

SETTING-UP, RUNNING, DEVELOPING & EVALUATING A LIS IN AN SME – AS A SOLO

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SETTING UP THE SERVICE FROM SCRATCH

1.1 - ESTIMATING EXISTING LIBRARY NEEDS

Being a solo...

- An interesting challenge.
- Need knowledge of the company's business.
- Requires flexibility (essential).
- Importance of contact with colleagues.
- Expect a steep learning curve.

A timetable is useful...

- For organising various tasks during the day is very helpful.
- Does tend to fall by the wayside when information is needed ASAP.

Minimum services to introduce...

- Reference and loan services.
- Enquiry work.
- Desk research.
- SDI & CAB

An information policy is your strategic plan for informational resources...

- An overview of the purpose (aims and objectives) of managing information in the organisation.
- Ensure that information resources are properly controlled.
- Make best use of available resources for all staff.
- Actively encourage staff to fully exploit available information.
- Elicit feedback about known and potential useful information resources.
- Proactively develop new sources of information.
- Look at both internal and external sources.

Information audit...

- To identify available in-house information sources and resources.

A Knowledge map...

- Developed from reference interviews
- Provides a detailed understanding of available knowledge resources that
- Is itself a corporate information resource.

Information management promotion...

- To develop awareness of info resources.
- In-house knowledge.
- Increase resource use.
- Raise library profile.

Systematic review of current acquisitions procedures...

- To improve auditing, information provision and the management of resources.

Actively seek input...

- Ask your line manager and all appropriate senior staff what they would like the library service to provide.
- Adopt their suggestions if you can.
- Look at other departments' reports to see what type of information is being disseminated elsewhere in the company.

1.2 - INVOLVING OTHERS

Single most important factor...

- Have the full support of staff - especially senior staff.
- Senior staff will then advocate use of the service to others
- Top down support.

Improve information flows and enhance staff knowledge...

- Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)
- Current Awareness Bulletins (CAB).
- Increased library use

Additional help...

- Ask for employee's spare capacity.
- Half day a week.
- Ad-hoc.
- Have tasks ready for them to do.

Volunteers...

- Full legal rights.
- Enough work.
- Consider carefully.

1.3 - MANAGEMENT FEEDBACK

Make sure you inform people about what you are doing...

- To ensure staff know that you are a professional.
- That you take your work seriously so they should too.
- It supports why the company should pay for and give time-off to attend conferences and training courses.

Appraisal Interviews:

Some companies have, as a matter of policy, an annual appraisal process. Can be...

- A brief chat about what you have done over the last year/time period.
- How you feel your job is going.
- An in-depth inquisition.

Appraisal interviews can be designed to measure quantifiable processes...

- e.g. I am processing X number of widgets more this year than last year.
- Or can evaluate the quality of service that a library offers.

Use the appraisal to your advantage...

- Manage the situation well and you can come away all the better for it.

At least two weeks before the appraisal is due...

- Ask for a set of questions (or write your own) that the appraisal will be based on.

Annotate the questions with your own notes...

- Give a copy to the appraiser a few days before the appraisal.

By doing this you set the agenda and focus of the actual appraisal itself...

- If you have a real tricky question to answer, you can always answer it with a question of your own.

Typical appraisal questions can include...

- Which aspects of your job do you feel you have done well in?
- How have you achieved this?
- What, if any aspects of your job have you had difficulty with?
- What were the reasons?
- Has your role either developed or altered since your last appraisal?
- In what ways has it changed?
- Is your job description an accurate reflection of what you do?
- Have you established any objectives for yourself for the coming year?
- Are you receiving the support you need from management and staff?
- Do you have any training needs?

Use the first question as a chance to promote yourself and your service...

- Include examples of some initiatives you have introduced.
- How you have reorganised a work area.
- Plan a project to improve outcomes.

Cite instances of where/when staff have found your services invaluable ...

- How you have introduced a new service aspect that is required
- Without having waited to be asked for it.

It is especially good if you can show that you have improved efficiency without sacrificing quality.

A cheat...

For forthcoming targets suggest appraisal targets that appear impressive
But that you have already achieved/started and about which your manager
knows nothing.

Yes this is cheating but it can help you avoid being tied down to achieving targets
when you should be developing your service.

PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING THE PHYSICAL LIS

2.1 - UNDERSTANDING YOUR OWN REQUIREMENTS

Identify the major tasks that you undertake...

- Administration of stock.
- Dealing with requests.
- Information research.
- IT management.
- Service promotion.
- Orientation/training sessions.
- Anything else?

Keep a log of library activities and procedures...

- Review what you have done periodically.
- Its good to remind yourself how much you have achieved.
- It is a record of the CPD you undertake.

2.2 - LOOKING AT THE NEW LIBRARY

When moving or setting-up from scratch...

- Go and look at the new library.
- Obtain a copy of the architect's plans.
- Plan the layout.
- Shortlist suppliers based on their service/cost.
- See other installations.
- Check all details
- Don't presume it will be supplied.
- Basing decision on meterage costs is a good bottom line.

2.3 - MAKING IT ALL FIT

Time Management:

Managing time well must be an overriding priority especially for information workers and is essential for solo's.

Organise workloads around others as much as possible to avoid constant interruptions...

- Prioritise workloads and timetable each day.
- If mornings are usually the quietest, that's when you should undertake the tasks that need to be uninterrupted.

It is very important to be available and accessible as much as is possible...

- It can be more important to know that it is ok to say NO.

To save, create, or manage time...

- Use a spreadsheet to total the amount of time spent on each task.
- Update the spreadsheet during the day.
- It provides an automatic total of the time spent on each job.
- Update/add/delete categories each week as required (if necessary).
- You can charge-out to different budgets for the time spent undertaking research on behalf of other departments.
- You can show what you have spent your time on each hour/day/week etc.

Working without a budget...

- Keep record of all spending on a spreadsheet.
- Use this as the basis of a budget proposal.
- Even if not requested, shows you are professional.
- Keeps you in touch with your spending.

Target Response Times...

- Simple to introduce but important
- A discernable facet of a professionally run service.
- Quantifiable and they inform users about what are realistic expectations.

Keep target response times as targets...

- Don't allow people to think of them as written in stone.

Be flexible and able to make exceptions for urgent requirements...

- For when staff are not available.
- For when the network goes down.
- In these cases reach an agreement with users about mutually acceptable deadlines.

You can't guarantee times for anything that is dependant on external factors...

- You have no control over the length of time taken for items to arrive.

You can give ballpark figures...

- Based on your knowledge of usual response times of individual suppliers and services.

You can guarantee...

- To process purchase requests, document supply, basic searches, etc., within stated timescales, e.g. one – two working days.

DEVELOPING AND ADAPTING YOUR OWN ROLE WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

3.1 - ASSESSING USER REQUIREMENTS

Information requirements need to be monitored and feedback provided regularly...

- Ask what people need and want.
- Provide staff with information that matches projects they are working on.
- Constantly review what's needed.
- By whom.
- For whom.
- For when.

Have regular meetings with department heads...

- A forum where problems are discussed and strategic work initiatives are developed.
- Unnecessary duplication of work is avoided.
- Work is better co-ordinated.
- Department heads are far more aware of each other's needs and requirements.
- You are better informed.

In-house training sessions in use of library resources...

- Both formal and ad-hoc training sessions reinforce the usefulness of the library and library staff.
- Enhances library status.

3.2 - DEVELOPING THE SERVICE FOR USERS

Develop an information policy to provide a strategic plan encompassing the use of information resources.

The policy can be summarised by the following five main points, which provide an overview of the purpose (aims and objectives) of managing information in the organisation...

1. Ensure that information resources are properly controlled.
2. Make best use of available resources for all staff.
3. Actively encourage staff to fully exploit the information that is available to them.
4. Elicit feedback about known and potentially useful information resources.
5. Proactively develop new sources of information, both internally and externally.

Determine departmental information priorities...

- What is important for you, the dept, the organisation.

Undertake an information audit to...

- Be aware of everything you are responsible for.
- Identify in-house Information sources and resources – physical..electronic..intellectual.

Undertake an Information management promotion...

- Make best use of available resources for all staff.
- Actively encourage staff to fully exploit available information.
- Elicit feedback about known and potentially useful information resources.
- Proactively develop new sources of information, both internally and externally.

Undertake a Systematic review of current acquisitions procedures...

- To improve auditing, information provision and the management of resources.

Improve co-ordination of in-house resources...

- Circulation lists should be revised and updated frequently.
- Out of date information must be discarded.
- Subject indexing is easy.
- Cataloguing not essential.

Undertake SDI and CAB...

- To improve information flows and enhance the knowledge base within the organisation.

Determine departmental information priorities...

- So you clearly recognise and fully support staff in their on-going requirements.

Develop your own library logo and use it as much as possible, e.g...

Latest News From The Library
Saving You Time - Keeping You Informed - Helping You Work More Effectively

- It gives you an identity
- A reminder of what the library does for staff

Be knowledgeable about...

- Live and pending projects.
- Knowledge/information requirements.
- Approaching/imminent project deadlines.
- Projects that staff are working on.
- The key-knowledge individuals in any given project/subject area.
- Project re-scheduling that may be required.
- Training needs.

Access all external information sources that could be useful...

- Constantly look for new sources of information.
- Feedback useful/relevant sources to all staff via electronic mail.

Identify the major tasks that you undertake...

- Administration of stock.
- Dealing with requests.
- Information research.
- IT management.
- Service promotion.
- Producing guides.
- Running library orientation/training sessions.
- Etc.

Target Response Times:

Target response times are simple to introduce but important because they are a discernable facet of a professionally run service...

- They inform your users about what are realistic expectations.
- They are quantifiable.

Keep target response times as targets...

- Don't allow people to think of them as written in stone.
- Be flexible and able to make exceptions for urgent requirements.
- For when staff are not available or for when the network goes down.
- In these cases reach an agreement with users about mutually acceptable deadlines.

You can't guarantee times for anything that is dependant on external factors or sources because you have no control over the length of time taken for items to arrive...

- You can give ballpark figures based on your knowledge of usual response times of individual suppliers and services.
- You can guarantee to process purchase requests, document supply, basic searches, etc., within stated timescales, e.g. one – two working days.

Enterprise Information Portal:

How can we avoid creating information overload for everyone without spending all our time being an e-editor?

Resolve this problem by putting all relevant items into an 'Enterprise Information Portal'.

An electronic newsletter with hyperlinks that facilitates...

- Scanning down a list of subjects.
- Jumping directly to a brief abstract of choice.
- Jumping directly to the full item.
- It is very easy navigate within and back up the document.

3 sections are the content of your newsletter...

- Subjects.
- Brief abstracts.
- Main body of text.

Making it interactive...

- Add your own library promo-banner at the top of the page.
- Insert hyperlinks from each subject to the first item for that subject in the brief abstracts list.

Develop An In-House Database:

A useful and developing 'core resource' of information items relevant to staff that potentially provides...

- Business information
- Corporate intelligence
- Company reports
- Company internet sites
- Directories
- Government reports
- Industry reports
- Internet
- Journals
- Press Scanning
- Product information
- Statistics

3.3 - MAINTAINING FEEDBACK

If staff (*especially senior staff*) are not aware of what you are doing, they have every right to assume that you are not doing anything that matters, or worse – anything at all...

- Undertake a customer satisfaction surveys once a year and send out the results.
- Put information on what the Library does onto your company Intranet.

Consider having a yearly development plan that outlines...

- Base category headings on the work you do...
- Outline the activities you undertake.
- What is involved in each.
- The level of priority you attribute to each.
- Detail what has been achieved.
- What has not
- The reasons why.

Include a section on what you want for the next year...

- Identify issues that you want to address.
- What you hope to achieve.
- What you intend to do.
- How you will do it.
- When it will be achieved.

List resources needed for the next year...

- Finance.
- Personnel.
- Time.
- Expertise.

Produce a report...

- Send the report to all appropriate staff...
- Your line manager.
- All senior staff.
- Directors.
- Whoever controls your budget.
- Everyone that is interested in the library service.
- Everyone who could potentially use the library service.

In the report include...

- The professional activities you participate in.
- How those activities help you in your work.
- Information about ongoing and new projects.
- Progress on key objectives the company/library business plan.

- Interesting news.
- Major issues.

Keep it short & Avoid tedious in-depth detail about...

- Loans.
- Library spending.
- Acquisitions.
- Income generated.
- Cataloguing procedures.

In the report include some statistical information, typical categories can include...

- Library spending.
- Income generated.
- Information about ongoing and new projects.
- Any major issues.
- Progress on key objectives the company/library business plan.
- Any interesting news.

In the report for the next/coming year...

- Identify issues that you want to address.
- What you hope to achieve.
- How you will do it.
- When it will be achieved.
- What will be required to achieve it.

Promote yourself and what you are doing – but without too much emphasis on the mundane library aspects of loans, catalogued items, budgets and income etc.

Specific tasks you can consider undertaking include...

- Develop an information policy.
- Undertake an information audit.
- Information management promotion.
- Systematic review of current acquisitions procedures.
- Selective dissemination of information (SDI) and current awareness bulletins (CAB).
- Determine departmental information priorities.
- Develop electronic resources.
- Improved co-ordination of in-house resources.
- Increased knowledge about what staff know and what is being worked on.
- Better quality information provision.
- Promoting on-line information resources available on the internet.
- In-house training sessions.
- Better knowledge of external sources of information.

HOW RUNNING AN LIS AS A SOLO DIFFERS FROM TEAM-BASED LIS WORK

4.1 - SIMILARITIES

Generically more than you might think...

- Shrinking budgets.
- Cutbacks.
- Understaffing.
- Poor pay.
- Too little space.

4.2 - DIFFERENCES

Solo work is very demanding because it's all down to you...

- Pressure to provide accurate high quality information, from a small resource base.
- Requires a pragmatic approach to work
- Can also turn you into a hybrid librarian.
- Isolation.
- Self-motivation.
- Work under own initiative
- Prioritise tasks
- Time management.

4.3 - MULTIPLICITY OF ROLES

It really is possible to become in equal parts...

- Librarian,
- Information manager,
- Researcher,
- Publicist,
- Internet sleuth,
- Training co-ordinator,
- Web-meister,
- Personal assistant
- Handyman –
- All in the same week.

MARKETING THE SERVICE

The easiest way to market your library service and/or yourself is through meeting and talking with people i.e. through networking.

5.1 - AT WORK

Network at work with...

- Reception staff - the first point of contact.
- Other members of staff.
- Other departments.
- Offices in other locations.

Get out and about in the company...

- Don't hide away.
- Greet & Meet.
- Walk & Talk.

How can you network...

- In person
- By phone
- E-mail

Can you network too much...

- Yes if it becomes counterproductive.
- Putting people off.
- People trying to avoid you.
- Do enough but don't be pushy.

All new staff should have an induction, ensure that staff know...

- Where you work.
- When you are available.
- What you can do for them (even for simple queries).

Tailor the induction to the individual as this will encourage library use and you will be building your network...

- This will encourage people to use your service.
- They find out what is available.
- They find out what is relevant to them.

5.2 - MARKETING THE SERVICE OUTSIDE OF WORK (NETWORKING)

Be interested in the professional bodies that relate to you at work and your organisation...

- Professional bodies relevant to your company's arena of business.
- Professional library groups external to your place of employment.
- User groups – Associations - Meetings.

The more interest you develop the more you will gain...

- It does require a level of effort to become involved in professional activities, none the least of which is the thought 'Why should I bother, I do enough at work as it is?'

Networking is not...

- Pushing yourself onto others.
- Making a hard sell.
- Manipulating people.
- Putting people in awkward situations.

Professionally very rewarding. When you do make the effort to network with others you will derive...

- Information.
- Knowledge.
- Contacts.
- Access.
- Status.
- Kudos.

It's up to you: It does not need to be difficult meeting others is relatively easy, the more you do the easier it gets - you can meet others via...

- Adverts in the professional press (e.g. Calendar section of the LAR).
- E-mail discussion lists.
- On-line newsletters.
- Conferences.
- Meetings.
- Newsletters.
- Starting-up your own group.

5.3 - MARKETING YOURSELF

Networking is the process of gathering, collecting, and distributing information for the mutual benefit of yourself and others...

- It is interacting with people.
- It is a skill we use pretty much all the time - it is an invaluable skill.
- When you network you are promoting yourself and your abilities...
- People will notice and will come to you for help when they need it.
- When they do, you have successfully networked.

Network via...

- Activities at work.
- In the canteen.
- In the works social club.
- If nothing is happening, then why don't you start something?
- External from work.

How can you network...

- Informally, over lunch or a coffee.
- Formally, in your professional capacity.
- Get out and about in the company.
- Greet & Meet.
- Walk & Talk.
- Go to professional meetings (you are doing this now!).

Networking will give you...

- Kudos.
- More rewards.
- Develop interests.
- Make you more marketable.

Networking is even more important when you are a Solo...

- You will get far more out than you have to put in.
- You can gain from giving as well as taking, e.g. through professional groups activities, seminars, workshops.

From time to time let the people you support know...

- That you are there.
- What you do.
- What you can do for them.

Networking is an opportunity to market yourself...

- The more you help people the more you encourage re-use.
- Re-use is itself a form of networking.

The easiest way to network...

- Make sure that you have a business card.
- Always keep some with you.
- Exchange business cards whenever you can – when appropriate.

Potentially you can network anywhere...

- At work
- Socially
- Within the profession.
- Locally
- Nationally.
- Internationally.

Don't forget about virtual networks, they are also important...

- Via promotional literature.
- E-mail discussion lists.
- Newsletters.