

Structures and job descriptions

I'm joined by Janice Lane

from Amgueddfa Cymru, National Museum Wales,
and she was formerly at Glasgow Museums.

I wanted to learn more about how restructuring
and changing job descriptions
can actually help staff take ownership
for participatory community engagement.

Janice, how do you ensure that
community participation is part of everyone's job?

Okay, I'll start with where I am now at the moment.

In terms of how I've structured the teams,
I haven't broken them down into
disciplinary teams as much as I might do
in a few years' time,
but what I have done is flipped
the way that they describe themselves.

The team that I...

the learning team that I have here
describe themselves by their subject first
as Learning Officers.

And what I've done is I've flipped that
and emphasised the fact that they are
their responsibility, their own participation
in learning and interpretation they're subject fresh.

Their knowledge of the collections
and the subject is important

but the driver is actually about participation
and about a collaboration in delivering that.

And that's quite a subtle cultural flip

but it is a cultural change for them

because that's brought up fears from them

that they won't be able to work so well

with the tutorial departments

and things like that.

Which is, again, is breaking down

some of those internally set barriers.

I'm moving to describing their roles

in terms of responsibilities

and expectations rather than tasks

that's another big cultural change.

Having a job description which lists a set of tasks

is very different from a job description

or a role description that describes what

your responsibilities are and what's expected of you

and how you're expected to work.

And I think that makes that more open

and it encourages people to think differently about

where they draw their own boundaries.

Can you give me an example

of when it would have been a task

but now it's a responsibility?

Instead of saying,

"Right, your job is Learning Officer,

and you're responsible
for putting together a learning programme
in this place and that place."
I'd turn that round and say
that responsibility is about engaging
with people across the collections.
So instead of saying, "You will deliver for schools",
or, "You will deliver for young people",
it is about saying, "You will develop
a range of learning opportunities across...
which involve the collections
working with a range of different audiences."
That in itself just becomes subtly more open,
and in terms of describing that,
I'm really trying to move away from saying,
"And so your responsibilities
are this, this, this, this and this,"
as much as you will be leading.
You know, on interpretation
you will be doing this rather than specific things.
And making explicit the collaboration,
making explicit the responsibility to reflect,
making explicit the leadership elements, really.
Does that create any HR issues?
No, they've been really open
to wanting to move to that.
In Glasgow, we've moved completely away,

we had role profiles and person specifications,
and the role profiles were so generic,
they were just kind of listing
the kind of skills that you wanted,
so the person specification really described
what was expected of you in that role,
which is a very different thing to a job description.
And very different from what I started with there,
where it said, "You will deliver
a learning strategy, you will deliver,
you know, you will be fundraising,
you will do this, you will do that."
What my role describes now
is a different range of things
and I also wrote in expectation
of behaviours, I think, as well.