to foster a team spirit if they truly want to succeed in today's business driven, accountable world. We will also be looking at the problems facing temporary or contract staff as well as One Person Librarian's (OPaL's), traditionally these groups have been regarded as being isolated from the traditional concept of a team environment, and what they can do to change this stereotype.

We will also be introducing a new section entitled "ARRM Update" where we pass on interesting information regarding new or recently amended legislation concerned with record keeping.

In this Issue we will be looking at:

- Team Work
- Temps, Contractors & On-hire Staff
- OpaL's: Going it alone
- ARRM Update
- A Thought to Ponder

Team Work:

Team – the word conjures up images of a cohesive unit of people intent on working towards the same set of targets and goals. But how true is this in most organisations today, and what can we do as employers to make sure that your "teams" are actually working together, and not out to undermine or take credit for the work done by others?

- Create the right atmosphere. Teams cannot work in a vacuum, nor can they work in an atmosphere of dictatorship and fear of failure.
- Have vision. Be clear about what it is you are hoping to achieve, and convey this to the team at all times. If the priorities change it is vital that you tell the entire team, not just a select few.
- Good teams have good leadership. A good leader allows the team members to grow and to develop. They lead by example, and are able to bring the team together into one cohesive unit.

- Establish common ground. Your team should be pulling in the same direction. Whilst team members will have different ideas and opinions it is important that everyone knows where the other people are "coming from".
- Have the correct operational framework. Make sure that the methods of communication fit the team and the work being done.
- Take the time to create the team. Good teams don't happen overnight. Trust has to be established and relationships formed before the team can move forward as a unit.
- Be open to change and differing opinions. After all, who is to say that the way something has always been done is the correct way of doing something. Be willing to say I was wrong, and grow as a team.
- Talk vs Action: Make sure that you don't spend all your time talking. You will still need to get the work done. If you do your job properly you will know the best people to take the project/work forward. But make sure this responsibility is shared otherwise some people will resent and begin to undermine your efforts and others will assume the "dictatorship" approach.
- Allow job movement and sharing of tasks. This allows everyone a chance to grow and to develop. It

also means that people can join or leave the group without causing too many stresses or strains on the rest of the team.

- Remember - **T**ogether **E**veryone **A**chieves **M**ore.

Temps, Contractors & On-hire

Staff:

When considering the dynamics of your team it is important to consider those people who for one reason or another are only with you for a short period of time. They are not your “traditional employee” but are those people who have been hired on a temporary or contract basis to fulfil a particular role within your organisation.

It has been said by numerous contract staff that they have felt that they do not belong to the organisation for whom they are working. They are left out of vital meetings or hear about vital decisions, staff changes, changes to working conditions and so on, in general conversations with other people, or even worse, as people are walking past them.

Imagine what it would be like if you were the person on contract. Vital decisions were being discussed, decisions will be made and they will have a direct impact on the way that you do your work, or if you are going to be working there at all. How motivated are you going to be? How much work are you going to get done this afternoon? How soon are you going to be making a call to your employment agency asking if there are any other jobs going?

Of course a lot depends on the length of the contract and the job that you are being asked to do. But it is important to remember that whilst a person is on contract to your organisation, you are their “host employer” and they should receive the same vital information as everyone else.

For example, if your regular records officer is on holiday and you have asked an employment agency to supply you with a replacement, how successful is that person going to be if they are not told when staff

have left or moved places, positions or departments? If your internal telephone directories are out of date, or your policies and procedures haven't been written down simply because “everyone” knows. Whilst this may not seem like vital information to you and the rest of your team, it is vital if the “replacement” person is to feel that they are part of the team, and able to do the job that they were hired to do.

For those people who are working on contract or a temporary basis, always remember that your contract or employment agency should be considered part of your team. If you haven't spoken to anyone from your agency lately it is important that you do so.

OPaL's: Going it alone:

The One Person Librarian has to be a little more creative when forming his or her own team structure, as in most cases, the librarian does not have any immediate co-workers to call upon. However, libraries do not exist in a vacuum. Reporting structures, and its clients exist within the larger organisational framework, and it is from these groups that “loose” teams can be formed.

Gaining support for projects is always difficult when you are a lone voice within an organisation, however regular bulletins, newsletters, and meetings with management will generate interest. Have regular open days, and promote the Library and Information Week to your organisation. Running a library is a constant marketing and PR exercise, especially around Budget time, and having enthusiastic supporters on your “team” can make the difference between survival or not.

As a part of the broader library and information community, it is good to remember that there is always a network of people to whom you can turn if you need assistance with a particular answer to a question. For instance, the Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) have numerous groups, forums and meetings that you can join or attend. The

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West Australian Information Network (WAIN) is an e-list designed to facilitate the sharing of knowledge between people. If you would like details on how to join this group, e-mail training@iea.com.au and we will gladly pass on the joining instructions.

ARRM Update:

If you are fortunate enough to hold a launch permit or a Space Licence then you should

be aware of the Federal Legislation governing Space Activities issued in 2001. Failure to keep records regarding such activities as number and results of test flights can result in fines of 5,000 penalty units (Corporations) and 500 Penalty Units for individuals found to be in breach of the law.

A Thought to Ponder:

“Books are what you step on to take you to a higher shelf”

Jim Rohn

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