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SURVEYS VIA IN-HOUSE E-MAIL

By Rita Reisman

We are a branch office of the ITT Aerospace/Communications Division in Fort Wayne, IN, and we are located in Clifton, NJ. Three years ago, we were moved from one building to another, and our new location was off the beaten track. Usage dropped drastically. In order to find out why, besides the fact that no one knew where we were, we decided to send out a survey.

Our first question was to find out if the responder knew where we were now located, and then continued with leading questions about our services. The survey was successful. Usage increased, and our services were more widely used.

Last year, we were moved to a more centralized location. During the year, we've noticed usage from several departments dropping off, and again decided to send out a survey. Since we've been accessing the Internet and trying to use e-mail in-house whenever feasible, we decided this would be the thrust of this survey--what we can do for our patrons electronically.

The survey was written and IS contacted to help us set up a mailing list. Late on a Thursday afternoon, the survey was sent via e-mail to Engineering, Marketing, IS, technicians, and almost everyone with an e-mail

location. Before I left that afternoon, I checked my mail to see if there were any responses. There were no responses, but the survey was there for all to see.

There were plenty of responses Friday. All morning, people ran in agitatedly waving computer printouts with thick dark lines running across the page. Apparently there were two problems--the first was that there are many different communication software packages at this facility. The second, and probably more important, is that I sent the survey out in binary (word processing) and the software packages all accept ASCII. Someone finally explained that to us, so we retyped the survey in the mail program, and sent it out again on Friday afternoon.

Over the weekend, I felt a bit foolish for having sent an illegible message to perhaps 300 people in NJ and apparently in Fort Wayne also. However, it occurred to me that 300 people were now very aware of us, and from the curiosity created by our first message, I decided perhaps it was successful in a way.

Monday morning, the first message I received was from the IS Manager, who congratulated us for persevering and successfully getting our message through

on e-mail. She also mentioned that they had been planning on sending out an electronic survey, but we beat them to it! Replies have been coming back very slowly. We're not sure why we are receiving one now and then, but everyone is very busy.


Even though the second message may have been more legible, not everyone is comfortable with e-mail. We have had people asking us to show them how e-mail works, how to access our OPAC, and how to access the Internet. Our survey has been very successful in that aspect. Since we have also changed our department name from Technical Library to Technical Information Center, the mail room will be delivering an announcement to everyone in the facility. So, one way or the other, our message is out. On our paper announcement, we have indicated that we are conducting the survey, and if anyone prefers a paper copy to contact us.

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