



Peer Collaboration
AALL 2009 DC :: TS-SIS Program
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Speakers Wendy Moore and Carol Watson describe the team management structure that has been successfully implemented at the University of Georgia Law Library for close to ten years now. While no management system is perfect, we recommend team management as good approach to make your law library a well functioning, productive place.

Ideas about Team Management

To help make your teams or peer collaboration successful, everyone must stay aware of the 3 C's:
Cohesion, Confidence, & Citizenship

Amazon notes that successful teams all:

- Need to be supported, maybe even initiated, from the top
- Have a Unique Identity & Dynamic
- Are Superior to Individuals in Breadth, Depth, and Dexterity
- Process Friction in Positive/Constructive Ways

Katzenbach and Smith (1993) list the following requirements for building effective teams:

1. Teams must be small enough in the number of members.
2. Members must have adequate levels of complementary skills.
3. The team must have a truly meaningful purpose.
4. The team must have a specific goal or goals.
5. The team and its members must establish a clear approach to the team's work.
6. Members must have a sense of mutual accountability.

Pluses & Minuses of Team Management

Pluses

- Accomplish tasks/goals that don't fit under one person's job description or a department's function
- Flexibility to respond to changing situations and new problems
- Better end results due to combined brain power. Less second-guessing or backtracking.
- Get more accomplished - not only is the quality of work better the sheer quantity is greater than the sum of our parts
- Gain skills at being a better team member that can be used on other collaborative work
- Develop a broader view of the work of the Law Library and gain skills in other areas including management
- Allows for continued professional growth and development for longtime members of the library
- Assists in helping new members of the library adapt to the work of the library more quickly and to buy into the mission of the library
- Creates a strong group vision of the Law Library and its role at the Law School and on-campus

Minuses

- Enormously time consuming
- Lots and lots of meetings!
- It takes a lot of patience with the process
- Need to spend time formulating a good agenda and then sticking to the agenda
- Forced to do your "homework" before each meeting
- Documentation is very necessary
- Creating consensus (or the appearance thereof) can get overdrawn
- We like to beat dead horses
- Difficult to translate level of experience and management skills gained in our system to a library with a strong hierarchical system, especially if trying to become an Associate Director or Director at another law library
- Director has to be willing to give up some power/control

Recommendations for YOUR library

Even though it may seem like you don't have control over the management structure of your library - you actually do! Don't use the excuse that certain people or local conditions prevent you from accomplishing work in a better way. We didn't set out to change our entire workplace management - we set out to better accomplish the work of the library. How can you implement some of these team ideas at your library?

- joint partnership on a task (suggest 3 people, but 2 is a good start!)
- form a team for a special project
- form a team for an library function that has several stakeholders
- utilize agendas, ground rules and minutes within your current meeting structures
- focus more on end results for the library than credit received for your individual work
- ask an independent individual to serve as a facilitator for your discussions
- read the same management book or article and then hold a discussion about it (remembering to use the ground rules!) - like a book club!

Resources for further reading

Two books that we recommend are Katzenbach & Smith's *The Wisdom of Teams* and Keen's *Creating Effective & Successful Teams*. Keen's is much shorter and references the other!

Keen, Thomas R. *Creating Effective and Successful Teams*. West Lafayette, Indiana: ICHOR Business Books, 2003.

Katzenbach, J.R. & D.K. Smith. *The Wisdom of Teams*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

Amason, Allen C. & Harry J. Sapienza. "The Effects of Top Management Team Size and Interaction Norms on Cognitive and Affective Conflict," *Journal of Management*, 1997, Vol. 23, no. 4, p. 495.

