

TOP TEN TIPS

CONVERTING TECHNOPHOBES INTO TECHNOPHILES: EMPOWERING RELUCTANT LIBRARY STAFF



STRIVE TO INTEGRATE NEW TECHNOLOGIES INTO YOUR WORKPLACE CULTURE.

Don't blog for blogging's sake. Well, okay, you can if you want to, but you won't win any 2.0 converts that way. Solve existing problems with new technologies and integrate them as seamlessly as possible into everyone's daily work.



ESTABLISH OR INCREASE REGULAR COMMUNICATIONS FROM SYSTEMS STAFF.

Monthly newsletters, weekly blog entries, and open "ticketing" methods of reporting problems show everyone what you're working on day-to-day. Everyone usually accepts that systems staff are busy, but they're never quite sure what you're doing.



REMOVE UNNECESSARY BARRIERS AND RESTRICTIONS.

Staff will never try something that they're not allowed to do. Let them download a new browser. Provide live server access the web pages that they create. Strike a balance between accessibility and security.



BANISH PHRASES LIKE "I'M NOT VERY GOOD WITH TECHNOLOGY."

Give staff credit for what they do know, and empower them to do the same. Most people know more than they think!



SOLICIT STAFF FEEDBACK DURING ALL STAGES OF A PROJECT CYCLE.

You may not get feedback on a new product until launch day, but never stop asking for it. People are more willing to accept change if their concerns are heard.



GIVE TECHNOLOGY TOURS.

Show 'em the servers! They're just big ol' computers, nothing to be scared of. Point out what each one does—network, printing, the ILS, the proxy, web pages, electronic reserves, etc.



PROVIDE REGULAR TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES...

...and don't wait until you're asked to do so. If there's nothing new (hah!) give a brown bag lunchtime presentation about something that the library already has, but may be underutilized—like any Microsoft Office product.



TEACH THE LINGO.

It's important for techies to "speak English" to colleagues, but it's also empowering for them to learn technical terms. Train everyone to recite something simple, like, "Our web server runs on a Linux box. The design uses XHTML and CSS, and the dynamic applications are MySQL and PHP." Acronyms and slang are the secret handshake in any society!



PROVIDE SANDBOX OPPORTUNITIES WHERE MISTAKES AND FAILURE ARE OKAY.

Personal web pages are a great way to teach basic HTML and web principles, and they provide staff an opportunity to get creative and take responsibility for their own technical product.



TAKE REFERENCE TRAINING.

Reference staff spend all day helping novice researchers navigate an alien, jargon-filled library. Training in formal reference interview practices can teach you how to do the same in your area of expertise.