Mining Your Org Chart for Hidden STI

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If you work long enough in a "compliance job," your world view can get a little skewed

I work for a DOE contractor, so I think of my role as ensuring compliance with DOE Orders and Manuals:

O 241.1-1A,

O 471.1A & M 471.1-1,

O 471.3 & M 471.3-1,

M 475.1-1B & O 475.2

But there are 11 pages of Orders, Manuals, and Notices in our contract

- CRADAs
- Work for Others
- Records Management Program
- FOIAs
- Lab Directed R&D
- Libraries and Press Releases
- Software Quality Assurance

CASE STUDY: CRADAs

- ORNL's approach to formalizing roles and responsibilities is Standards-Based Management Systems (SBMS)
- The SBMS for CRADAs clearly points out what authors must do
- The DOE-IG looked at CRADAs last year
- SBMS apparently wasn't being followed

Scope of the problem

- It's in the CRADA that a final report will be prepared and sent to OSTI
- Preparing and distributing the final CRADA report is clearly addressed in SBMS
- When Tech Transfer got their copy of the final CRADA report, they assumed I got my copy
- Over 100 final CRADA reports never got to me

Fixing the problem

- In the short term, I obtained PDFs of the missing reports and processed them "by hand" (individually via E-link)

- Relatively quickly, we were caught up

- In the future, final CRADA paperwork won't be closed out without an accompanying OSTI ID number

Good news for the future

- Instead of seeing myself as the "compliance guy," I now see myself as just one of many compliance folks
- There is a sense of fellowship among compliance folks that usually makes them eager to help other compliance folks
- That's been my experience at ORNL

Work for Others

- Unlike a CRADA, not all Work for Others will generate a final report or any publication of any type
- Some Work for Others publications specifically ban any distribution of reports outside the funding agency
- However, many WFO projects DO generate reports for unlimited distribution

Records Management

- Staff in Records Management see a wide array of records described and maintained.

- Some of these records are reports and other types of STI.

- Records Management staff have many of the same compliance issues as STI managers.

FOIA requests

- At ORNL, Freedom of Information Act requests are routed through Records Management.

- At ORNL, FOIAs need to be reviewed for release before being sent on to DOE.

- Many FOIAs are requests for STI such as technical reports.

Lab Directed R&D

- Laboratory-Directed Research and Development is designed to fund ideas that are outside the research funding cycle.

- Consequently, many LDRD projects are in a "pre-publication" cycle for quite a while.

- Conversely, LDRD projects have to prove their value to justify funding. This "proof" is often in the form of publications.

Libraries/Press Releases

- Libraries are "where the rubber meets the road" for STI.

- If you can't work with a librarian, you probably can't work with anybody.

- Library staff are knowledgeable and helpful, and they often tell me more about ORNL STI than I ever imagined.

- Press releases are easy to find and often put you on the track for "fresh" STI

Software QA

- From purely an STI standpoint, it's hard to locate STI software:
  - It's rarely the "deliverable"
  - It seems to always be "in beta testing"
  - Developers don't always see its usefulness outside their own program

- At ORNL, I have recently been able to tap into the software quality-assurance process

Other factors

- It's better if management owns problems because management has greater authority than the compliance folks.

- It's better to have a "here's what's in it for you" speech ready because the argument "it's a requirement" is not always compelling to persons NOT in a compliance job.

"Find your center"

- Because an organization ultimately takes on a personality all its own, one size will never fit all.

- Analyze your organization to find a central function that everybody agrees is important.

- At ORNL, that central function is the Publications Tracking System.

ORNL's center: PTS

- The Publications Tracking System (PTS) is designed to capture most of the Lab's STI.
- PTS is the process of both approving and capturing the full text of ORNL STI.
- Unlike the former ORNL document system, PTS was designed by authors, managers, and users.

Has it been easy?

- In a word—"NO"
- It's been at least humbling to hear complaints about the old publication system designed by me.
- The designers of the new system are always finding more esoteric problems that apparently only I know the answers to.

Has it been enlightening?

- In a word—"Yes"
- The increased amount of "buy-in" and management attention has lead to a much better product.
- The new system links up to OSTI, thus eliminating the step that made me the bottleneck to getting items to OSTI.

Summary

- The changeover, initiated by top management to solve a related problem dealing with content issues in STI, is both more comprehensive and more easy to use than the old system.

- Try to tap into other compliance folks at your site. You'll meet a lot of nice people and learn more about your site. And you'll probably find some "hidden STI" along the way.

Questions?

- At this point, feel free to offer up similar thoughts and processes at your site.

- I'm open to comments, kudos, cut-downs, and criticisms.

- I've left out some "low-hanging fruit" from the ORNL org chart to test how well you've been listening.