

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Implementing Technology Solutions in Libraries: Techniques, Tools, and Tips From the Trenches. By Karen C. Knox. Medford (NJ): Information Today, Inc. 2011. 173 pages (soft cover). ISBN 978-1-57387-403-8. CAN\$35.00.

Just as the title implies, this book was written from the trenches, and it is practical and straight to the point. Don't dismiss the book's 173 pages as too brief; it is saturated with Karen Knox's experience in implementing technology projects within libraries. Knox has a BSc in Computer Science and an MLIS, which give her the ideal combination of education to fulfill her role as Director of IT at the Rochester Hills Public Library.

In chapter one, Knox outlines creating a technology plan and, based on this, identifying areas where improvement is needed. The reader is introduced to a fictional library, Info City Public Library (ICPL), used to provide practical examples at the end of each chapter. The reader can follow ICPL from the very beginning of project initiation right through to the end of the project life cycle. ICPL's initial need is to find a better way to manage the demand for public computing. This need fits within the confines of their technology plan, and thus a project is born. Accompanying this chapter is Appendix A, a detailed sample of a technology plan.

Once the need is established, ICPL identifies stakeholders and chooses a project team in chapter two. ICPL has now created a list of solution ideas for the service need described in chapter one. The list is shared with the team who narrows it down to two possible solutions: new computer and print management systems.

In chapter three, research is conducted on the solutions to the need and potential vendors. Developing specific criteria for the solution is important at this stage. To help with decision making, the project manager issues a request for proposals (RFP) to potential vendors. The team ultimately decides project details and selects the vendor. Accompanying this chapter are Appendix B (a sample RFP) and Appendix C (a sample review tool to score the RFPs received from the vendors).

Knox makes procurement seem simple in chapter four where she discusses contracts. Dealing with vendors is both exciting and challenging, as is creating and reading the paperwork associated with it. After reviewing the RFPs, project managers make recommendations to management. The reader is provided with a sample of a recommendation letter in Appendix D. Relationship building is important when negotiations occur between libraries and vendors. ICPL chooses a vendor for their project and embarks on the paperwork for the contract.

After the vendor is selected, implementation of the project begins with chapter five. Kick-off meeting etiquette and tips are described. Project managers should practice change control using an "IT Inventory Tool" or

"IT Planner". Examples of both are provided in Appendices E and F, respectively. ICPL has its kick-off meeting, where the team documents discussions, action items, and next steps.

Chapter six focuses on monitoring and controlling the project. It is important to document both planned and unplanned challenges that arise when introducing a new technology. ICPL has installed a new computer management system and print management system on one of the terminals for testing. The team monitors the new systems and trains staff to be comfortable using and answering questions about them. Testing is important prior to implementation across the whole organization to smooth out any technical difficulties and to identify possible policy revisions needed to accommodate the changes.

Chapter seven reminds the reader to refer back to the implementation plan set out in chapter five, as it is easy to lose sight of project scope amidst the action. Developing and nurturing vendor relationships are also highlighted in this chapter. ICPL is still testing the system, and assessment of the project status is carried out.

Chapter eight describes customizing and finalizing the systems. The results of chapter seven's project status report will guide the team in planning the next steps. At this point, it is easy to stumble upon delays while smoothing out technology, policy, and resource issues. These have to be addressed before deciding on a live date. ICPL has a challenge with the new copy machines that they need to correct before moving forward.

Chapter nine focuses on human resources and customer service management. Training staff and promoting the new system are essential for adopting and adapting. There will always be staff and patrons who oppose change and will require more time to adjust. ICPL trains staff and introduces policies to accommodate the new system. The IT Director develops a strong plan for staff to be included in the decision-making process.

Chapter 10 describes the launch of the new system. Scheduling extra staff to be on hand on launch day will help everyone cope with the decrease in comfort level. ICPL's launch goes smoothly with only minor setbacks. They take this opportunity to gather feedback from both staff and patrons.

Chapter 11 closes the project by tying loose ends and implementing final tweaks to the system. Chapter 12 focuses on evaluation and looking back at what worked and didn't work. This information will be vital for future planning and implementation. ICPL has their final meeting to create a lessons learned report. Finally, Knox summarizes this book and provides closing insights in chapter 13.

The project management theory and application discussed in this book are beneficial for managers in any area of the library. However, it is highly recommended for those who are in library information technology or are interested

in project management techniques. Furthermore, Knox's sense of humour and sharp wit make it a delightful read.

Knox's Web site (<http://www.karencknox.com/itsil>) is a supplement to this book and is updated with useful examples of project documents. The Web site itself is highly recommended for librarians in management roles who have little or no training in business writing.

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