

LibraryCrunch

Bringing You A "Library 2.0" Perspective, by Michael Casey

[« The Meaning of... | Main](#)

Communicating With Blogs

[Alternatively titled: **BranchBlog Comms: No Language Difference Could Hold Them Apart**]

This brief piece was originally meant to be included in my CIL2006 presentation titled [New Technology Challenges & Success](#).

How do we communicate? From the new branch construction perspective we have one primary goal, and that is maintaining excellent communications with all staff during what is, understandably, a very stressful and hectic time. Construction projects are not the best place to train and develop new staff. Nor are they all that conducive to quiet, one-on-one discussions regarding policy and procedures.

But you have to work within the reality of your situation, and in this case we're talking about a new staff, in a new building, 65,000 items to prepare, and two months to do it in. Somehow, we needed to communicate. Our first choice would always be face-to-face, but that wasn't always possible. And as in any work setting, we have staff who communicate on different levels, often using different generational or professional languages. Creating an environment that can comfortably encourage communication on these varying levels is never easy, but it is positively daunting to try and do it amidst book deliveries, building inspections, staff training and all of the other things involved in a new library building project.

So we needed to create other avenues for staff to communicate. As branch manager, I am not always the easiest person to reach – meetings and telephone conversations and my own email communications often take me away from that direct interaction I want to be able to provide. And staff, busy with so many tasks and unable to always work together as a large team, need another way to communicate, both informally and professionally.

What we needed was a mechanism which allowed for both horizontal and vertical communications, and which was less formal than email but had many of the attributes of face-to-face communications; namely, openness and accountability. Horizontal communications – the communications between staff who are mostly on the same level – often take place in break rooms and on the work floor. But this project had staff everywhere, and talking to a trusted co-worker wasn't always possible. Vertical communications – communication between front-line staff and management – usually takes place either in formal meetings or through email, though hopefully is also takes place in small groups and one-on-one between worker and supervisor. But we did not have a typical library work environment, and we needed to try something new. So, we turned to an internal blog as one tool to assist us.

Our IT department rolled out to our server a WordPress blog that was both simple to learn and administer. Staff were all sent an email with a link to the new blog. Simple instructions were also sent and logging in and receiving a password were very simple operations that all staff easily understood.

Over the course of a week I posted several questions regarding branch issues. I asked staff about genre placement, shelving strategies, and scheduling. Other staff asked questions regarding in-branch parties, network passwords, and local restaurants. Very quickly most staff were checking and sometimes commenting to the blog on a daily basis.

It's too soon to declare victory, but initial indications seem to point towards the blog serving as a positive tool for communicating both vertically and horizontally. The concept of the blog, by its very nature, lends itself to this success.

Our internal blog provides us with a very effective means to communicate. The openness of the blog lends itself to a strong sense of group-imposed responsibility. Every staff member can read and comment on the blog. Both the writer and the commenter share a responsibility that is policed by the larger community of readers. Snarky or inappropriate questions or comments will be seen as such by everyone. Likewise, questions posed but unanswered, or answered in an unsatisfactory manner, will be available for all to see. So, for both parties, reputations are at stake.

As branch manager I cannot simply choose to ignore the comments and questions posted to the blog. Oh, I could ignore them, but at my own peril, and with the loss of any positive reputation or respect. Likewise, staff value that line of communication, and so long as they use the blog in a responsible manner they know that management will respond to them.

We'll see how the next few months play out as staff get more and more busy with direct customer interactions and library operations become just a bit more traditional. I'm hoping that the blog will continue to serve as an effective means of communicating for branch staff.

[cil2006](#)

[Library 2.0](#)

Posted by Michael on March 26, 2006 12:27 PM | [Permalink](#)

→ TrackBack

TrackBack URL for this entry:

<http://www.librarycrunch.com/mt/mt-tb.cgi/140>

→ Post a comment

(If you haven't left a comment here before, you may need to be approved by the site owner before your comment will appear. Until then, it won't appear on the entry. Thanks for waiting.)

Name:

Email Address:

URL:

☐ Remember personal info?

Comments: