

Concurrent Session L
Wednesday 2 September
1.55pm – 2.45pm

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30 Aug – 2 Sep 2015
Novotel North Beach Wollongong



Session 2

I Think I Can: I Learnt I Could: How the Take Up of Personal Leadership Can Influence an International Institution

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A chance meeting at TEMC 2012 was the spark for the formation of a creative partnership between Margaret Ruwoldt and Mary-Louise Huppatz. A coffee chat revealed not only similarities in their then roles but shared ideologies and passion for learning. Together they bring a wealth of experience to their roles at the University of Melbourne having worked in a number of sectors (retail, construction, higher education) across multiple management roles (human resources, communication, information technology, strategy and planning). In 2014 they and seven colleagues received a Vice-Chancellor's Award for Outstanding Contribution for creating the first UoM Professional Staff Conference (now an annual event). Mary-Louise and Margaret are currently incubating cunning plans to bring yet more new ideas into their workplaces.

In September 2014 the University of Melbourne hosted its first Professional Staff conference in its 160-year history. The formation and delivery of this conference was distinctive in many ways, not the least that it was a staff-led initiative. The success of this approach leads us to explore the question - must staff and their ideas wait to be led or can they take up ownership for implementing innovation and change?

Inspired by work of colleagues within the sector, the idea for a conference was sparked by attending TEMC 2012. Ensuing discussions led to an exploration of ways that opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing could be incubated and created for the professional staff community at the University.

This exploration and vision for a Professional Staff conference evolved from “wouldn't it be good” to “someone should really do this” to “maybe we can do this” to the realisation that “yes we could”. And, yes we did – delivering a conference on September 13, 2014. This inaugural conference achieved four key aims: celebrating the contribution of professional staff, promoting cross-unit collaboration, creating opportunities for staff development and enriching all who participated. One month after the conference, more than 68% of attendees surveyed indicated that they had changed their behaviour as a result of attending.

Presented as a case study, this session unpacks the behind the scenes elements to share with others who may be interested in setting up similar grass roots approaches to professional development. It explores the life cycle of the conference and shares the tools and thinking used to shape and mould the project along the way. These include idea generation, team leadership through to project management and evaluation mechanisms. In addition, it will explore the opportunities and challenges in undertaking a staff-led initiative – from seeking institutional support and recognition through to operating across divisional and institutional boundaries.

An element that contributed to the success of the conference's delivery was the Organising Committee formed by nine staff volunteers, representing the breadth and depth of professional activities across the University. Formed in December 2013, this grouping of nine

staff evolved to form a high functioning and focused committee and one year later was awarded a Vice-Chancellors Award for Outstanding Contribution.