Dr Marianne Broadbent is Senior Partner and co-owner of EWK International.

TRUST IS THE KEY TO A GREAT TEAM

Dr Marianne Broadbent is a keynote speaker at the ALIA National 2014 Conference in Melbourne this September, proudly sponsored by Civica. She will be speaking on building professional and personal leadership capabilities. This article, which was first published in February/March 2013, is from her regular column in Government News and gives us just a taste of her insights into leadership gleaned from a career that began in teaching and teacher librarianship and has led Marianne to her roles as co-owner and Senior Partner in consultancy and executive search firm EWK International and founding partner of ARBITER Leadership Technologies™.

Great teams are the result of a lot of effort from the team leader and each team member. They don't just happen. They are usually the outcome of a conscious and deliberate effort to understand what makes teams work well, and learn what matters to the individual members (and acknowledge this in tangible ways). This is complemented by good linkage of individual aspirations and roles to the remit of the organisation.

The path to achieving truly effective teams is not 'rocket science' and it is quite well documented. So why do so many of us have experiences of mediocre, frustrating, or just plain bad team work?

LEADERSHIP IS AS MUCH ABOUT HOW LEADERS DEAL WITH THEMSELVES, AS IT IS ABOUT HOW WE WORK WITH AND LEAD OTHERS.

How would you describe the attributes of the team of which you are a member – that is a peer member, not the team you lead? Would you use words like 'effective, cohesive, supportive and committed'? Or would descriptions like 'lacking in trust', 'not really a team or truly collaborative' and 'engaging in conflict avoidance' be more appropriate?

If we asked the same question of the team you lead, how would your team members describe their experiences as a member of your team?

The answer lies in the simple failure to do the work to build genuine trust among team members. To build that trust the individuals need to really get to know one another as people. They need to know what matters to each other, to deal with conflict constructively, agree on commitments and then hold each other accountable for delivering agreed results.

This sounds simple, and at one level it is. But first each of us needs to be willing to come to terms with two things: the first is to understand ourselves, and the second is to really get to know, and understand, our colleagues as people rather than as just another officer, peer, executive, manager or service provider.

I recall a conversation with a newly appointed executive responsible for a large team of smart people providing services to many significant government departments and agencies. He was thrilled with his appointment, but aware that he had inherited a competitive and challenging group of smart individuals, focused on achieving their individual goals.

He had heard comments that it takes at least 18 months to build a really great team, and wanted to know if this was true. We explained that is about the usual time period, but you can certainly accelerate this process with a sound grasp of the importance of building trust, modelling trusting behaviour, personal focus, real consistency and commitment.

That consistency and commitment starts with the leader of the team, and starts with their own ability to share their strengths, weaknesses, development needs and experiences with the team they lead.

> There are risks here, but without some informed risk-taking, the rewards don't come.

When we take on our first executive or management role, we often want to show ourselves to be strong, truly capable, and lacking in vulnerabilities. But some of the most powerful and effective leaders adopt a different stance: they share what matters to them as people, as individuals, not just as an executive; they know their strengths and where they need help and are not afraid to share that with their team members; they are willing to share their failures, what they learnt from them, and areas that they continue to work on.

Their real strength is their ability to build trust by trusting their team members with information about their own vulnerabilities. They are modelling the behaviour that they want their team members to demonstrate. This is not necessarily easy and can be misunderstood. Our perceptions of gender differences and different cultural expectations complicate this situation. But the ability to model real trust, and through that, have other team members trust each other, is the firm foundation of great teamwork.

We have worked with, and observed, a significant number of executive leaders and their teams who have taken that journey in different ways. The experience can be challenging at first, but it is all part of continuing to learn and grow, and then contribute and participate at a higher level.

Some years ago I was part of a global team where we managed to get together face to face about every three months (remembering too that this was years before Skype, Halo or Telepresence).

My youngish boss had a very keen focus on us getting to know more about each other, which at the time I felt was quite enjoyable but perhaps a bit 'diverting'.

However, I came to appreciate how we were quickly getting to know and appreciate each other, be comfortable with how we each got things done, and our various differences and quirks.

The experience of that team remains with me today, as we were able to then more readily deal with conflicts, have very direct discussions, agree on commitments and then expect that these would be delivered as agreed with each of us doing our parts.

We held each other accountable for what we had agreed to do. It was demanding but very satisfying and that is what most of us look for in our everyday work.
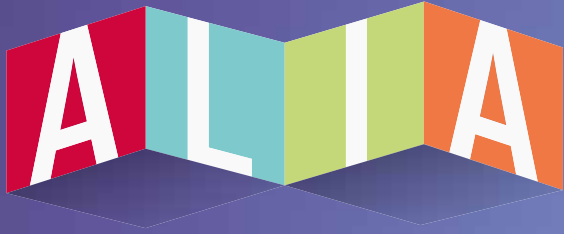
We used to talk about 'hero' CEOs, Secretaries or Directors-General but this time has now passed (mostly…). Great leaders create great teams and deliver sustainable and sustained results. Creating effective teams is hard work but it 'delivers' on so many levels.

Again, it is worth reflecting, how would your team members describe their experience as a member of your team? Do you know? Have you asked them?

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PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS

Can't make it to ALIA National 2014 Conference and still want to get involved? We've got plenty in our program that will appeal to you.

Why not come to one of our four pre-conference workshops on Monday 15 September 2014?

RESEARCH IN INFORMATION PRACTICE
Facilitated by the ALIA Research Advisory Committee

Whether you are involved in a project at work or want to know how to do research into an aspect of library and information studies, this workshop will give you somewhere to start. Members of the ALIA Research Advisory Committee — practitioners and academics with a range of research skills and experience to share — will take you through important steps in the research process and facilitate hands-on activities in designing, conducting and writing up a project.

TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR LIS CAREER
Facilitated by ALIA Sydney

In this fast-changing world, job descriptions change, workplaces are restructured, and new opportunities come up every day — in places you never thought possible. This session brings together experts in LIS recruitment, professional development, and personal branding, for a hands-on workshop allowing participants from all areas of the LIS community to:

• Identify your transferable skills.

• Identify your skill gaps and relevant training or professional development.

• Refine your CV and learn how to best address selection criteria for your dream job.

• Develop your personal brand and build personal learning networks.

DESIGNING AWESOME CUSTOMER SERVICES FOR YOUR LIBRARY
Facilitated by State Library of Victoria and Meld Studios

Service design is the intentional and thoughtful design of internal and customer-facing activities needed to deliver a service. Articulating and working towards your service vision will help realise your library's strategy. In this workshop you will learn the principles for designing and delivering consistently good customer experiences through your people, systems and processes. This workshop is facilitated by service design experts, Meld Studios, in partnership with the State Library of Victoria who have recently reviewed and redesigned their customer services based on the principles explored in this workshop.

ONLINE COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION
Facilitated by Australasian Libraries in the Emergency Sector (ALIES)

This workshop will give participants the opportunity to experience how the emergency management libraries share their resources and knowledge, and how each library has a role to play in supporting the sector despite being spread across two countries. ALIES has supported the implementation of the Australian Emergency Management Knowledge Hub, which is an innovative online resource allowing the exchange of ideas and knowledge by providing access to disaster information, evidence-based research and multimedia. It will be the main focus of the workshop to be explored along with the other online resources ALIES uses to communicate, collaborate and contribute.

We're also running breakfast workshops for you to learn and get involved with:

PRINT YOUR OWN WORKSHOP: INTRO TO 3D DESIGN, PRINTING AND APPLICATION

A basic introduction to 3D printing with live demonstrations and a workshop around creating your own 3D design from idea to print. Join Andrew Kelly from the Town of Victoria Park Library, WA, as he shows you the ins and outs of making.

PENGUIN AND NATIONAL SIMULTANEOUS STORYTIME

Brought to you by Penguin Group, join us at the conference for a breakfast workshop to be the first to hear the announcement of the 2015 NSS book. This workshop will provide you with some great resources and ideas to support your NSS event and promote reading and literacy in your library or school.

For more information on all workshops or to register, make your way over to the conference website: nationalconference2014.alia.org.au.