



A beacon which shines a light on innovation and creative co-operation cutting across all levels of an organisation

# THE INCREDIBLE POWER OF STAFF NETWORKS

Cherron Inko-Tariah MBE

The Incredible Power of Staff Networks  
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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Cherron Inko-Tariah** MBE is a former civil servant and has undertaken leadership roles in HR, and various policy and strategic positions across Whitehall, including working directly with Ministers and Permanent Secretaries. During her time in the Civil Service, she received the Deputy Prime Minister's Award for Excellence and was also shortlisted in the Leadership category of the Civil Service Awards.



Cherron is passionate about staff networks and the positive impact they can have in the business. She is an accomplished Chair of staff networks (one to award-winning status) and has facilitated bespoke training to educate members on the benefits of proactive development.

During her career, she has achieved a Postgraduate Diploma in Human Resource Management, and a Masters Degree in Employment Studies and Human Resource Management. She is a member of the Chartered

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Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) and is also a qualified career coach.

In 2011, Cherron received an MBE for her services to HM Government and her work in the local church community with young people.

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT THIS BOOK...

“This book is very well written and I find it a really helpful resource.”

*Evonne Hopwood - Vice-Chair of a staff network in the Civil Service*

“I’ve no doubt this book will help many new and existing staff networks – and their members – to flourish.”

*Rasheed Ogunlaru - Coach, Speaker, Author*

“This book is, quite simply, a MUST read for all those already in, thinking of, or connected to staff networks.”

*Rob Neil - Diversity Consultant and Facilitator*



EXCERPT

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cutting across all levels of an organisation.

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## CHAPTER TEN: DEAR CHAIR

***“Those who water, will always be watered.”***  
***(The Bible, Proverbs 11:25)***

This chapter is specifically aimed at Chairs (or potential Chairs) and is written in the style of a letter. I wanted Chairs to have something to refer to on those days when some encouragement is required.

Dear Chair,

Firstly, congratulations on taking up the post as Chair of your staff network. You are in a wonderful position to be a catalyst for change. “Me?” Yes, you. Anything that the staff network does to help improve the working environment for members of its target group, and to help the employer appreciate difference, *is* a positive change. Like any leadership position, leading a staff network is not an easy task and there may be times when you experience one or more of the following:

Frustration	Crisis of Confidence	Insecure	Sense of Purpose	Fed-Up
Doubtful	Tearful	Confused	Worried	Out of Your Depth
Excited	Discouraged	Discombobulated	Emotional	Weak
Strong	In Control	Jealous	Driven	Happy

I can tell you that if you experience one or more of these emotions or moods, then that is quite normal. You are not alone. Leading a staff network is not an easy role. However, it can be extremely rewarding and enjoyable. So here is some advice from the heart to encourage and inspire you as you lead.

- Allow yourself to grow into your role. If you are a new Chair, sometimes there is a tussle between trying to emulate the former Chair (if they were effective and dynamic), and making your mark.
- Be uncommonly curious about your own personal development during your time as Chair. Yes, you need to deliver and achieve for the staff network but think about what skills/knowledge you want to develop personally.
- Be a Chair of **I.C.E.** No, I don't mean be stone-cold but rather: **Integrity** - say what you mean, mean what you say.  
**Character** - not to be confused with reputation. Abraham Lincoln said: "*Character is like a tree and reputation is like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing.*" Be genuine.  
**Excellence** - do what you can to the best of your ability for the best of the staff network.
- Take control of your time. In addition to running the staff network, you probably have a 'day' job, and other personal responsibilities (e.g. family, studying, volunteering etc.). If you haven't done so already, negotiate time for your staff network duties. But you will still need to be creative in how you use your time. Travelling time is great to catch up on emails, review papers etc. Remember, you don't have to do everything - master the art of mindful delegation.
- Ensure you have a good support system in place. This is team 'YOU [insert your name]' (e.g. Team Charlie). Team 'YOU' should comprise people you trust and in whose opinion you hold confidence. Team 'YOU' will be people who value you and will offer you constructive feedback because they want the best for you, and from you. They will be people who can encourage you, who will challenge you, who will make you laugh, who will coach

you, or who will just listen to you sounding off. Every Chair needs their own team; their inner circle.

- Remember to prioritise “us” over “me” - be inclusive, collaborative and practice what you preach.
- Be generous and specific in your praise, in your encouragement and with your attention. Share credit.
- Take note of these ‘Rules of Leadership’ (Courtesy of Perry Noble and Benjamin Conway):
  - 1) Not everyone will like you.
  - 2) It is not your goal for everyone to like you.
  - 3) The better you lead, the more people may not like you.
- Do not become complacent and take your role for granted. There is a fantastic Jamaican Patois phrase that says: “*Wanti wanti cyan getti getti and getti getti nuh want it*” (literal word for word translation: want it want it can’t get it and get it get it don’t want it). There are people who would love to lead a staff network but, for whatever reason, are unable to. Then, there are others who are in the position but don’t appreciate it and take things for granted. The gist is: *be thankful and embrace what you have because there are always people who would exchange places with you in an instant.*
- Take a look at the ‘qualities’ below. I encourage you to try and arm yourself with as many of these as possible. They will prove invaluable both during your tenure as Chair and beyond.

Well-grounded	Strategic Thinker	Solution Focussed	Values Driven	Able to Share Success
Drive a Compelling Narrative	Generous	Common Sense Drive	Resilient (Rhino-hide)	Opportunity Hunter
Business Focussed	Energy & Authenticity	Communication Skills	Lead with Grace	Personal Mastery
Planning Skills	Pragmatic	Analytical	Credible & Authoritative	Forward Thinking

- Before you leave your role as Chair, take the time to complete a ‘due diligence’ handover checklist. Lorraine Thomas (former Chair of the Equality Matters staff network at the Department of Health) found this a really useful exercise. The checklist is a great way of helping the incumbent Chair to ensure that the incoming Chair has no surprises (and it’s a really nice thing to do). She devised a template which helped her accurately outline the key issues for her successor. (See table 1 on the following page.)
- Don’t be afraid to rule with your head *and* your heart because:

<b>Hear</b>	<p><b>Integrity</b></p> <p><b>Competencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting consistently with principles, values and beliefs (walking the talk)</li> <li>• Telling the truth</li> <li>• Standing up for what is right</li> <li>• Keeping promises</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Results in:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Trust</b></p>	<p><b>Responsibility</b></p> <p><b>Competencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking responsibility for personal choices</li> <li>• Admitting mistakes and failures</li> <li>• Embracing responsibilities for serving others - “leave the world a better place”</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Results in:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Inspiration</b></p>
	<p><b>Forgiveness</b></p> <p><b>Competencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to let go of one’s mistakes</li> <li>• Ability to let go of others’ mistakes</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Results in:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Innovation</b></p>	<p><b>Compassion</b></p> <p><b>Competencies:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Actively caring for others</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>Results in:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Retention</b></p>

(Table courtesy of Nitin Kalra, PeopleStrong)

Finally:

- ✓ Focus on delivering outcomes.
- ✓ Deliberately develop yourself.
- ✓ Be determined to make a change.
- ✓ Have fun and enjoy the ride.

All the best.

**Cherron**

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