Industry and Team Communications – Part Three: The Team and Project Reporting

Building and Managing a Research Team

Research Team Diversity

There are many different configurations of research teams in academia, and boundaries can often be unclear. They may comprise co-investigators, fractional or pooled staff, technical and clerical staff and postgraduate research students. There may also be inter-and intra-institutional dimensions and increasingly international ones.

Assessing The Balance and Composition of Your Team

Ideally, the balance and composition of the team in terms of skills, expertise and other contributions will be appropriate to achieve the team's objectives for the research goal, the team is working towards. The research team leader needs to be confident that team members have, or can develop, the necessary skills and knowledge for the research at hand, and recruitment decisions should be made on that basis of this knowledge.

Managing Your Team

Your responsibilities as a manager of the group are identified in **Adair's action-centred leadership model**:

- Establish, agree, and communicate standards of performance and behaviour
- Establish style, culture, approach of the group, including soft skill elements
- Monitor and maintain discipline, ethics, integrity and focus on objectives
- Anticipate and resolve group conflict, struggles or disagreements
- Assess and change as necessary the balance and composition of the group
- Develop team-working, cooperation, morale and team-spirit
- Develop the collective maturity and capability of the group - progressively increase group freedom and authority
- Encourage the team towards objectives and aims. This means motivating the group and providing a collective sense of purpose

- Identify, develop and agree with the team- and project-leadership roles within the group
- Enable, facilitate, and ensure effective internal and external group communications
- Identify and meet group training needs
- Give feedback to the group on overall progress; consult with and seek feedback and input from the group.

Team roles and development

There are a number of team roles and individual profile tools available and your institution's staff development department or an equivalent department, may have registered practitioners in one or more of these roles, who can help you and your team understand your preferred team roles or working styles.

How to Write Executive Reports, Briefings and Summaries:

Executive Summary Format

Here's the basic format of an executive summary.

- First, your Introduction - be sure to know your audience
- Include a Table of Contents in the form of a bulleted list
- Explain the company's roles and identify strengths
- Explain the need, or the problem, and its importance
- Recommend a solution and explain its value
- Justify said solution by explaining how it fits the organization, and then,
- Include a strong conclusion that once more wraps up the importance of the project

Writing Tips for Effective Briefing Documents

Here are some writing tips for effective briefing documents:

- **Keep It Brief!**
  - A briefing document should be no longer than two pages.
  - It should get directly to the matter of the issue and provide a thorough overview without being lengthy.

- **Use Concise Language.**
  - Briefing documents should be, as the name suggests, brief. This is not the place to be verbose or use figurative language.
  - Instead, use clear, concise sentences to explain the issue(s) at hand clearly and directly.
  - State the situation and potential resolutions clearly, using as few words as possible.

- **Use an Easy-to-Follow Format.**
  - Use short sentences, small blocks of text and bullet points to ensure maximum skimmability.
  - The structure should include:
    - the issue or topic, including background and the current status
    - important details relevant to the issue
    - recommended options for resolving the matter

- **Avoid Speculation.**
  - A briefing document is not the place to posit theories or speculate.
  - It should include an overview of factual information with potential solutions that logically follow from the facts.
  - Evidence or sources should be provided for any issues or facts mentioned in the document.

Steps In Writing A Briefing Document

- **Step 1**: Summarize Key Information
- **Step 2:** Verify Details
- **Step 3:** Propose Alternatives
- **Step 4:** Do Quality Control
- **Step 5:** Edit and Proofread Carefully