Staff Profile Pages

Introduction

Organisational **Staff Profile Pages** systems are electronic directories which store information about staff in a given organisation. In addition to providing information such as names, job titles, groups and contact details, staff pages include details about knowledge, skills, experience and interests, and even hobbies. As these systems are electronic, they are especially valuable in organisations that have geographical or other barriers to personal connections. For this reason, they are often used as the cornerstone point of systematic knowledge and learning initiatives in development and humanitarian organisations. At their most useful, staff pages have the potential systematically to facilitate connections that might otherwise happen only randomly, leading to valuable new collaboration opportunities. On a day-to-day level, effective staff pages enable and improve the brief, fluid connections across an organisation that are at the heart of the learning organisation.

Detailed description of the process

- **Identify user perspectives:** Find out how the different teams and individuals might use the system, for what reasons, and when. A particular need is to consider the multiple uses to which the system may be put, as well as potential differences between intended and actual uses.

- **Determine the appropriate level of participation and control:** It is essential to establish from the outset whether inclusion on the system should be compulsory or voluntary, and whether to create and manage entries centrally or allow individuals to create and update their own. Most successful pages are based on the voluntary and decentralised approach, allowing staff to personalise their entries. Some systems aim for a halfway house between centralised and decentralised approaches, by providing a core set of data, which expands on the basic concept of the staff directory, but leaving users free to add details as they see fit.

- **Create a template and taxonomy for the information:** When creating a template for the system (see Figure 16 below), it is important to consider ease of data entry, data amendment and data retrieval. A common language or taxonomy describes information in essential fields, such as those relating to expert knowledge, experience, countries, areas of work and interests (see Tool 30). Fixed terms and options for these fields may be appropriate, so that users can select from a menu or a selection of tick-boxes.

- **Broadening the scope:** Staff pages should be easily linked to other components of the KM system, for example, collaborative working tools, trip report systems, project databases or email systems, to allow easy access to electronic information of the organisation. They might also be expanded to include details of communities, teams, external suppliers, partners, and so on.

- **Develop guidelines and provide training:** Data protection laws mean that staff pages must comply with relevant requirements. As such, a clear HR policy on the correct use of the system is crucial. These policies and guidelines should be provided to current staff and new joiners in the form of manuals and training courses, so that current and new staff are able to understand the system and are encouraged add their entry. Leavers should also be reminded to update their entry accordingly, subject to their own preferences for contact after moving on.

- **Launch the tool and gain 'buy-in':** There is a need for internal marketing of any staff pages system, to encourage participation and use. Useful initial mechanisms include launches at staff meetings, putting up posters and nominating champions to promote the system in different areas of the organisation. Another useful tool is to ensure senior management are all involved with the pilot rollout, thus leading the rest of the organisation by example. As with all knowledge and learning tools, the benefits must be made apparent at every stage.

- **Monitoring ongoing use and promotion of the tool:** There is the need and the potential to track the ongoing use of electronic pages, and the reporting requirements for this should be considered as early as possible. Effective measuring can help promote the tool across the organisation, and

help strengthen internal networks. Gathering and sharing the best success stories of using the system can help build participation on an ongoing basis.

- **Maintenance:** Owing to the continual changes in staff composition and location, and additions to personal knowledge and skills, updating the system regularly is particularly important in development and humanitarian organisations. Links to other systems (e.g. HR systems and project information systems) should allow data such as job details, contact information and current work to be updated automatically. Where individuals create their own entries, it may be necessary to send regular reminder emails about updating the system, with a reporting mechanism to highlight those who are lagging behind.

Figure 16: Staff pages template

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Name
Job title
Department or team
Photograph
Contact information
A brief job description
Current and previous projects
Trip reports
Areas of current knowledge and expertise (selected from a pre-defined
list of subjects / terms; people may also rank their knowledge, e.g. from
'extensive' to 'basic')
Areas of interest
Countries of interest
Key contacts – both internal and external, e.g. key donors, valuable
partners, etc.
Membership of internal and external communities of practice or other
networks
Relevant professional qualifications
Personal profile: hobbies and interests, holidays, etc.
An uploaded CV (multiple versions possible)
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Example: Aid people directory

The aid world is characterised by high turnover and rapid redeployment. www.aidpeople.org is a website set up to serve as an inter-organisational staff pages, the main focus of which is to find former colleagues and others facing similar issues or with similar interests. The focus of the site is explicitly on signposting people rather than information. The site also has supporting tools such as blogs and discussion fora to enable users to benefit from the experience of others. At the time of writing, the site was being launched, with the ambition of developing a member base of 25,000 in the first year. If even half this number is reached, it could prove a significant resource for the humanitarian sector.

Sources and further reading

- Collison, C. and G. Parcell (2001) *Learning to Fly*, Oxford: Capstone.
- NHS Toolkit: www.nelh.nhs.uk/knowledge_management/km2/white_pages_toolkit.asp.