

Case Study - Academic Learning Event Advertising

Background:

Academic Professional Development (APD) is part of Human Resources and Development in Edinburgh Napier University. Annually they deliver around 100 training courses or events, and focus on supporting academic staff and researchers in their career development.

In order to do this they have historically advertised their events in a number of ways:

- 1) By **email** to all staff
- 2) Through the University's **self-service HR** system
- 3) Through the University **internet**
- 4) On a stand-alone **web-page**
- 5) On a **google docs** calendar

As well as these different client facing systems, the team maintained

- 1) An **access database** to as their web-site's back end
- 2) A master **word document** containing key course information
- 3) A master **excel spreadsheet** tracking where information on each course or activity was held and at what stage this course or activity was at

In November 2013 the Academic Professional Development (APD) Co-ordinator (the individual responsible for administering these systems) approached the Sustainable Futures team initially looking for advice on streamlining, through potentially introducing a new system to link together their existing information.

Activity:

In initial discussions, Sustainable Futures agreed to support the APD Co-ordinator under their coaching service, and they arranged a series of hour long coaching sessions which took place with the co-operation of the wider Academic Learning team late 2013 through to Spring 2014.

These sessions initially focussed on supporting the APD Co-ordinator in applying business analysis tools to identify where each piece of information held by the team was located, and therefore move towards removing duplicated information.

Latterly they focussed around enabling the creation of a business case for change, and in bringing on board colleagues to support simplification.

Outcomes:

At time of writing the APD team had reduced the number of places they advertised their courses to three locations, with plans to further consolidate before the start of next academic year; as they were unable to remove some advertising material mid-session.

Benefits of this are primarily to staff who access these courses, and the members of the APD team. For University staff, they have fewer places to look for courses, and those places should be more intuitive and better linked to the existing services they use – using deep-linking through the HR Connect system enables easier booking from course advertising for example.

It is also more likely that the course information will be accurate, as each iteration of the material being repeated in different locations allows opportunities for errors to be introduced.

For the staff in the academic liaison team time has been saved with the reduction of the google calendar system resulting in a time saving of 5-10 minutes per course run. Staff in APD are now familiar with new services, such as the University blogging platform, and have learnt techniques to bring about more efficient working practices.

Finally, these improvements link with supporting the Universities values, primarily those of innovation, through the use of new services and ways of working, and professionalism, as this project has supported increasingly accurate, up to date, and easy to find information.

The difference involving Sustainable Futures made:

Team members report that involving Sustainable Futures enabled them to look at their business processes systematically, challenge them to simplify the systems they had rather than introducing an additional system.

They said learning how to tackle this with a systematic approach is something they had not done before and having gone through the review could now apply to other processes in the future. They also said Sustainable Futures supported the team to use new services.

"Before we knew there was duplication, but we didn't know clearly how much duplication there was, where it was, or what the consequences of that were."