
Number 175 of the Neal-Schuman How-To-Do-It series, Staff Development on a Shoestring delivers on the promise of its title. With a clear and effective writing style, Trotta presents a compelling case for staff development built around the concept of “better service through staff development” (1). After exploring the direct connection between customer service and staff development at some depth, she asks: “why not utilize our own skills for the provision of development?” (6).

According to Trotta, it is fundamentally important that library directors and managers take the lead with active involvement in staff development. Included throughout the text are numerous well constructed supporting worksheets and handouts that will prove useful to those who fear that their teaching skills have acquired a bit of rust; the author encourages readers to duplicate and modify the forms as needed. The model training programs provided are sufficiently developed to be taught as-is. Programs on effective communication, teamwork, time management, and customer service are each outlined and supplemented with talking points, helpful tips, and suggestions for evaluation. Although not fully developed as a program, an entire chapter is devoted to staff development and technology.

Significant attention is given to the active role that staff evaluation and self-evaluation can play in completing the feedback loop of ongoing staff development, with chapters devoted to the use of evaluation itself as a development tool. Particularly useful are several pages devoted to the manager's task of overcoming employee resistance to change. Throughout, the bulk of the text is focused toward accomplishing the author’s goal of convincing and empowering the reader to shape and manage change in the library—harnessing it as a positive force rather than something to be feared and opposed. Trotta, who has served as Director of the Meriden, Connecticut, Public Library and has twice been named the Connecticut Library Association’s Outstanding Librarian of the year, notes simply that “learning is an act of change” (31).

In this book, the author has provided librarians with an eminently practicable roadmap to achieving staff engagement and grass-roots frontline advocacy driven by the commitment and active involvement of library management in ongoing staff development. In concise and measured tones, Trotta embraces the reality of the ever-increasing speed of change in today’s library and delivers the tools needed to achieve results that are not only cost-effective but arguably superior to the typical one-off training workshop—with the potential for realizing significant peripheral benefits. This book is highly recommended for any in library management.—Tod Colegrove, Head of DeLaMare Science & Engineering Library, University of Nevada, Reno, Nevada