Breaking Out of the Silo: partnering outside the library

Krista Ford
Director, Library & Research Services
Steptoe & Johnson PLLC
Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature's inexorable imperative. – H.G. Wells
What does this mean for the future of our profession?

• Many of the traditional roles and responsibilities have been eliminated by automation.
• We are the keepers of the firms’ collective knowledge and are in a unique position to move into other roles and take on new tasks.
• Our backgrounds and interests are varied and we have so much more than reference to contribute to the organization and the bottom line.

In other words, Information Professional must adapt or die (professionally, that is)
How do I identify potential opportunities?

• Ask questions about current projects.
• Attend department meetings and see if there are ways you can add value.
• Walk the halls and get to know folks in your office(s).
• Brainstorm with your peers about potential ideas and bring them to leadership.
• Other ideas?
Cross-Functional Partnerships

- **Finance:**
  
  EX: Partner with our CFO on annual standard rate setting.

  Result: Nominated to the Strategic Pricing Committee

- **IT:**

  EX: Partnered with CIO on developing a knowledge portal to house research/CI materials.

  Result: Took over the function of KM at the firm.

- **Marketing:**

  EX: Partnered with CMO on strategic planning, business development, and competitive intelligence research.

  Result: Nominated to the Strategic Planning Committee
  
  Result: Spearheaded the firm’s CI program.
Impact of New Opportunities

Pros
- Adds variety and interest to our roles.
- Fill knowledge gaps.
- Organizational embeddedness.
- Leverage in salary negotiation.
- Strategic Partnerships - Build a larger network of allies within your organization that can help you to move initiatives forward in the future.

Cons
- Perceived as “stepping on toes”.
- Anxiety about being outside comfort zone.
- Burnout – not enough bandwidth to get it all done.
- Overlooking essential tasks.
- Negative feedback – being a Jack of all Trades means you probably have not mastered them all... yet.
Measuring Success

• Use **tangible** and **measurable goals** to demonstrate success.

• **Ask for feedback** from strategic partners. Gather anecdotal success stories to share with organizational leadership.

• **Tie success to bottom line.**
  – Identify your role in securing new business through proposals or market research.
  – Note increased revenue stream incurred by increasing standard rates.

• **Track process efficiencies** created by your role in a project.
  – Streamline information through a Knowledge Management portal. Less time spent on finding information means more time for billing hours.
  – Look for opportunities to suggest, evaluate, and/or implement efficiency tools.

• **Keep a log throughout the year.** This will make it easier to remember all the projects and successes throughout the year – and not just at review time!
How will **YOU** differentiate yourself?

- Project management
- Analytics
- Strategic planning
- Market and/or Industry research
- Pricing
- Human Capital Management
- Practice Area Support analyst
- Content Aggregation / Knowledge Management portals
- Advisory services
Thriving in The New Norm

• “Relax! We aren’t brain surgeons. No one will die if they don’t get their research today.” – a very wise former boss

• **Constant communication** is the key to success.

• All **failure can be overcome by acknowledging and owning your mistakes**. Being open and honest about shortcomings will build trust and strengthen your professional relationships.

• Learn to **view feedback as an opportunity to make positive change**. It allows you to identify where you got it wrong so you can improve the outcome in the future.

• **Celebrate success with your strategic partners**. Make sure they know their partnership is meaningful.

• **Time management skills are absolutely essential** for our functions.
Got questions?

Email: Krista.Ford@Steptoe-Johnson.com
Office: (304) 933-8198 / (724) 749-3109
Cell: (412) 913-3003