

BUILDING BRIDGES WITH IT

Successful collaboration with your IT department

SOME HUMOUR TO START...



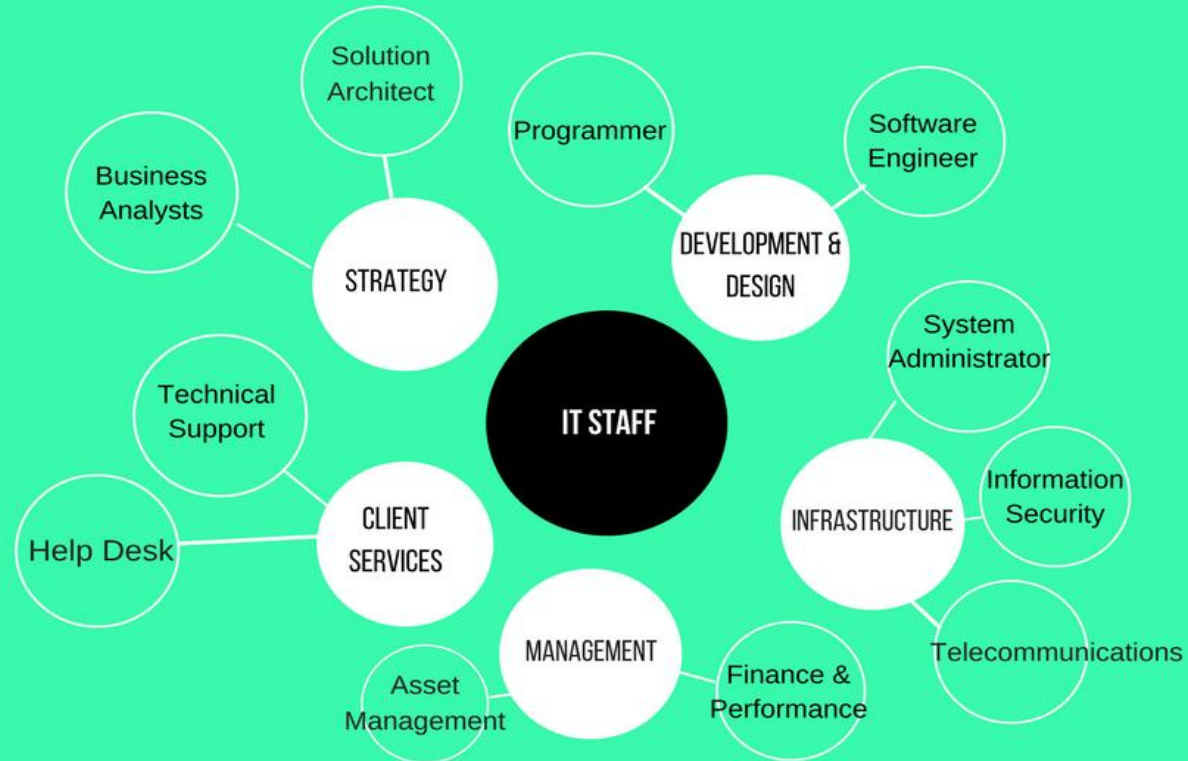
Introducing Jen
to the Internet!

THE IT CROWD

OVERVIEW OF TODAY'S PRESENTATION

- 1) Who are IT and how do library technicians connect with them
- 2) Differences between library technicians and IT
- 3) How the occupational subculture can impact on communication and working relationships
- 4) Communication styles and models of working relationships
- 5) Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL) and how it can help library technicians communicate with IT
- 6) Strategies if things aren't working

WHO ARE IT?



CONNECTIONS BETWEEN LIBRARY TECHNICIANS AND IT

- * More interactions with IT than librarians have
- * "Library technicians perceive themselves as becoming the predominant front line staff for public service and technological assistance"
- * Library technicians often contact the Help Desk or are involved in projects with IT

DIVIDE BETWEEN LIBRARY AND IT FIELDS

- * Work of library and IT fields - valued differently

- * **”Work performed in non white, non-male is often viewed as less technical regardless of the technological objects that are employed in the process”**

- * Difference in salaries and fields are very gendered (Libraries - female dominated, IT - male dominated)

STEREOTYPES



IT OCCUPATIONAL SUBCULTURE

*Characteristics of an IT occupational subculture:

- Frequent use of jargon
- Demands of profession - long hours, angry users
- Ethnocentrism - feelings of superiority and control over other groups
- Physical settings involving electronic equipment and disorder
- Adverse stereotypes of end users and vice versa

OCCUPATIONAL SUBCULTURE AND WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

*Research has found that the propensity to join an occupational subculture increases if staff are unhappy with their position or organisation.

*It seems that the characteristics of the subculture can sometimes lead to conflict. Intercultural conflict can be defined as conflict between the IT occupational subculture and the organisation as a whole

*Potentially can be resolved through acceptance or coexistence.

COMMUNICATION STYLES & PERCEPTIONS

- * Communication skills - vital in both industries
 - * Conjecture over whether IT staff have poor communication skills - some studies say yes, others say they have their own way of communicating.
 - * Perception is reality!
- ”User satisfaction denotes user perception with the system rather than the technical quality of the delivered system”

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

*Barriers to working relationships include:

- outsourced IT service
- misunderstandings based on the different focus of the two departments
- overall organisational culture
- reporting structure

“Major problems occurred when there was a lack of awareness and appreciation regarding each other’s mission, expertise, and goals... both departments provided an institution-wide service, but from the IT point-of view, the library was just one of many departments it served”

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS - POSITIVE ATTRIBUTES

- * A demonstrated level of competence or domain knowledge
- * A focus on the “broken” work processes vs blaming people
- * A willingness to admit individual mistakes and to acknowledge limitations
- * A spirit of cooperation and not competition
- * An ability to give and receive assistance from associates

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS - MODELS

* Library Systems Model

- Electronic Information Coordinator position - works as a liaison between the library and IT.
- The library and IT hold regular meetings - check on issues impacting on the library, resolving/defusing them
- Library and IT depts - able to focus on a common goal, working relationships have improved substantially
- Library staff publicly praise IT staff for positive interactions at staff meetings

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS - MODELS

*Temporary work assignments & tours

- IT personnel being sent on temporary assignment into a (end) user community can be very helpful
- Could be a few hours each week
- Document ideas or suggestions
- Tours can have a positive impact, especially if IT not co-located

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE LIBRARY

“Set of best practice publications for IT service management... ITIL gives guidance on the provision of quality IT services and the processes, functions and other capabilities needed to support them”

- *Started by the UK Government

- * ITIL training focuses on customer service skills, including active listening skills, empathy and communication skills generally

- *The fundamental tenets of ITIL can be implemented by IT departments without having to complete the training

ITIL AND THE LIBRARY TECHNICIAN

*Using ITIL language:

- What are the **risks** if the problem isn't solved (or solved in a timely manner)
- How quality of services and productivity are being impacted by the problem

*Risks include:

- Financial risk to the organisation
- Compliance risks (i.e. legislation)
- Risk to the reputation of the organisation

STRATEGIES IF THINGS AREN'T WORKING

- *Talk to your manager about the difficulties you are having communicating with IT
- *Talk to your IT department's manager (possibly in conjunction with your manager) about the problems you are facing in your working relationship with IT staff
- *Relate problems back to the impact on your library service
- *Publicly praise positive IT staff interactions through a staff meetings or other public forums
- *Examine your own expectations around IT service
- *Think about a SLA (Service Level Agreement)
- *Accept they may not change :(

CONCLUSION

If both library technicians and IT are committed to working together, the library service and the organisation as a whole can be fundamentally changed for the better.