

## **How to “pool” your human capital so you can take advantage of opportunity in growing and building events**

John McGeary is a Vice President for Reed Exhibitions and one of the guys behind the successful launch of New York Comic-con. I was interested to speak with him to see how a large company such as Reed can be flexible as the market requires to launch events of their own in growing by acquisition. New launches have an extra degree of risk and extra resource costs, but Reed has the fortune of being big enough that the cost of launching events can be absorbed by revenue and profit improvements from other brands. Despite that, they have found a number of efficiencies in organizing human capital which take advantage of opportunity, while mitigating the costs of failure.

Since consistently bringing in an audience is one of the toughest tasks an event organizer has, I was particularly interested in how Reed organized their marketing teams to pull in a quality audience, especially for new events.

John’s group has a marketing group with a pooled staff led by a Marketing Director who manages the marketing function for multiple brands. The individual tasks within the group are done by those with skills in that area (i.e. search optimization is done by the person most skilled in search). The result of this infrastructure, according to John, is increased proficiency of the team while still giving the individual staff the chance to do tasks with increasing responsibility. In addition you can take advantage of keeping everyone busy throughout the year, so peaks and valleys of work for individuals.

How do you make it work? John offers the following four tips:

### **1) Focus on the internal growth of the team**

That is, you are probably going to give certain tasks to those who have the best skills, while at the same time, giving ‘overflow’ tasks to newer less skilled staff who can learn them as part of a team, rather than struggling as an individual to get them done. Each staff can increase their personal proficiency.

### **2) Have the best people doing the most important things**

Given a pool of staff, you have the fortune of being able to rank the projects, the staff and make a match for both depending upon ability and workload. I guess in doing this you are also building a rank order of staff by value to the organization.

### **3) “Market” the fact that team members get a lot of exposure to upper management and teams within a big company**

From the employee perspective, he/she gets exposure to multiple teams and management staff since they are working on multiple projects for multiple teams. This obviously has potential career benefits, especially in a bigger company.

#### **4) Allow learning to happen, and make your plan flexible to be able to adjust for change**

With any change or plan, you need to allow for the ability to change as necessary, since circumstances may arise which are outside the original plan. Plan accordingly!

There are arguments which can be made for a brand based approach or for a functional approach, like what John is doing at Reed. Ultimately your decision will be made on what works best for your company. I was impressed with how John makes it work, and it looks like a successful model for his recent launches. Tread with caution if you make any change, and make sure you get support from top to bottom, but don't be afraid to take risks as John has done. Good luck!

I look forward to seeing many of you next week at the CEO Summit!

*Warwick Davies is the Principal of The Event Doctor!, a consulting company which helps event organizers realize greater revenues and profits by fixing 'broken' events and launch new ones both in United States and internationally . His clients include event organizers in the information technology, healthcare, biotechnology construction and design engineering and executive event markets. Previously, Warwick was responsible for internationally recognizable event brands such as Macworld Conference and Expo, LinuxWorld Conference and Expo, and the Customer Relationship Management Conference and Exposition worldwide. For more information on The Event Doctor! and past SISO The Event Doctor! columns please visit <http://www.theeventdoctor.net/resources.html> . He can be reached at [Warwick@theeventdoctor.net](mailto:Warwick@theeventdoctor.net) or at 781 354 0119.*