

Social Responsibility 101

Working with Nomad, Henley-on-Thames

Early on in my time at Water for Fish (WfF) I was asked to talk to the team at Nomad, a not-for-profit youth and community project in Henley-on-Thames (UK). Water for Fish was looking at ways to help the Project and community and, until then, had been helping with clearing gardens, painting, etc.

When I sat down with Sue Prior, Nomad Project Manager, it became clear very quickly that there were many ways we could support their work by using our professional expertise, rather than donning overalls. The management team at WfF were very positive about this approach so we embarked on an exciting programme of work.

My role began and continued evolving as Project Leader for WfF and I started by coordinating a needs analysis focusing on both the Nomad team of five permanent staff, as well as the suite of support services they provided to the community. After much research, including one-on-one interviews with the Nomad team and questionnaires conducted by Nomad staff within the township, we formulated a project plan that was designed to build on two areas: (1) skills development for both staff and the projects' management committee, and (2) tailoring the teams' support and approach to a specific client group in need - local youth.

"Having Water for Fish devote so many of its top consultants to us is a real privilege and has opened our eyes to many different ways of doing things. We get on really well with their people and a lot of mutual trust and respect has evolved. More importantly, the real winners are the local people whose lives we try and make better."

Sue Prior, NOMAD Project Manager

Project One – Developing the Nomad team and their vision, with a view to:

- Team Building – Helping to strengthen the NOMAD team, enhancing their working relationships, clarifying job roles and increasing effectiveness, with a view to building a performing team
- Strategy setting – Helping to formulate a vision for NOMAD that will provide a proactive/planned approach to meeting the community's needs, including approaches to securing funding and engaging key stakeholders to make the strategy work
- Relationship building – Providing a toolkit the Nomad team can use to enhance their relationship-building capability with all areas of the community, clients and wider community alike, including skills building and formulating communication plans.
- Facilitating change – Developing techniques that allow the NOMAD team to cope with the ongoing, changing needs of the community including client needs and external influences such as government body

Project Two - Supporting the NOMAD team in their work with local youth by delivering workshops focused around key issues young people are facing today, namely:

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- What do I want to do?
- How do I go about finding a job or apprenticeship?
- How should I prepare my CV?
- How should I conduct myself during an interview?
- How can I build up my self esteem?

The project evolved as time went by, and as the Wff consultants understood the Nomad team's needs and priorities, and those of the local youth, the programme developed to focus on the most relevant areas.

We also knew it was important to ensure that this work was helping Nomad to raise its profile in the local community, particularly with other businesses who might be prepared to follow suit and provide financial or professional support. With this in mind, we also provided practical support and guidance regarding marketing and PR, using press releases and PR contacts to access local and regional media.

So, how was it helpful?

The feedback we received was extremely positive, and the Nomad staff were incredibly excited about the development programmes they embarked on. From the very first workshop I co-facilitated with the Managing Director of Wff, which was around team-work, they were making instant changes to their ways of working, taking on board how more effectively they could be working together such as having more regular team meetings and understanding each other better. It was fantastic to see that we were making such a positive impact so quickly.

Nomad has continued to develop in many ways in the past year and a half. Since Wff began working with them, they have gained independent charity status, and have launched a new website for the community, among many other things!

"Karen Ross, NOMAD project leader, says: 'From our first contact with them last year, to the recent team development workshop we ran, we have had very meaningful discussions with the NOMAD team, and are delighted to be working with them... Despite this being pro bono work, we feel it essential to use our best people and most current thinking if this project is to benefit everyone involved.'"

Press Release, 4 May 2005

For more information about the Nomad Project, go to www.nomadhenley.co.uk.