



Project review- July 2015

Interconnect



Where it all started.....The Civil Service Academy.

In October 2014 I was lucky enough to undertake a four day training Academy through Civil Service Local. From being a little apprehensive initially I found the experience hugely positive and rewarding. I have gained a lot of valuable knowledge and developed my existing skill set which has really given me a confidence boost.

Our Academy group bonded from the start and we all felt comfortable, openly talking about our ideas and were not afraid to put ideas forward.

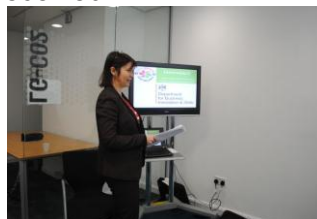
We have a mix of project team members from different departments and backgrounds. I think this diverse mix of people, combined with the can do attitude that everyone continues to exhibit, allowed us to get ahead in terms of team work and organising our tasks.

Interconnect...The project.

The aim of our project is to offer an opportunity for staff to interconnect across Civil Service departments in the West Midlands.

To increase awareness of other departments and what they do. In turn, encouraging, sharing and learning from best practice. Inspiring others to explore new opportunities and develop themselves as individuals.

We had a very successful pilot networking event, held in March 2015. This event helped the project team really identify what our main event should offer and how we would act upon the feedback received.



The pilot gave us valuable information in terms of areas of interest and what worked in terms of agenda and timings. We used this feedback to support our selection of stall holders/presenters and how to schedule the day.



In our original scoping document, the Interconnect main event was set down for 7th July 2015 and we achieved this milestone. All project planning and management had to be done alongside the day job which was tough at times. We scheduled project meetings in the run up to the event, ensuring all bases were covered, allocating tasks and keeping in contact during the week. The pressure was now on to deliver on schedule. Maintaining the momentum became more difficult when we lost a team member, after they achieved a new role within their department, which came with additional responsibilities. We then lost a further member due to illness.

Then there were five.

We were not deterred by the depletion of the project team and powered on to deliver our event on time.

We held a finalisation meeting the week before the event to identify any major issues that may arise and to check our role allocation was sound and sufficient. These were tense times as we were inviting over 100 delegates and some high powered senior Civil Servants; we had to ensure we had planned as much as possible.

The Main event.

The morning of the 7th July arrived and we were ready. A few final tweaks to the delegate packs and a floor walk around the stalls to ensure everything was in place before we opened the doors. We had really worked hard to engage other departments in our project and this was demonstrated by the diversity of the stalls.

We had stalls from the Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC), Ministry of Defence (MOD), Department for Work & Pensions (DWP), the Home Office (HO), Department for communities and local government (DCLG), Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS), Animal Plant Health Agency (APHA) and Civil Service Local (CSL). The stall holders did a fantastic job and had really researched their departments. There was a vast amount of material in terms of handouts, further information and points of interest. The volunteers manning the stalls really engaged the delegates. They talked about their personal experiences and their journeys through the Civil Service with real passion and presented a positive image of the Civil Service.

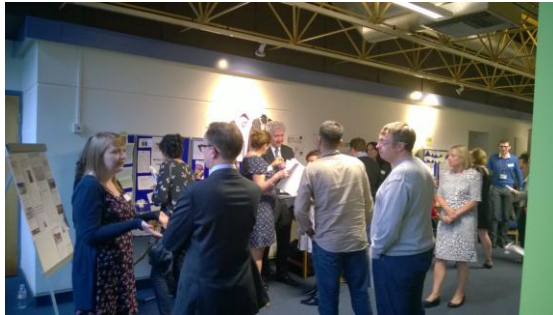


The stall holders were involved as volunteers for their own personal development and to take information back to their departments in terms of what other departments do.

We had some great feedback from those that were involved with running the stalls.....



Really enjoyed the day and found it very informative. As much as we were there providing information I think we took a lot away from it ourselves learning about other departments from the people that visited the stall.
(HMRC)



I just wanted to say
‘thanks for asking me’!
It was a great event and,
although a stall holder
and not a delegate, I
learned so much!
(APHA)

I had a great day
and thoroughly
enjoyed myself;
look forward to the
next gathering!
(MOJ)

We had a great response to our event invite which was sent via senior leaders and distributed throughout the Civil Service. There were a few chaotic minutes whilst we got the delegates registered and their packs distributed but everyone seemed really up for the day and approached the project with an open mind. There was a real buzz around the room.



Our project sponsor, **Malcolm Boswell (Area director of ACAS)** opened the event to an expectant audience and there was no going back.....

We had some last minute tweaks to the agenda, with a minutes silence to be incorporated and a wildcard speaker with an informative DVD of how Civil Servants support the armed forces. This gave the event a new dimension and was well received by our delegates. Our MC Gloria dealt with these changes in the agenda seamlessly as if they had been scheduled from the outset which gave the event a very professional flair.

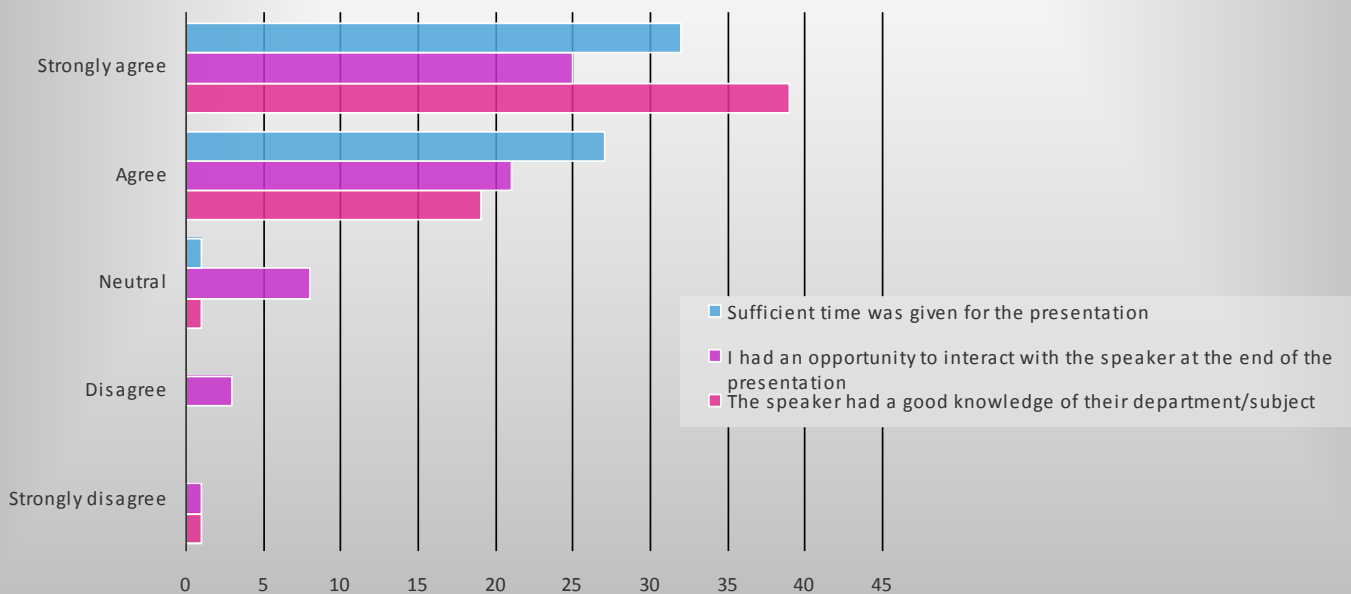
There was a nervous start for a couple of our presenters, some of which had undertaken presenting as a development opportunity. One of our presenters was a delegate at our pilot event and was so inspired that he wanted to give something back to the project. The nerves were soon overcome by the positive vibes from the audience and support from the project team and confidence started to shine through. There were some very passionate and well delivered presentations, which really illustrated the diversity and scope within the Civil Service.



It was then time for our keynote speaker, **Fiona Jones (Operations delivery profession Team Lead, Civil Service Learning)**. We had chosen Fiona, as the project team were so inspired by her journey when she spoke at the Academy and we wanted to share that experience. Fiona was engaging and inspirational throughout her speech and was really open to networking herself. This showed the willingness of senior leaders to get involved with all grades and I think the delegates were impressed by how accessible senior leaders could be. The project team are hugely grateful to Fiona for taking time out of her busy schedule to actively support the Interconnect project.



Keynote Speaker Feedback



Our coach, Julie Styles, has truly believed in the project team and our vision from the outset. This has been instrumental in the success of our main event and the fantastic feedback received from delegates and others that attended as our guests.

On a personal note, as event manager, I didn't stop all day. Really getting involved with registering and meeting delegates, monitoring the stalls to ensure those volunteering had everything they needed and networking with those that were representing their departments.

I was also on hand to answer any questions and promote our vision for a more cohesive and capable Civil Service.

I found the day incredibly rewarding and I think the project team can be very proud of what was achieved.

The delegate feedback was very positive and I think the delegates really enjoyed the day.

I have developed my organisational and leadership skills from working within the Interconnect project team and look forward to applying this more readily in my day to day work.

The next step....

We will now reflect on our time working on the project and attend the Civil Service Academy end of year event in October 2015. We will assess what we have learnt, the challenges we have faced and our overall achievements and successes, both individually and as a project team. It has been hard work for the past 10 months but all well worth it.

I would highly recommend the Civil Service Academy and associated project work to anyone looking to develop and push themselves forward within the Civil Service. If you have the commitment and the drive, the opportunities are out there...Go and discover your full potential.

Claire Tomlinson
(Band D (EO) - MOJ/HMCTS- Clerk to the Resident Judge)
July 2015.