

Career Development for IT Support Staff

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Agenda

- What do you want out of your career?
- Looking out for yourself
- Networking – not wireless or ethernet!
- Training
- Mentoring
- Barriers to efficiency – workplace health
- Career-limiting dangers
- Work/life balance
- Professional bodies
- Your plan
- Q&A

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What do you want out of your career?

- Are you doing your job:
 - Because you enjoy it?
 - Because you need the money?
 - Because you kind of slipped into it?
- Your work makes up about one third of your life!
 - Important to get it right
 - Affects your health
 - Affects your home life, relationships etc.



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The best person to look out for you...

- Is you!
- Show loyalty to the organisation but beware of assuming it will show loyalty to you
- Constantly work to show your value
- Join a trade union
- Be assertive – i.e. firm but fair
- Don't be a martyr
- Take your breaks, especially lunch!
- Manage your employer's expectations

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Things you can change

- Staff numbers
- Your pay
- Your reputation
- Your appearance
- Flexibility
- Hours
- Variety
- Specialisations
- Stress levels



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Network Network Network

- Go to conferences – well done, you're here!
- Get to know peers and decision-makers
- Go to work-organised events, even just to show your face. People will remember it.
- Shamelessly show what you are worth
- Have business cards handy and wear a name badge when appropriate
- If you deserve the credit for a project then don't be afraid to accept it!
- Consider volunteering a shift on your helpdesk or similar

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Places to Network

- Commercial events
 - Product launches
 - Technology briefings
 - Roadshows
- UCISA events – including the social bits!
- Exhibitions & Trade shows
 - How many do you go to?
- JISCmail lists (UCISA has lots)
- Get involved in Cross-University IT issues and groups
 - UCISA
 - BCS Local Groups
 - JaNet events and training


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Simple Networking Exercise

- Tell the person on your right what your job is, and also something not job related about you. They tell you the same
- Then turn to the left and repeat what you learned about the first person and then give information about you. Swap roles and do the same.
- Easy isn't it!
- You learn much more by talking to people you don't know!

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Training



- Develops your value and effectiveness
- Also your employability
- Ask for what you want
 - Back requests up with research and justification
 - Maybe offer to pay cost back if you leave within an agreed period
- Keep cost in perspective with what you cost your employer in salary!
- ITS3 will help you make the case to your unit


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Mentoring

- BCS has a framework
- Other Universities do this
- Confidential
- Outside Management Structure
- Maybe outside your institution
- Benefits both the mentor and the person being mentored

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Time Management



- Learn to manage your time effectively
- University has courses available on this
- There are books available
- Work out if you work better late or early and plans difficult tasks around that
- Take a few minutes at the start of each day to think about how you will spend your time
 - Maybe write some notes
- Remember the story of the man with the blunt axe and the tree to fell. Sharpen your axe first!

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Training within your institute?

- Formerly Continuing Education
- Lots of training available, with other University Staff
- Seminars for support staff and first line managers
- Introductory Certificate in First Line Management
- www.learning.ox.ac.uk

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Barriers to efficiency

- Office colleagues?
- Long lunches/late starts/early finishes
- Browsing the 'net
- All these can be accepted or changed as you wish
- Talk to colleagues if they are preventing you from working properly
- Ask your line manager for help

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Efficient but overworked?

- You don't have to take responsibility for everything!
- Guilt is a personal choice
- Line manager has a duty to recognise and eliminate overwork
 - Don't be afraid to point it out though
 - Note hours, tasks etc. etc.
- Negotiate with your line manager
- "I could do that but if I did, what would you like me to stop doing to make time for it?"

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Health at Work

- Vital to look after yourself
- You have a right to work free from bullying or harrassment
 - Being bullied is **NOT** your fault!
 - Talk to your department or college's harrassment advisor if you need to
- Excellent BBC web site at: <http://tinyurl.com/jwm9v>



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Career-limiting dangers

- Be careful on social networks
- If there is a problem talk by phone or in person
 - Email often misunderstood
 - Email can come back to haunt you
- If you want to say something bad/confrontational then try it on someone else first, put yourself in the receiver's position or sleep on it!



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Work/Life Balance


- The old phrase: work to live, don't live to work!
- There is much more to life than just work
- Work should not overshadow the rest of your life
- Parents & Carers have had the right to request flexible work since 6 April 2003

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Professional Bodies

- British Computer Society (BCS) 
 - Various levels of membership
 - Not cheap!
 - Group Schemes available
 - CITP is the flagship qualification
- Association for Computing Machinery (ACM)
 - Based in New York
- Institute of IT Training (IITT) 
 - Focus on IT Trainers
- Can add credibility to you as a professional
- Useful sources of books, courses, career advice, local groups, events, awards and certification

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So what will you do? 

- Don't try to change too much too fast
- Think about changes needed in
 - Colleagues
 - Management
 - You!
- Plan how to achieve the changes
- Make a timescale and have regular reviews to see how you are doing
- It needn't feel like climbing a mountain!

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Finally

- Remember that very few are completely happy with their career
- But most are happy most of the time
- Focus your energy on things you can change
- Don't waste energy worrying about things you can't change
- Understand that happiness is not based on possessions, power or prestige, but on relationships with people you respect

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Questions & Answers

- Thank you!
- Thanks to Jane Littlehales for allowing me to use her slides from a previous conference for ideas



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