

Resource Centre Management Course

Organisational Memory

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An African proverb

When an old person dies, a library is lost....

Scenario in organisations

- Resignation or Termination of staff
- Major changes in organisational policy
- Lack of information dissemination systems
- When information is “locked inside the heads of individuals”

Why does this happen?

Lack of a system to ensure organisational memory

Indicators: What is the situation in your organisation?

Internal de-briefing		Organisational learning	
Accessibility of key documents to staff		Networking	
De-briefing of outgoing staff		Best practice publishing	
Database for projects and programmes		Analysis of Information for learning	
Prioritisation of Information function		Access of information from other parts of organisation	

Why it is important to establish and maintain organisational memory?

Justification

❑ Possible staff turnover

Lack of documentation, makes the organisation vulnerable when staff leave. Especially in cases of high staff turnover

❑ Fading of memory

The nature of the Human Being – tendency to forget

❑ **Avoid reinventing the wheel** - caused by accumulation of documents in offices of individual staff members, without the knowledge of other staff thus resulting in duplication of work. Results in waste of resources

Benefits1

❑ **Organisational learning**

Organisational growth is dependent on learning from it's past, especially in the context of changing organisational patterns. Important to gather internal experiences as a crucial element of organisational learning.

❑ **Accessing external learning** through information produced by networking, such as temporary inter-agency partnerships or by short-term projects

Benefits2

- **Provision of instant information**

Easy tracing of information when needed by stakeholders e.g. potential funders or visitors

- **Capturing the process**

Provides an **easily accessible “paper trail”** for any decision or transaction that has taken place in the organisation.

Methods of instituting Organisational Memory

- ❑ **Exit interview** for all the departing staff (parallels the induction required at the beginning of contracts)
- ❑ **De-briefing - thorough** internal debriefing of staff on projects or assignments; and consultants hired
- ❑ **Standardised methods** of recording, storing and distributing the result of the debriefing. This should include collection of consultants' reports and project materials

Methods

❑ **Documentation**

Mechanisms which enable an individual's memory to be "down-loaded" into an information system.

This enables the organisation to access that person's experience long after the individual has moved on to another organisation.

❑ **"telling their story"**

Linking departing staff with trainers to develop training materials (sometimes based on case studies) for both internal and external use

❑ **"best practice" publishing**

Methods3

- **Sharing of experiences** related to project and programme interventions through seminars and workshops. Dissemination of information accessible to colleagues both in their own organisation and beyond.

Conclusion



organisation's collective memory



unlock each individuals knowledge



organisational domain.