



Job Swaps

Objective

The purpose of job swapping or shadowing activities is to learn actively from a colleague, business partner or customer about their job. This will raise awareness of exactly what colleagues do each day, and encourage better communications between departments. It will not be practical for a complete job swap to take place at all times so it is likely that the day would be a combination of job swapping and job shadowing. The job swaps can take place within an organisation or with a customer or supplier.

The personal and business benefits can include:

- Improves internal communications
- Improves team working
- Encourages 'out of the box' thinking
- Helps clarify career development
- Develops coaching and mentoring skills

Planning Schedule

People

It is helpful if both people involved give thought to what they would like to get from the experience, noting any areas of particular interest and anxiety. A jointly agreed plan for the time together verbally or in writing is helpful. Try and be as frank as possible about any apprehensions before the event.

Involve everyone, from Directors to cleaning staff. Try and match people to a swap that would be beneficial to them, not just for fun or ask staff to apply for Job Swaps / Job Shadows available.

Encourage senior management to allow a member of staff to shadow them for a day, or to job swap with their PA or a more junior member of staff.

People may want to take their own photos, but it is also a nice idea to bring in a professional photographer for the event, these photos can be used in publicity for next time.

Materials

Draw up participation forms that ask for second or third choices for job swaps. Include questions like 'why I think I should be a manager for the day', and 'what I think I will learn from this experience'. Also look at any areas of particular interest or anxiety of participants. The answers will help the organisers fit employees to the best swaps for them. The Participation forms should be made widely available; posting them onto the company Intranet is a good way of making them easily accessible.

Issuing everyone with logoed t-shirts may be a fun way of getting people into the spirit, and putting everyone on the same level.

Time

Management must agree specific dates of participation (preferably Learning at Work day), it is best to spread the event over several days, fitting around shift patterns, so allowing everyone to participate.

Health & Safety

There may be some jobs that cannot be swapped, for example jobs that require specialist training, or involve confidentiality, or working with children. Let people know what is excluded in advance to avoid disappointment. Make sure everyone is given appropriate training and sign a health and safety agreement, on fire, health and safety regulations.

Venue

The job swaps themselves will obviously be taking part all over the workplace, but it may be that you want to organise a get-together of all staff. This could be a pep talk before the event starts, or for a closing 'ceremony'. You will need to know how many people are likely to be taking part, to decide whether you have the space to bring everyone together, or if not, to have smaller briefings, maybe for each department.

Misc.

You should also think about practicalities in advance (for example, warning colleagues that the job shadow is taking place and getting approval if the activity being observed is confidential or commercially sensitive).

Identify areas of your business which will benefit most from job swapping, those areas which will benefit most from allowing job shadows to take place and those areas for which neither would be practical.

Implementation

Publicity

This kind of event requires maximum awareness among employees. Briefing and notices requesting volunteers really need to be produced a few months in advance, in order to give people time to think about what job they would like to do for the event, and to return their participation forms.

Regular progress updates and reminders need to be generated, using posters, the Intranet, or group meetings.

During the Experience

For the individuals involved it will be helpful to keep notes of reactions, thoughts and feelings to allow a constructive review after the event. Make sure that both partners are happy to answer questions throughout the day and don't shy about asking about something that is new to you. Ideally both partners should be relaxed and curious about what the day holds in store.

Extra Activities

People will be interested in what others have got up to during the event, so a 'closing ceremony', as mentioned above, is a fun way of rounding off the day. This ceremony may include prize giving for the most successful swap, showing photos of employees in action, and giving thanks to the organisers and the participants. This is a good time to hand out feedback forms, and maybe get some on the spot feedback about what worked well and what didn't.

Follow up

A mutual debrief at the end of the day is very valuable. This could focus on what has been experienced and what lessons learned.

It may be helpful to review the experience in the light of three pieces of information:

- the best bit
- the worst bit
- what will change as a result of the experience

The Campaign for Learning is hoping to publicise the lessons learnt from the job swaps. If you would like to share your experience please complete the form below and return it to us.

Job Swap Debrief



What was the most enjoyable part of the day?

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What was the least enjoyable part of the day?

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What have you learnt?

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Will you change anything as a result of your experience?

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If you are happy for us to use your experience as publicity for Learning at Work Day fax this form to Job Swap Debriefs, Campaign for Learning, 19, Buckingham Street, London, WC2N 6EF or fax to 020 7930 1552.