

Information Overload

Registrant Resources Edition

Issue 68, June 2008

Welcome:

After a period of absence from the e-zine lists, a question was posed to you, the readers of this particular newsletter about its continuation or not. I have to say I was a little underwhelmed by the response. Of the 220 newsletters issued – only 9 people responded.

Of those 9, all asked for the newsletter to continue. Which means 211 of you aren't bothered one way or another.

And - of those 9 respondents, only 2 answered the second question – what would you like to see it cover?

In the world of information overload in which we reside it is easy to take for granted the services we have come to expect, but are provided free of charge to us. It is also easy to take for granted the people who spend time putting these things together. Now I am not just talking about this newsletter, but people like Peter Green of the WAIN list serv, and all the other list serv moderators. They make our lives so much easier by creating forums where we can exchange information, share news and views and concerns of our various professions. They act as a conduit to information, yet they get overlooked – and worse still berated when things don't work, fall off, fall over and remain backlogged for days on end. Similarly the many committees, working groups and lobbyists comprise the same names and groups of people. They are willing to give up their time and energy for our professions, yet few people recognise them and the jobs they do.

So as the editor of this particular newsletter I would like to say thank you to the nine of you who responded, I do appreciate your time and your comments. I would also like to say thank you to the list serv owners who have enabled me to get this newsletter to people across the world. And I would like to thank the IT crowd who provide the technical expertise for all of this to take place. I do appreciate the services you have provided to me as a librarian and information manager, so that I can do my job.

So does this newsletter continue? Well if we were to go with majority rules as we stated in the last issue, the answer would be a resounding no. But in fairness to the people who responded and to the information profession as a whole, I will be continuing the newsletter – at least for a while. So onwards.

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In this issue we will look at:

- Managing change
- Life skills
- A Thought to ponder.

Managing Change

As contract personnel we are at the front line of change. Every time we accept a new position with a new organisation we have to contend with new people, new ways of working, new pieces of software and the myriad of problems and issues of learning new ways of doing the same thing.

As you know this can be both a good and a bad thing. Good because it means you get to show off your particular skill set, often during a difficult period of time for the client. Bad because you may feel like you are out of your depth by several metres in the beginning. So how do you cope?

- Accept that the first couple of days are going to be hectic as you go through inductions and getting to know the work and the people you are going to be working with.
- Accept that you have been taken on as for a certain period of time and do your work to the best of your ability. As many of our contractors know – extensions and renewals may be offered especially to those people who do an exceptional job. Of course there will be times when renewals are not possible, especially if you are covering a position for a particular reason – eg., holidays. But guess who they are going to ask for when they get another vacancy / gap in their work force !!
- Remember you have support back at the office. Whilst we cannot be with you in person, we are just a phone call away, so never be afraid to ask for help or advice if you need it.
- Use the list serves. As we mentioned in the introduction of this particular edition – the list serves that provide help to our communities are teeming with expertise, and are willing to share it. Of course you may get a few differences of opinion – but that too is a good thing. Whilst WAIN and ALIAWest (as far as I know do not have a searchable archive – although I am willing to stand corrected on that one), the Records Management Association of Australasia (RMAA) does. Many a time I have remembered reading about a certain issue – and been able to search the archive, follow the threads and find the answers I have been looking for. Always worth remembering to do before you pose your question. There are people across the information community who are going through the same issues we are, so even though we may feel like we are alone – we're not.
- With experience you become better at adapting to change. Every position you accept and undertake – either through IEA or a.n.other employer, gives you a myriad of experience you can take with you as you move onwards and sideways. A potential employer understands that. The more experience you have, the less training you need when you move into your new position. For those people who are in consultancy roles, a client is expecting you to draw upon your knowledge and apply what you currently know to their situation. This saves them time and false starts and therefore the potential for real cost savings also.
- Life skills – are some of THE most important aspects to this mix.

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Life Skills

Often overlooked these things can rarely be “learned” from a text book or a course of study, but are gained through experience. Experience can be a hard task master, because you have to learn how to act, react and learn from events that are happening now. As you know, hindsight is a wonderful thing. But there are some things you can do to ensure you don’t land flat on your face too many times.

1. **Attitude:** This can be both a good and a bad thing. You can have an attitude that says, I will only do what I am being paid to do, and I will do it, but don’t ask me to do anything outside my job description. And you know what, I know it’s part of my general duties – but I don’t like that part of my job – so I shall whinge and whine and make everyone around me miserable. After all I’m miserable so why shouldn’t they be as well. Or you can have an attitude that is a joy to be around. Now I am not saying that you take on more work than you can handle, nor should you do other people’s work, but you can have a genuine appreciation for your own self worth (and no that does not mean you are arrogant) and that of your colleagues.

The attitude that says I will dress properly and appropriately. I will arrive on time and leave when I should. I will speak kindly towards other people – including internal as well as external clients. I will act in an appropriate manner at all times. I will do my job to the best of my ability all of the time, as I am being paid an honest wage for the work that I am doing, and in doing so will be rewarded at the right times for all the right reasons.

2. **Honesty:** If you don’t know how to do something, then say so. Don’t try and be something you’re not. This can of course be a little difficult if you have oversold yourself and your abilities at the interview, in which case, you are going to have to do some very quick thinking and on-the job learning to bring yourself up to speed. But in general terms, you cannot hope to know all there is to know about every part of your job – on day 1, and rarely on day 7 of your new position. You only have to read some of the entries on the many list servs to know that experienced professionals don’t have all of the answers all of the time. Ask your questions, but be prepared to listen.
3. **Take responsibility:** It is important that you take responsibility for your actions and your decisions to date. The reason you are where you are now is because of decisions that you made at some point in the past. Accept that some of those decisions could have been better. Accept that some of those decisions were perfect for you at the time. But do not live your life in regret as all you will do is go back over and over those decisions you consider were “wrong”. Every decision that you make has the essence of something valuable within it “do more of this” “do less of that”.

With many thoughts
Lorraine

A Thought to Ponder

“Live your life as though there is great joy to be experienced... an abundance of goodness in each person you come in contact with, and the knowledge that you have enough inner wisdom to answer the mysteries that challenge you.”

Meladee McCarty

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