Skills for Success: the Health Library Staff Development Framework
Sponsored by the National Library of Health, building on work developed by London Health Libraries and the Library & Knowledge Development Network

Developing your personal effectiveness
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What is “personal effectiveness”?  
Personal effectiveness covers those skills and abilities that we need to have, regardless of our job, status or professional background. They are underpinned by a commitment to reflective practice – to considering what we do, why we do it, how we might do it better next time. Personal effectiveness skills include:

- self-belief – the belief in your ability to make an impact
- understanding your personal style and its effect on others
- ability to switch styles of interaction to suit individuals and situations
- personal risk taking – the ability to work outside your “comfort zones”
- understanding the business of your organisation
- being effective team members and leaders
- being effective in meetings
- “getting things done”
- managing your own development
- managing your workload effectively
- developing resilience and managing stress

Personal effectiveness is important for everyone.

Why is it important?  
As both work activities and organisational structures change rapidly and the resources available to “do the job” reduce, the need for all members of a team to be working as effectively as possible has become even more vital. Being personally effective is not just for senior staff, it is equally important for junior staff.

However, it’s no good simply being a brilliant member of the library team – you also have to let people know how good you are in order to further your own career and the work of your service. Employers look for staff who not only have the required qualifications but have a track record of getting things done i.e. staff who not only demonstrate “the can do” but also the will to put this into action “the will to do”. To use current jargon, you need to be seen to “add value”.

What do I need to do?  

1. Who are you? – or know thyself. Understanding yourself and how that influences your preferred ways of working and impacts on others is a key starting point for developing personal effectiveness.
One well regarded means of developing self-awareness is via the Myers Brigg's Type Indicator (MBTI) assessment. This is a personality-based assessment which provides you with an analysis of your personality preferences. Understanding your preferences can help you to:

- Be more successful
- To work with others more productively
- To contribute more to the team
- To reduce your stress
- To enjoy work more and get more out of life in general

The MBTI assessment test may be available through your Human Resources or Training department. Alternatively there are a number of websites where you can take the test and receive feedback online, for a fee.

You may also find it helpful to reflect on how you operate in a team and what role(s) you naturally fall into. The best known test for this is from Belbin Associates. http://www.belbin.com/. Again the test is available online. The feedback will tell you the strength of your preference for playing each of nine roles, and help you to understand how you might operate more effectively in team settings.

Your local HR department may be able to offer a 360º assessment. This uses a list of questions about your impact on others including your influencing/persuasion style. It is sent in confidence (and with their prior agreement) to 3 individuals who are senior to you, 3 of your peers and 3 junior colleagues. The feedback provides information on your key strengths, weaknesses and personal style and can be used to inform a programme of development.

Having carried out some of the above (or similar) you are well on the way to developing personal effectiveness. You have demonstrated a commitment to your own development and taken some positive actions.

2. Where can I make a contribution?
Take the next step and think about how you currently present your skills, experience, achievements, motivations and values. Depending on your role you may be looking at your contribution within a team; your direct contribution to users or your contribution at a wider organisational level. How can/will you add value?

Think about how you present yourself. This doesn’t mean being dishonest about yourself, but does require you to think about how you can shape the perception other people have of you. What do people think when they think about you? What do you want them to think? What reputation do you have with colleagues and users? Do senior managers in the organisation know about you? Would they ever think of coming to you or the library service in general for help with their own priorities? How can you raise your profile?

3. What are my priorities?
What you do next will depend on your individual situation. You may have particular responsibilities/challenges in your role which guide you towards developing specific areas of effectiveness. You may wish to enhance your skills across a range of areas. Completing the sorts of tests suggested above will give you some indications of where you are strong and where you might benefit from new or more developed skills. If you are committed to enhancing your own effectiveness then a key thing to remember
is that “if you do what you always did, you’ll get what you always got” i.e if you want to change and/or develop you are going to need to do things differently. You may wish to take the outcomes from the assessments and map them against the skills listed in the introduction “What is personal effectiveness”. If you’re not sure what would constitute effective performance in these areas you might look at some lists of competences.

- The NHS Knowledge & Skills Framework – particularly the sections on communication and learning and people development
- The Health Informatics Occupational Standards [http://www.hinos.org.uk/](http://www.hinos.org.uk/) which includes sections on giving direction, managing change, managing and developing people
- The NHS Leadership Qualities Framework includes a detailed section on personal qualities. [http://www.nhsleadershipqualities.nhs.uk/](http://www.nhsleadershipqualities.nhs.uk/)

4. Consider your preferred learning style.

5. Match your learning style to the possible development opportunities available. You may wish to consider that personal effectiveness skills are rarely learned in the classroom – but through trial and error, a commitment to develop and a lot of support. Joining a learning set or working with a mentor, and keeping a reflective diary can be particularly helpful and if you think you might be able to learn from (or learn to learn from) these methods they have a lot to offer.

6. Discuss your areas for development with your line manager and build them into your personal development plan. You may need to create a list of priorities for a 1-3 year period as it may not be possible to develop in all the areas of effectiveness at the same time.

**What are the implications?**

- you will be reassured that you are able to maximise the contribution you make, whatever your role
- you can continue to develop your skills even if you have been in a role for some time
- you will have evidence of your own development to use in your appraisal/performance review
- you will be recognised as an effective and therefore valued member of the team
- the contribution of the library team to organisational priorities may be enhanced
- you will ease your transition into new roles

**Resources**


Honey, Peter & Mumford, Alan (1986) *The manual of learning styles*. Maidenhead, Peter Honey
Learning materials from the following FOLIO courses may be useful:

Getting to Grips with Knowledge Management – provided practical skills in delivering KM techniques that are feasible at local or organisational levels. Course materials are at [http://g2gkm.pbwiki.com/](http://g2gkm.pbwiki.com/)

Promoting and Marketing Library & Information Services (ProMISe) – the aim of this course was to help participants to gain an understanding and appreciation of the value and importance of marketing and promotion in library services. Course materials can be viewed at [http://promise.pbwiki.com/](http://promise.pbwiki.com/)

Understanding the business of Clinical Care (Clinicos) – purpose was to give a broad knowledge of the application of information in modern healthcare organisations. Course materials are available at [http://clinicos.pbwiki.com/](http://clinicos.pbwiki.com/)