

Staff Development Ideas to Improve Quality of Job Performance and Satisfaction

By

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In a previous article on staff development ideas, I offered up a personal definition of what I think staff development is: Staff development can include anything done in an organizational manner to improve the working productivity, efficiency, and well-being of employees in an organization. This very broad definition can be helpful in that it allows for library personnel to come up with ideas for getting staff involved in a variety of activities and continuing development without narrowing it down to a single aspect of one's job. For example, instead of treating staff development as simply a way to give a library employee who works in serials better spreadsheet skills, it is often more productive to look at it as a way of improving the overall value of that employees' appreciation for their job. By including a variety of opportunities for staff to develop their skills, improve personal relationships in the work environment, and increase their cultural/personal knowledge, staff development can greatly contribute to higher job satisfaction within the organization, not just personal productivity.

Exactly one year ago, I wrote an article describing my philosophy on staff development along with some examples we use at my current institution. One year later, I'd like to present the following real life examples of how the Mary Livermore Library at The University of North Carolina at Pembroke has incorporated a wide range of activities to improve job performance and satisfaction over the past year.

Traditionally, when setting up our periods of staff development, we try to incorporate three elements: Social engagements consisting of a gathering of food and ideas, group trips of cultural significance, and training sessions that help to enhance staffers' use of technologies and resources that are job related.

The library wound-up 2006 with our annual Christmas party. Mainly serving the purpose of giving staff an opportunity to 'catch-up' in a non-work environment, our Christmas party was held off-campus at a nice neighborhood restaurant with a sit-down lunch. We also had arranged a magician for entertainment, as well as singing and instrumentals by actual members of the library staff. We are lucky to be so talented. We were then quick to kick-off the New Year with a cultural enrichment trip to the North Carolina Museum of Art. We often like to plan a trip at the first of the year before the semester starts, as a way to ease everyone back into the workflow after a long holiday break. This year's first trip was planned for the art museum because there was a touring *Monet in Normandy* exhibit (<http://www.ncartmuseum.org/monet/>) at the museum during this time. Since many staff would not have the opportunity to see the exhibit on their own, we decided to rent a bus on campus to take anyone that was interested. The trip was all-day since we drove two hours each way and stopped for lunch on the way home. The experience was one of the better trips that we have had because staff really enjoyed being able to see Monet up close; something that is both culturally and educationally enriching.

Staff development activities were planned again during the week of March 5-8. We chose this particular week because the students and faculty were off for spring break. This gives library staff the opportunity to take a break as well, although unlike most other faculty, we stay on campus. We again decided to do a staff trip, and this time the committee developed three possible destinations for which staff could vote on. This time, another museum won out, giving us an opportunity to visit the Levine Museum of the New South (<http://www.museumofthenewsouth.org/>). A very interesting museum in Charlotte, NC, the Levine offered several exhibits pertaining to Southern history from 1865 to the present. We combined this trip with a visit to one of the larger public library systems on the East Coast – The Public Library of Charlotte & Mecklenburg County (<http://www.plcmc.org/>). Staff enjoyed being able to visit the main branch in Charlotte, giving us an opportunity to see what the environment was like at one of the largest libraries in the area. Again, this trip was educational and also gave staff a good opportunity to bond outside of the workplace.

Also during the week, we held what we call a Lunch-N-Learn, where we invite a speaker to the library to talk with staff about a particular subject and follow it up with a luncheon. We generally try to get speakers of local interest on topics ranging from hobbies to personal finance to intellectual topics. We have often asked our very own faculty members to come speak to staff, which was the case during this particular week. We invited Dr. Thomas Dooling, physics professor at UNCP to speak to the staff about physics in our everyday lives. Staff found the presentation very informative and entertaining, as Dr. Dooling put the science of physics into a context that everyone could understand. In addition to the museum trip and Dr. Dooling's presentation, we also offered staff some work-related training sessions. I offered one particular session on using a newly acquired electronic database called *Books 24x7*, used for searching e-books in business and computer science topics. There were also multiple workshops offered to staff through a continuing series dealing with advanced tools used in Microsoft Word. The sessions were well attended and needed by some staff members who use these applications in their everyday work.

The committee usually reserves a period at the end of the summer before classes commence where we devote another full week to staff development activities. To help get the academic year started, the committee put together a strong lineup of activities planned for the week of August 6th through August 10th. We had two guest speakers come to the library to educate staff on food and nutrition, and personal health and fitness. The first was Susan Noble, a North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service agent, who spoke about food safety and nutrition facts and myths. Our second speaker was Dr. Sonia Tinsley, a UNCP professor from the Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Department. Dr. Tinsley presented an engaging session on the physical, mental, emotional, social, intellectual, and environmental dimensions of wellness. In addition to these sessions, we again provided staff with the opportunity to gain practical skills. I offered librarians two workshops on teaching information literacy skills to freshmen. One of our reference librarians offered two sessions on using the electronic resources *Books in Print* and *Choice Online*. There were also two sessions given on the use of Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Outlook to library staff in need of those skills.

Most recently, the staff development committee decided to offer additional learning opportunities during fall break. Workshops were offered on manipulating data in

Microsoft Excel and how to use keyboard shortcuts. We also hosted a presentation on human resource topics. To close out a successful year of staff development, the library will be holding a chili party in honor of the Thanksgiving holiday, and of course, will hold its annual Christmas party during the first part of December. The committee also decided to have an end-of-year trip this year, giving staff an opportunity to visit the O'Berry Center Foundation in Goldsboro, NC in December. The O'Berry Center Foundation is committed to improving the quality of life for many disadvantaged persons through the funding of scholarships, research, education, and family and community support throughout Eastern North Carolina (<http://www.oberrycenterfoundation.org/index.htm>). Each year the library takes up donations for the O'Berry Center, and this trip will give staff a chance to see what their charity is going towards. The last event we have planned will be for the start of the spring semester. Staff will have the opportunity to see the very popular Mysteries of the Lost Colony exhibit (<http://ncmuseumofhistory.org/lostcolony/site/index.html>) going on at the North Carolina Museum of History in Raleigh on January 3, 2008.

In order to stay as active as the Mary Livermore Library is when it comes to providing for staff development, it is of utmost importance to get a committee started. By keeping an ongoing committee with a chair and secretary, the staff will automatically be reminded each month or quarter that it's time to get active and plan again. Meetings can be as frequent as monthly or per semester; the objective is to maintain some level of frequency that will enable the committee to keep up momentum. Also, do not place all of the responsibility on just one or two committee members. No matter what the size of the organization is, all members need to join in on the planning. Get a wide perspective of ideas from members that work in different areas in order to gauge what types of training sessions may be of interest or more relevant, as well as which social and cultural activities may be better attended than others. By keeping an active committee, it ensures higher participation and better planning.

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