

## *Staff Development on a Shoestring*

Marcia Trotter. *Staff Development on a Shoestring: A How-To-Do-It Manual for Librarians*. New York: Neal-Schuman, 2011. 117 pp. \$70.00. Paper. ISBN: 9781555707309.

How can a library provide professional development for its employees during these lean times? Is it even possible? Marcia Trotter believes it is, and she shows how it can be done in her new book *Staff Development on a Shoestring*, which provides library management with a staff development manual that focuses on training in-house. Trotter has served as Director of the Meridian, Connecticut, Public Library. She is past president of the Connecticut Library Association and was twice honored by it as outstanding librarian. She is the author of *Managing Library Outreach Programs*, *Successful Staff Development*, and *Supervising Staff*.

Trotter notes, “The best way to accomplish good staff training with very little money is to design in-house training programs that turn experienced staff into proficient trainers” (ix). One might ask shouldn’t we focus on resources instead of staff development. The library staff is as important as the library resources. We must have both. In chapter one, the author presents important reasons why staff development needs to be a priority. One of the main reasons is because “things change rapidly and often in our profession” (1). For librarians to deliver the best services they must keep up with these changes. Librarians have long held the conviction that to remain effective they must practice life-long development. The author asks the question, “What is the cost of not providing training?” (6). She answers, “Staff who is untrained is more likely to provide poor service.” This will provide a poor image of the library and lead to its demise. To provide the best services we must provide training for our staff.

What is staff development? Trotter defines staff development as “the ongoing process that orients, trains, and teaches, through a systematic approach, members of the organization to work together to serve its customers” (1). It is the author’s conviction that customer service will be improved through staff development. Other reasons she gives for staff development are employee retention, “maintain and improve employee skills,” keep current, motivate employees and boost morale, and improve customer satisfaction. Even in-house training isn’t free even though it is more affordable; it costs less than not investing in staff development.

Trotter provides instructions on beginning a staff development program in chapter 2. One of the important ingredients for creating a staff development program is creating a library policy for staff development. The author notes, “The performance of a library lies within the ability of the staff to deliver the best possible experience to patrons” (9). To accomplish this goal the library needs a policy on staff development and procedures on how it will be carried out. Trotter provides a sample customer service policy and a sample staff development policy to help accomplish this task. In this chapter, the author provides an outline on setting up a staff development program. The first step is planning for the program. This plan should include the goals and objectives of the library. What are you trying to do? Second, you must determine who will be responsible for staff development. Third, you must do some kind of needs assessment. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your staff? Where do they need training? This can be accomplished through formal and informal survey tools. The fourth step would be designing

a program. The next step would be choosing a training topic. It is important to get everyone to sign on to this program. There must be a sense of ownership by the staff if the program is to be successful.

Chapter 3 focuses on the process of providing training in-house. Some of the topics covered are choosing a trainer, “determining training needs,” writing learning objectives, creating a training team, and different methods of providing the training, such as presentations or online workshops. The author discusses various ways of doing the training, such as lectures, role-playing, case studies, application, and discussion. She thinks lectures should be used sparingly.

Trotter thinks that certain things are required of a library director for a staff development program to succeed. One of the most important responsibilities of the director is communicating the vision of the library. She notes that conveying this vision is not a one-time event. A good vision must be clear and have the staff's support. It is important to have a philosophy for both staff development and customer service. A second important task is the designing of adequate job descriptions. Trotter notes, “In describing positions, we must be able to provide established boundaries while at the same time encourage employees to pursue their strengths” (37). A third important task for the director is providing encouragement for the staff. This can be done both publicly and privately.

In chapter 6, Trotter describes how mentoring can be helpful for staff development. She lists four phases of mentoring: “initiation, cultivation, separation, and redefinition.” The initiation stage is the beginning stage when the mentor first meets the new employee. The second stage is when the mentor teaches the mentee. The third stage is when the mentee is able to separate from the mentor and is competent to do the work on his own. The last stage is when the mentor and mentee “redesign” their relationship. They can now relate as colleagues and the former mentee can mentor others.

Trotter provides model training programs in chapter 8. These samples can be adapted “for any type of library,” according to the author. The programs described cover communication, orientation, teamwork, time management, customer service, and interacting with patrons. Trotter provides training outlines, worksheets, and handouts. These models will provide much help for those designing training programs.

The last three chapters provide information on “evaluation as a development tool,” recognizing accomplishments, and the last chapter provides a resource directory. Evaluation will be very important to any training program, for it will show if the program is achieving its purpose and what changes need to be made to improve the training. Recognition will come in a variety of ways. It can be as simple as giving a staff member a word of appreciation, or as important as delegating greater responsibility in the library to an employee. The Resource Directory includes a bibliography of publications, organizations, tools, and online sources.

*Staff Development on a Shoestring* is a clearly written resource on how to create and sustain a staff development program. It could not have been published at a better time. It provides quality information on providing training for library staff in a cost-effective method. Investing in the library staff enhances motivation and boosts morale. It will also equip the library staff to provide excellent service. The handouts, examples, and sidebars make this book an even-better resource, one that all library managers or directors will want.

*John E. Shaffett*  
*The Baptist College of Florida*

