Reframing the Role of Librarians as Internal Consultants

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About Me

Who am I?
Workshop Objective

- A multi-level perspective of consulting

What would it mean to REFRAIME the ROLE of University Librarians as internal consultants?
Our Agenda

① What is Consulting?

② The Client-Consultant Consultant Relationships

③ Librarians as Change Agents
What is Consulting?

Opening Discussion

1. Develop a working definition of ‘Consulting’

2. What are the benefits (or drawbacks) of reframing the role of librarians as ‘consultants’?
“There has never been a time in recorded history when the rich and powerful have not needed expert advisers of some description. The biblical kings had prophets, Persian sultans had viziers, and Greek city states had the oracle at Delphi. Even the Mafia had their consigliere” (O’Mahoney, 2010)
What is Consulting?

A Broad Definition

“You are consulting any time you are trying to change or improve a situation but have no direct control over the implementation... Most people in staff roles in organizations are really consultants even if they don’t officially call themselves consultants”

(Block, 2000)
The Rise of Internal Consultants

Industry Trends

- Support/shared functions (e.g. HR, ER, Finance) are more ‘advisory’ or ‘consulting’ oriented in their approach;
- Specific internal consulting functions are increasingly common across all industry sectors (i.e. public and private)

Advantages of Internal Consultants

- Company-wide perspective
- Continuity into implementation
- Higher levels of confidential
- Greater cost-effective
- Internal capability development
What is Consulting?

Consulting as a Service

1. Who are your internal clients?
   - What do they want and/or need?

2. What ‘consulting’ services does the Library currently provide?
   - Which services are most valued by your internal clients?

3. Are your clients ‘satisfied’?
   - How do you know?
Various UniMelb shared service functions appear to be shifting to internal-consulting models. Why?
What is Consulting?

UniMelb Library as Internal Consultants

- UniMelb library already has a ‘consulting’ orientation
  - Tailored services for teaching/research needs
What is Consulting?

Service Innovation and Client Perceptions

Some Challenges

- **Building client awareness**
  - Are clients aware of the services and value you provide?

- **Resistance to change**
  - “This is the way we’ve always done things”

- **Demonstrating value**
  - How to you evaluate/measure value?

- **Shifting staff mindsets**
  - Challenging the ‘traditional’ role of librarians

- **Processes and methodologies**
  - Consistency in service delivery and client experiences
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**Meeting your client’s implicit expectations is just as (if not more) important than meeting their explicit expectations.**

Effectiveness as Consultants

Expert vs. Advisor

- **“Patient-doctor analogy”**
  - The most common view of consultants
  - Consultants diagnose and ‘fix’ sick clients
  - Ignores the psycho-emotional factors

- **Engage with your client as an advisor not an expert**
  - **Expert:** Uses logic to provide answers with an aim of being ‘right’
  - **Advisor:** Provides understanding, reasoning and insight and helps client make their own decision.

- **Consulting should be a process of co-production**

Effectiveness as Consultants

Building Trust as an Advisor

- **Trust Equation**
  - Maximize numerator and minimize denominator

  ![Trust Equation Diagram]

  - **CREDIBILITY (Words):** Revealed in our credentials and honesty
  - **RELIABILITY (Actions):** Revealed by keeping our promises
  - **INTIMACY (Emotions):** People feel safe talking about their agendas
  - **SELF-ORIENTATION (Motives):** Revealed in our focus (us or them?)

Our Agenda

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Librarians as Change Agents

My Assumption

- UoM Library continues to provide a range of teaching and research related services because of:
  - A belief that you have specific technical knowledge/expertise that can improve student learning and research outcomes.
  - Enable and support academics in their research and teaching activities.

Are academics currently engaging productively with the University Library?

What is the current uptake of library services by academics?
(e.g. Research@Library, Teaching@Library)
Librarians as Change Agents

Consultants are change agents
- Seek to improve or change the way things are currently done
- Ability to affect change depends on their ability to influence

To influence is to exercise power
- Seek to improve or change the way things are currently done

Positional Power
“Power that comes from a person’s roles, title or position”

Personal Power
“Power attributed to someone who has traits admired by people”

Librarians as Change Agents

The Nature of Change

“People do things for their reasons, not for yours”

- **Force field analysis**
  - Use to capture the factors that will aid or hinder change

- **Driving Forces**
  - The positive reasons for change (i.e. your reasons)

- **Restraining Forces**
  - The negative reasons against change (i.e. their reasons)

Thank You

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