



Wiseman Consulting & Training Insight and Leadership/

High Impact Staff Days for Libraries

Staff Days at public libraries are a fine tradition – an important way to play out a library’s culture in action. They can demonstrate a library’s values by recognizing a staff member’s special contributions, provide skill building in key area that support the organization’s strategic direction, and ensure that a sense of fun, frivolity and community building can be anticipated on such special days.

The planning for these all-important events is often done by the staff with management oversight. Preparation often involves attention to good food and brainstorming about ways to engage the staff. Words of praise and encouragement are frequently offered by the library director and/or board members.

Given the purpose of staff days – and the time and attention invested in them - why are we finding the most frequent response to our inquiry about one of these upcoming events is a feigned yawn or a roll of the eyes. We are finding that staff, when asked honestly, would prefer a gift certificate and a day off in lieu of yet another staff day.

Something has gone wrong! But, staff days can be turned into a rare opportunity for effective collaboration, bringing everybody together in ways that re-energize and re-focus staff for the betterment of one and all.

Lately we’ve had many clients tell us that the staff days we conduct are much more than they expected. In fact, we’ve been told that our staff days “rock”!

We are helping many libraries to rethink staff days and create better results – it’s an investment that deserves a good return. We stress moving from entitlement to empowerment. We encourage developing staff day forums to hold critical conversations about the present and the future of the library – and much more.

Our considerable experience conducting “wow” staff days enables us to make some surefire recommendations. Here are ten good tips:

1. Have the staff members at all levels share what they appreciate about each other in very specific ways. In small groups, have staff discuss the things that others do that make life and work easier for them. Be sure to record these comments and post them afterwards. Be sure that feedback gets back to others.

2. Have people talk about what they like about working at the library and why they have made this their work. What is working for them right now? Have people share what's working for the patron and what successes have occurred this year? Also discuss the challenges they may face in the future.
3. Discuss in an involved way what the future direction for the library should be in programs, services, processes, facility, human resources etc.
4. Identify what are the future trends in facility, programs, technology, and materials. Bring a local author to talk about books.
5. Provide opportunities for leaders from the community to address what they see are the critical issues they are facing and how those could be helped by the library.
6. Provide for an open exchange of information between the staff, board, and leaders. Bringing a moderator may help here.
7. Teach a few vital skills necessary for the library to be a success (learning about a new technology, handling patron complaints, dealing with teens etc.)
8. Be sure to follow-up on questions, concerns, ideas and/or suggestions for change that are mentioned.
9. Provide opportunities for staff skits on a day in the life of your department or your most unusual reference or patron request.
10. Do let the staff know that they are appreciated and solicit their feedback on how the day went. Thank all those who helped with the day.

Learn more about ways that we can help?

Visit www.wisemanconsulting.com

Be in Touch. Contact Us:

1014 N Plum Grove Road. Ste 302
Schaumburg, IL 60173
Phone: 847.843.9934
Fax: 847.843.9936