

# Implementing Your Own Ideas for Job Satisfaction

You *can* improve and develop your job  
for your town and yourself

# Our Jobs When We Started



## Andrew

- Two mornings a week at elementary
- One morning a week at kindergarten
- Some translating & interpreting
- Assisting ALTs
- Pre-merger preparation
- Twice-monthly adult English class
- Occasional international events
- Occasional speeches/presentations
- TV reporter once a year at festival
- Monthly newsletter article (広報)
- Monthly all-prefecture CIR meeting














## Alanna

- Was told by predecessor that I would be “just a glorified kindergarten ALT.”
- His predecessor was so bored with the job he quit and now works at the local Nova.
- 3 mornings a week at kindergarten
- 2-hour English class at the library twice a month
- 3-hour English class at the women’s center twice a month
- 2-hour adult English night class twice a month, run by the BOE
- Daily English email lessons sent to city workers
- Monthly English class at the children’s center
- Occasional translating/interpreting
- Occasional speeches/presentations/events
- Monthly newsletter article (広報)
- Monthly all-prefecture CIR meeting
















Hmm... not ideal. Maybe if we make a few small adjustments....

# Our Jobs Now

## Andrew

-  Redesigned elementary school visit schedule and curriculum to focus on international exchange over English
-  Ended kindergarten visits
-  Started a fortnightly cable TV program with full creative control
-  Started shooting, editing, and doing projects for cable TV and involving film in work
-  Increased translating & Interpreting
-  Took advantage of town merger
-  Started friendly office English lunch time
-  Continued adult English class
-  Increased involvement in events in and out of the city
-  Monthly newsletter article (広報)
-  Monthly all-prefectural CIR meeting

## Alanna

-  Took control of kindergarten schedule (2x/week max)
-  Ended library English class entirely
-  Cut women's center class from 3 hours to 1 hour
-  Took over adult English class from BOE. Doubled participation.
-  Started regular cable TV show. First 6 months: variety show also involving English. Now: all-Japanese talk show interviewing guests.
-  Started 2x/monthly Japanese language exchange
-  Changed email English lessons from daily to weekly
-  Increased translations (city info, maps, website)
-  Rekindled communication with US sister city
-  Held annual all-prefecture int'l festival in my little town
-  Helped reform local int'l volunteer group
-  Became national CIR representative
-  Continued local international events
-  Monthly newsletter article (広報)
-  Monthly all-prefectural CIR meeting

**So, how do you go about changing you job into what you want?**

# The First Building Block: ATTITUDE

- ⚙️ **Think in the long term:** build trust and credibility and a reputation for yourself as a hard worker and original thinker so that you can make waves and shake things up effectively
  - Don't be shy
  - Put yourself out there
  - Positive thinking
  - Never give up!
  - Talk to everyone and be the one to reach out
    - ⚙️ Example: arriving in the morning
  - Use your unique position to you say things others can't (both serious and joking)
  - Share your different viewpoint (appropriately)
  - Don't be afraid to stick to your guns when you know you're right
  - Be patient and keep perspective about your coworkers
  - Look for a balance between your way and 'the Japanese way.'  
Don't forget that while your way might be different, if they'd wanted a Japanese person they would have hired one!

# The Second Building Block: NETWORKING

## ❁ Making connections at work

- Get to know people in as many sections as possible.
- Catch people on their smoking lunch break time
- Attend office parties and trips as much as you can
- Stay behind 15 minutes after work and chat sometimes
- Get to know 'erai hito' even if they seem unrelated to your work (heads of other sections, BOE people). You are a wildcard in the hierarchical structure so take advantage
- If someone invites you to karaoke and drinking, GO! Even if you don't drink or sing. You never know who will be a good friend to have later on.
- Find someone at work you connect with personally to advise you about the workplace and office politics. Small town interpersonal politics are complicated, and they affect you!

# The Second Building Block: NETWORKING

## 🌸 Making connections in your community

- Talk to the locals (kids, old people, everyone). Make yourself available.
- Connect with community organizations
  - 🌸 Andrew: International Center
  - 🌸 Alanna: International Volunteer group
- Use English classes and school visits to build support for other types of events
- Get to know local groups of foreigners besides other JETs
- Sporting, festival, and hobby groups
- Local business owners and organizations

# The Second Building Block: NETWORKING

## ❁ Making connections with other JETs

- Nearby CIRs
  - ❁ Toyama's monthly meetings
  - ❁ Events run by multiple local CIRs
  - ❁ Help each other with events, translations, etc
  - ❁ Have CIR social events
- ALTs
  - ❁ Keep them updated about local events using email
  - ❁ Get to know their supervisor and schedules (so you can get their schools to let them participate in events and/or give them daikyu)
  - ❁ Be there to help them out and help them learn
- On a regional/national level
  - ❁ Prefectural or regional website and the CIR homepage
  - ❁ Keep up with what others are doing to get support and ideas

# Let's get specific: what worked for us?

- ❁ Andrew: School visits
- ❁ Alanna: Cable TV show
- ❁ Andrew: Incorporating your own interests
- ❁ Alanna: Japanese Chat Time

# They said *NO*. Now what?

## STRATEGIES

### ❁ **Think of it as a negotiation.**

You need to understand the other side's motivations. Be aware of their concerns and priorities.

- Money: figure out the budget
- Time: they do not want to add to their workload
- Accountability: avoiding criticism from superiors and citizens is at the forefront of every public servant's mind. They won't want to stick their neck out alone. You need community support, precedent, and approval from higher-ups to reassure them.

### ❁ **Don't give up.** Be patient and take the time to build support. Keep chipping away.

### ❁ **Write a detailed proposal.**

Try to think of possible objections, and find solutions before they are even raised. Something already written out in black and white has more impact. He who writes the proposal gets to decide the details.

### ❁ **Refer to precedent.**

Research past projects in your town and projects in other towns. Model your idea on precedent so it's not just you against the naysayers.

### ❁ **Be willing to volunteer** at first, even if it's not fair.

### ❁ **Think long term:** Nothing can happen overnight. Start laying a foundation for your second year during your first, and pave the way for your successors

### ❁ **Nemawashi:** it's real, it works, and you need to understand it. This is where all your networking pays off. It's about getting the right people to apply the right pressure and influence.

### ❁ **Confide in people** you think are totally unrelated to your project or section. Ask for their advice and get their sympathy. Even if it seems they have no answers, it will come back around. Don't forget the highly interconnected social structure of smaller towns.

### ❁ **Calm down, cool off, and be persistent!**