

The value of starting a Development Forum for Professional Support Staff in your organisation.

Leadership is often associated with more senior roles and successful women are often viewed as those that make it to the dizzy heights of CEO. However women lead in organisations regardless of their “seat” in the hierarchy, in different circumstances, at different times, in different ways and at different levels.

At Lewisham College, their Professional Support Staff Forum came into being in November 2010, thanks to Frances Butler, the Executive Assistant to Maxine Room, (Principal at Lewisham College), to raise the profile, confidence and professional growth of this important group of staff.

That group comprises those in supporting roles who manage administration teams, deliver projects, support curriculum staff, manage and develop modern apprentices, are the externally and internally facing customer relationship managers for their managers and teams, and those that seem to know most about what is going on in the business!

The Forum, led by Frances and supported by the Senior L&D Manager, meets to network, share best practice and to develop a cohesive, professional administrative cross college support service as well as provide an opportunity for professional development and career planning.

Activities so far have included presentations from senior managers, the setting up and rollout of a mentoring programme for all members, the undertaking of a personal skills audit to facilitate development planning for individuals and the Forum, and planning a range of development activities.

Critical to the success of this project has been the support of the Principal and the college’s senior management team. Feedback from everyone - Forum members, managers and mentors has been very positive and there is every indication that the Forum and the individuals within in it will go from strength to strength.

Many thanks to Kirsty Goulding Senior Learning and Development Manager at Lewisham College for this article.

If you or anyone you know in the learning & skills sector has initiated a new programme or project successfully or has introduced innovative processes at work – we’d like to hear from you.

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