

University Team Initiative

MARCH 2003 NEWSLETTER



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FROM CAROL CANTRELL

In my short two years here I have seen how much the staff and faculty truly care about the University and that they have a real commitment to quality. What they may not have are the tools and skills to use effective teamwork to enhance the quality of their work.

My vision as the Vice President of Human Resources is that the team that comprises the University Team Initiative (UTI) will be able to inform you about the teams in the University that are successfully making things happen. We want you to understand what makes teams effective and how you can take those skills and use them in your daily work life.

The President has charged the Human Resources department with making New School University an employer of choice. Our hope is that one day, people will look at our banners as they walk down Fifth Avenue and say, "I hear New School University is a great place to work." Many of us already know that this is the case, it is a great place to work with

wonderful people and very special programs. Others need to understand why we are proud of working here and the fun we have in developing systems and programs with our colleagues. This is what UTI is all about. I invite you to join the team. Read our newsletters, tell us about teams in the University that you believe are especially effective, and ask us questions about teamwork.

In all my years of doing human resources work, I firmly believe this may be the single most important initiative in which I have been involved. Your membership in the University team is crucial to our efforts. Please think about why you work here, what do you like best about being here, what teams are you on, how are they successful, how could you as a team member bring more to the team and get more out of the experience? Finally, as you consider these questions think about how we can help you be an effective team member at New School University.

UNIVERSITY TEAM INITIATIVE MISSION STATEMENT

The University Team Initiative aims to foster a creative and inclusive work environment. To this end we will provide faculty and staff with opportunities to better understand the university's structure; to broaden their networks and contacts throughout the organization; and to develop professionally and personally. Our goal is a renewed commitment among university employees to the development of the organization and a better understanding of their role in this process.

While there are clear differences and needs among the faculty and staff, there are also processes and procedures in use which are duplicated among individuals, committees, departments and divisions. Many of these processes have devolved into successful models.

Although we will not be able to find a complete set of models to fit every purpose and every group, we can take advantage of successful initiatives that have come to fruition and have benefited others. We can use these models to give us ideas on how to tackle problems that may exist within our setting and to promote an efficient, respectful, creative and enjoyable work environment. The UTI effort began with the clear purpose of highlighting a few of these successes, sharing them with the University community, and making some choices among these successes for future action.

To get us to this point, we will need to accomplish the following objectives:

- Identify good team models,

- Gather information on those models,
- Assess the information,
- Communicate our findings and recommendations to the University community and,
- Build the support and buy-in of the University community and administrators necessary to enable implementation of our ideas and findings.

By then implementing these modes, we will then be able to:

- Create alliances that will promote teamwork and cooperation,
- Improve communication on all levels, and
- Help people to feel their contribution is of value.

WHO WE ARE

We are employees from all sectors of the University who have come together to create a more cohesive and productive work environment through teamwork.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE TEAM BUILDING EFFORT

- Ask for advice and help from colleagues when you need it.
- Submit ideas and suggestions to the team.
- Create a professional development plan.
- Submit articles on team work in your department —get the discussion started.

**Join the University
Team Initiative!**

CUBICLE ETIQUETTE

The more we read and speak with others involved in our information technology, office building-dwelling business environment, the more it becomes apparent that the cubicle has become the standard business configuration, even for managers. For those of us not lucky enough to telecommute, the cube has become our home—albeit small—away from home. When my tenure ended as managing editor for a scientific journal, I moved back into my other profession as a publications/documentation specialist—and out of the office into a cubicle. I was a bit surprised by fellow workers' flagrant, even if unintentional, lack of courtesy for others working nearby. Speaking as if they are the only people within earshot, colleagues often converse in normal tones, laugh and have a party, breaking the concentration of those around them. And asking the revelers to keep it down or take it elsewhere often is considered discourteous. Although now we have voicemail and e-mail, it seems that some simply would rather holler. To this end, I have assembled 22 rules for cubicle etiquette, which should help to promote greater thoughtfulness in today's office environment.

1. Eavesdrop inconspicuously. Although you don't mean to eavesdrop, often you simply can't help it—the walls of cubicles rarely reach over 5 or 6 feet in height, so sound easily finds its way over the top. When someone adjacent to you

asks someone a question for which you know the correct answer, resist the urge to volunteer this information. This action will only confirm that you were eavesdropping, even if it was unintentional.

2. Get an invitation. Do not enter another cubicle unless you are invited. And do not stand outside a cube to conduct a conversation. Converse either in your cube or in that of your colleague.

3. Do not be a pest. Do not use sign language or whisper to attract the attention of someone who is on the phone. Return later to carry out a conversation if you see someone dialing, checking e-mail or voice mail, or involved in another activity.

4. Respect meditation. Think twice before interrupting someone who appears to be deep in thought. They probably are.

5. Be a soft talker. Be aware of how your voice carries. Always use your "library voice" when speaking in a cubicle environment.

6. Do not play with electronics. Avoid using your speakerphone for conversations and voicemail retrieval. Also if you listen to compact discs in your CD drive or to Internet radio, use your headphones. There simply is no reason to subject others to your taste in tunes.

7. Keep private matters private. Do not exchange confidential information in a cubicle. If you would not want it published in the local newspaper, do not discuss it in your cube. Try to find a meeting room, or take your conversation outside.

8. Suffer alone. If you are ill, stay home. No one likes a martyr. Neither does anyone appreciate taking your cold or flu home to his or her loved ones. Understand that the first few days of an illness are the most dangerous in terms of contagion, and work from home during this time if possible.

9. Kick others out gracefully. Walk towards the entrance of your cubicle when you would like to keep an impromptu meeting short. You can stand up and say you need to go to the restroom or make a copy. Be creative.

10. Keep snacking to a minimum. The smell, noise, and mess of snack foods may be offensive to others. Also, some people are

allergic to certain snacks such as peanuts, and popcorn can nauseate others.

11. Decorate with taste. Whether you furnish your office space with lava lamps and throw pillows or company policy and flow charts, remember that your cube is viewed by others throughout the day. Keep the half-nude pop icons and risqué cartoons to a minimum. Others may be offended on moral, religious, cultural, or sexual grounds. And who needs a complaint filled against them?

By Gary M. Smith Senior Member, Houston Chapter Intercom, Nov. 2000

To read the full article, please visit www.newschool.edu/admin/team/res_cubicles.html.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

University Teamwork Survey

The University Team Initiative needs your support as we move forward on our goal to identify and gather information about teamwork at the university. Over the next month we will be conducting a survey of the university employees, including faculty and staff, to help us understand who the university employee is and the quality of their experience of teamwork. The survey is intended to give us a starting point as we understand the perceptions and motivations of the community. All of the information is confidential and will be used to help give direction to our future inquiries and the resources we are able to identify and share over time. We hope you will support us in this effort by taking the survey at www.newschool.edu/admin/team and click on survey.

Roving Reporter

Ever think you missed your calling as a journalist? Are you knowledgeable about what's going on in the University? Do you want to see articles about what you feel are exciting and interesting activities here at the New School? Then become a Roving Reporter! In each issue of the University Team Initiative Newsletter we will feature an article written by a member of the New School staff. Please submit ideas and articles to Nicole Drayton, 55 West 13th Street 7th Floor. Email: Draytonn@newschool.edu Phone: 229-2662 ext. 257

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

"People have been known to achieve more as a result of working with others than against them"

*-Dr. Allan Fromme
Renowned psychologist, lecturer and author*

"No one of us is more important than the rest of us."

*-Ray Kroc
President, McDonald's Corporation*