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LIBR 281 – Discussion Post – Collaborative Team

Metadata is often created in a collaborative, team environment. It is often created as part of a digital project that includes many steps and processes. What collaborative projects or tasks have you been involved in? What have you learned that you might bring to a collaborative metadata project?

While I don't have previous experience working on metadata projects, I do have ample experience working on and leading collaborative projects as a Project Manager and Marketing Communications Manager. I've been involved in many, many product and service launches as well as advertising and promotional campaigns.

One of the more important things I've learned is to bring experts to the group, especially for technical advice and instruction and legal and regulatory expertise, but also be sure that service departments, like accounting and customer service, have representation if the outcome of the project will impact them in any way. These experts don't necessarily have to be involved through the entire project, but their advice and direction can make a huge difference in how smoothly the project will be executed.

The project will always take longer than you anticipate; plan accordingly. This means that you should set expectations about when you will be able to complete the project and then schedule to some earlier completion date, so that when the unexpected occurs, you've already built yourself in some buffer time.

Learn how to work with the different personalities on the team. This is easiest if your group has relatively consistent personnel, of course. You have to learn how to address each person, how they like to be asked questions, how they like to be given feedback, and how best to elicit their honest and constructive opinions. This can mean a variety of things: some people prefer that you stop by for a chat; others prefer that you communicate via email. Especially if you are leading a project, you have to understand how to get decent work out of the team members.

Do whatever you can to keep meetings short and to the point. Work happens outside of meetings.

Everyone needs reminders. Make them gentle or rather more forceful as required. Explain the consequences of missed deadlines in terms of overall project success or failure.

Encourage people when they do good work that is moving the project forward. Always thank everyone for their efforts and be grateful for their participation. Most often this leads to better work and more participation. If you have trouble with one or a few individuals, address them separately and individually. If you do not feel that you have the authority to reach out to them, enlist the help and advice of your manager.

Do what you have promised to do in the timeframe in which you promised it. If you can't meet the deadline or do the work for any reason, contact the team leader as soon as possible to let them know your predicament. Do not wait until your deadline passes. Especially if you are leading the team, it is vital that you do what you say you will do. You are establishing the work tone by your actions, and you must perform before you can expect others to. Simply, lead by example.

Most of these are pretty intuitive, so I realize I'm not sharing anything groundbreaking. :) They are just the things that I think worked well for me when leading or participating in collaborative work.