Front Desk: Importance and Function

Introduction

As a front desk administrative assistant, I provide a central location for information about the office for sustainability and sustainability related topics on campus. For students, faculty, and staff, the front desk serves as a means to direct traffic and provide assistance for many different needs. For people coming into the office, my job is to update them on current events or answer common questions. The front desk also plays a big role in creating a more efficient and organized workplace here at the Office for Sustainability.

Aside from completing the daily and weekly tasks that the front desk team is assigned, this semester I was presented with the task to try to develop the front desk as a team when our schedules do not permit us to meet together as a group. How do you create a team of people that work together as a unit when they are not working together at the same time? Is there a way in which we can all feel united and engaged, and also exchange thoughts and ideas with one another even though we all work independently and do not often cross paths?

An additional task was tasked with creating a Frequently Asked Questions sheet to assist all front desk team members in finding answers for the often asked questions. This list would be used by the team and others who find themselves faced with questions like “How do I recycle off campus?” and “Tell me about the electric car charging stations”.

Methods and Results

I began researching ways where the front desk team could connect, share information with one another, and bond as a team. I had to explore different ways in which we could make this happen, and my first thought was to create an evening where the front desk team members could come together for dinner at the Gibbs House. Unfortunately there were too many scheduling conflicts for this to successfully occur. As a work around, I created a social media page on Facebook where we could communicate and share information with one another.

Because of the success I had with the Facebook page, I was able to complete my second task to create the Frequently Asked Questions document. I did this by polling my team members on what questions we have received on a somewhat regular basis. We
have all answered the question “Where is the bookstore?” and “Can you tell me how to get to Parking Services”, but we do get other questions such as “Who can I talk to about how to recycling in my apartment? and “Are there any jobs available here?” The results of the FAQs live in a document that is part of the front desk manual. (Appendix 2)

On the Facebook page, I’ve been posting a weekly question that has something to do with the office, along with a personal question. The team members respond with their thoughts and ideas, and then share the answer to the question related to their lives. This provided a way for us to discuss issues we were all facing, and learn more about each other even if we can’t all talk in person.

Graphics, Charts, & Pictures

Appendix 1: FB Page

Appendix 2: FAQ
Commentary, Reflection, and Next Steps

Using the Front Desk Team Idea Board FB page, I was able to create a list of frequently asked questions that we receive here at the front desk. Members of the team commented questions that they are asked the most about, and we were able to create a handout that contains these questions with the answers. This has been so useful since we all work at different times and different days and we each see different groups of people filtering in and out of the office. I combined the FAQs and we have discussed answers to these questions on the FB page. This allows for us all to have consistent answers that we are sharing with students, faculty, and staff.

In the future, going over the FAQs will become part of front desk training while incorporating role playing to help us get “up to speed” as ambassadors of the Office for Sustainability. If the Communications Committee agrees this is a good idea, I would like to see the FAQs on the website as a point of reference for our friends on campus and in the community.