

BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

Medical library downsizing: administrative, professional and personal strategies for coping with change. By Michael J. Schott. New York: Haworth Information Press, 2005. 153 pages (soft cover). ISBN 0-7890-0420-8. US\$19.95.

Despite the sense of foreboding that is conjured up by its title, *Medical library downsizing: administrative, professional and personal strategies for coping with change* is an enjoyable and thoughtful read. Michael Schott has filled this book with so many good ideas and solutions for managing a library, reading this book might just make the librarian and their library services such an invaluable commodity that they escape the radar in a time of restructuring, downsizing, or as the author prefers to call it “a bad corporate event (BCE)”.

This is a quick and witty read; however, the author by no means makes light of the serious nature of the subject matter. He covers it all: the rumours, the hostilities, the lack of communication, and the sleepless nights. What makes the topic so palpable is the format in which the book is written. The chapters are succinct, punctuated with comic strips, quotes, and personal highlights. The text is interspersed with military jargon, popular culture references, and irreverent acronyms.

Chapters are organized to follow through the various stages of the downsizing process. Each chapter provides a synopsis of what can be expected during that period of unrest from “Before the announcement” to “When hostilities cease”. Among the author’s good advice is to always have an updated résumé prepared and review the library’s mission and vision statements to make sure that they are both obtainable and compelling. Policies and procedures should be in order, and all evaluations and benchmarking material should be at the ready. Schott also advises the reader to make use of the time at hand, providing a series of case studies to illustrate

opportunities that can be seized during this time of confusion. When traffic no longer visits the library, why not use the time to upgrade skills or create or revise a library Web page? This is also the time for “Planning your campaign” for the leaner future. There are tips on developing a strategic plan, reviewing budgetary needs, and preparing an outstanding presentation for upper management.

The book does not belie the sober aspects of downsizing. Sections are devoted to managing change, laying off staff, and dealing with one’s own job dismissal. Honest, forthright advice is presented on what to do after one is laid off, from negotiating the best severance package to getting one’s résumé into circulation. Emphasis is also given on the need to address the emotions of the survivors of downsizing with the author offering tips on how to diffuse hostility before the work environment turns toxic. Schott even deals with the “uh-oh factor”, those inevitable mistakes made in the haste to cut back; he presents a series of scenarios and solutions guaranteed to get library services back on track.

The final chapter serves as a cautionary warning to all medical librarians; they must make themselves visible, their skills and knowledge accessible, and promote their services as a mission-critical part of the organization. Although taken from the perspective of a hospital library, this book should be considered a vital resource to any librarian regardless of their sector of employment.

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