

model is developed the full benefit of the advising system will not be achieved.

Portions of the advising system that have been implemented are proving to be successful as witnessed by the increase in positive student reaction towards the academic program. Current research programs are under study to identify the actual impact of the program upon students, their performance in the classroom, and their attitudes toward the department.

IMPLEMENTATION IN OTHER SETTINGS

The concept of a comprehensive advising system has much merit, and there are several areas which should be addressed by curricula when considering its implementation.

The coordinator of the program must have knowledge of the academic program, be able to provide direction and assistance to the advisors, maintain close liaison with administration and faculty, and have a working rapport with students.

There must be a survey of existing resources on campus that already provide services that may be intended for the advising system. Coordination, as opposed to duplication, is necessary to better utilize and communicate these services to students.

Effective and organized communication among staff is critical. Exchange of information with all student services staff is necessary to maintain continuity and establish program foundations. Developing lines and means of sharing and disseminating information must be a major objective of the system.

Full time professional advisors are needed, because advisor involvement and responsibility are of such nature that regular teaching faculty would experience difficulty providing adequate time to perform the task.

Administrators must recognize and support the program. Its importance in terms of placement, monetary contributions, retention of students, overall quality of students, and recruitment of students must be emphasized to department heads and deans.

While the proposal provides some new and creative opportunities, it also represents a somewhat dramatic deviation from traditional advising. It is felt, however, that advising can assume a much more meaningful role in a student's academic and personal growth. It can become a means of identification through which alumni can associate and communicate with their former department. Realization of the unique potentials of academic advising as pointed out in this article is a step in the right direction. Further, implementation of activities designed to improve the effectiveness of advising can ultimately bring greater focus of attention upon the role of advising at educational institutions.

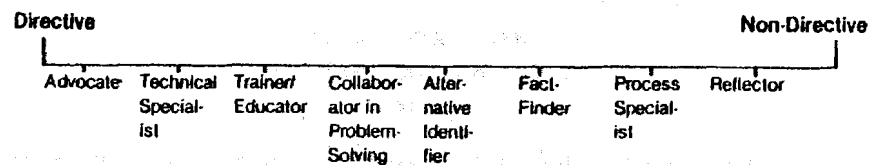
Some Principles of Effective Advising Consulting

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DETERMINING CONSULTANT ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

The roles played by consultants extend to a wide range of functions; these tend to vary according to the expertise of the consultant, the style or philosophy of the consultant, and the requirements of the consulting situation. Advising consultants, for example, may be expected in one situation to function as a judge or evaluator of an existing advising program, and in another situation as a designer or advocate for a new program. On the one hand, a consultant may be assigned the role of diagnostician, to determine present or potential problems in an advising program; on the other hand, a consultant may be cast in the role of catalyst, to help get a program started. These roles are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but it is important for the consultant and client to understand and agree on the nature of the consultant's role.

Lippitt and Lippitt¹ have devised a model for analysis of eight different consultant roles, ranging from "directive" to "nondirective" on a continuum.



In each of these roles the consultant is actively engaged in serving the client group. On the "directive" end of the continuum, however, the consultant is assuming a dominant role of advocacy, while on the non-directive end the consultant is limited to stimulating client analysis and understanding.

An advising consultant may function in each of these capacities. For example, in working with an institution to assist in the development of a new type of advising program, a consultant may assume the role of REFLECTOR, primarily asking questions to help the institution's personnel to clarify the purposes, commitments, and possible consequences of the

¹ G.L. Lippitt and R. Lippitt, *Consulting Process in Action*, San Diego, Ca: University Associates, 1978.

program. This may suggest a somewhat passive role, but in fact, in this capacity the consultant may be very active in challenging the assumptions and strategies of the institution's advising system. This role is often appropriate in the early stages of a consultant, because it is a way to unearth valuable information that leads naturally into performing other consulting roles.

As a **PROCESS SPECIALIST** a consultant seeks to clarify how organization members interact to accomplish tasks they are attempting. To illustrate, a consultant may share observations regarding the relationships among faculty advisors, students affairs professionals and administrators and may seek to facilitate communication among these groups. As a **FACT FINDER** a consultant extends the questioning activity to a variety of means of collecting and organizing information. For example, interviews and surveys may be used to find out how individuals perceive an advising program and their opinions of it. In the role of **ALTER-ATIVE IDENTIFIER** the consultant would explore the range of possible ways that an advising program might be implemented or evaluated. As a **COLLABORATOR IN PROBLEM-SOLVING** a consultant helps institutional representatives identify causes of problems, and project possible solutions of them. An advising consultant might collaborate in redesigning elements of a new advising system to overcome objections to the existing one. As a **TRAINER** or **EDUCATOR** a consultant may conduct workshops, recommend learning resources, or share experiences relevant to implementing an advising program. In the capacity of **TECHNICAL SPECIALIST** an advising consultant may analyze for an institution the strengths and weaknesses of a proposed advising program and suggest possible ways of overcoming its weaknesses. Finally, as an **ADVOCATE** a consultant might recommend an alternative advising program that would accomplish the institution's objectives more effectively than an existing or institutionally-designed one.

DEFINING THE SCOPE AND FOCUS OF RESPONSIBILITY OF A CONSULTATION

The goals of a consultancy must describe its scope in terms that will enable the consultant to determine how much is expected. A consultant should be sure that the scope of the task assigned, and the achieving of its goals, are within the limits of time and resources available. If not, then adjustments should be negotiated.

In addition, the client institution and the consultant should have a mutual understanding of the focal point of the consultant's responsibility to individuals or groups within the institution. The individual who has made the initial contact with the consultant may or may not be the one with whom the consultant will primarily be involved.

Is the consultant serving primarily the dean, the director of advising, the advisors, a combination of these, or some other individual or group? Academic advising is often a "boundary-spanning" function, and a consultant may work with persons at more than one administrative level in more than one organizational unit. This suggests the importance from the start, of securing mutual agreement regarding the primary focus of the consultant's responsibility. At the same time, the consultant's relationships with other individuals and groups in the institution should be facilitated to insure their maximum participation. Although the mandate and authorization of the administration is essential for cooperation by all parties in the institution, a consultant's effectiveness is also dependent

on being perceived as an independent party who is not merely serving as an administrator's agent to implement a pre-determined plan.²

UTILIZING CONSULTING RESOURCES

Information Resources

Good consultation requires effective means for collecting, analyzing, and communicating information. Institutional representatives are generally eager to provide the consultant with relevant data, but the consultant must know what information is most useful. The following considerations should be kept in mind regarding the collection and use of information:

1. Written information is often available prior to a campus visit, but it is also necessary to supplement the written sources with data obtained from interviews and observations. Preliminary review of written materials may enable the consultant to identify areas that require clarification, verification, or elaboration. If it is not feasible to gain access to individuals or other necessary information sources prior to the consultant's visit, arrangements should be made to do this early in the planned campus visit.
2. The process of interviewing institutional personnel should be carefully planned and executed. A prepared list of questions, or even a concise questionnaire, may be effectively used as part of a consultant's information-gathering efforts. If a structured set of questions is used, then the interviews must allow for clarification and elaboration of responses. Also, the laws of confidentiality apply when dealing with information obtained through interviews.

An example of the use of structured questions is in Table 1, a questionnaire distributed to faculty advisors. This brief questionnaire employed ideas and questions provided in part by faculty advisors. It gave respondents the opportunity for open-end responses and the option of signing the questionnaire. The responses and follow-up interviews with individuals who signed it led to some important data on faculty perceptions of advising and ways of improving it.

3. The data collection process can be used to help build relationships and prepare the way for later stages of consultation. By asking significant questions and seeking information from individuals and groups who are an influential part of the advising system, a good start can be made toward assuring the best understanding of the system and establishing the credibility of the consultant.

4. Providing feedback to the client institution is an important function of a consultancy. By arranging to share with appropriate personnel information obtained through the consultation process, a consultant can facilitate understanding among individuals who function in different aspects of the advising system and can provide a rationale for the consultant's diagnosis and recommendations. The feedback must be carefully summarized and presented as objectively as possible. The clients may be interested in the consultant's

² Donald E. Harvey and Donald R. Brown, *An Experimental Approach to Organization Development*, 2nd ed., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1982, chapter 7.

TABLE 1. SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE ON FACULTY ADVISING

Please provide brief answers to each question. You are invited to give your name at the bottom, but this is optional. Your answers will be kept confidential. Use the reverse side if additional space is needed.

- I. Achieving basic objectives of an advising system.
A group of the college faculty have identified the following basic objectives of the advising system. Comment briefly below each objective, including means and/or difficulties associated with achieving the objective.
 1. "To establish good rapport between student and advisor."
 2. "To provide freshmen and sophomores with advice on selection of a major which will tie to long range career objectives."
 3. "To advise students in academic trouble, acting as a liaison between the instructor and the student, and advising on possible change of major."
 4. "To advise all students on a total course of study which is compatible with career objectives, presenting realistic alternatives."
 5. "To handle paperwork on "drops" to insure that the student receives counseling on the advisability of dropping."
 6. "To interpret academic regulations to students."
- II. Improving the advising system.
 1. How may the advising needs of new students be most effectively met?
 2. How might faculty who advise large numbers of students perform their advising role more effectively?
 3. In your opinion, what are the areas needing the most attention in improving faculty advising and what might be done about them?

Name _____

impressions of this information, if given; they must be helped to distinguish between these impressions and the data summarized.

Diagnostic Resources and Principles

Most consultants are presented with a problem situation or institutional need that they are asked to address. Each of the consultant roles described earlier involved an element of diagnosing the probable causes or underlying elements of the situation and ways of addressing the need. The purposes of diagnostic activity are to discover the precise nature of the concern to be analyzed, to identify its basic causes or aspects, and to provide a basis for the programs or activities that the consultant will present. Experienced consultants often develop a series of key questions or an analytical framework for accomplishing these objectives. One popular, general-purpose diagnostic technique originated by Kurt Lewis is

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forced-field analysis. This technique seeks to identify forces for and against particular organization changes, with a view toward determining how these forces may be utilized in improvement efforts.¹

Several principles of effective diagnosis can be summarized:

1. The problem definition initially presented to a consultant should be carefully examined and verified. Often subsequent information obtained by the consultant provides additional perspective that calls for a redefinition of the institutional problem. The consultant should make sure that efforts are directed toward an advising need that is correctly construed and mutually understood.
2. The consultant should address basic causes of a problem rather than superficial symptoms of it. For example, if an institution is experiencing difficulties with lack of advisor motivation and it engages a consultant to conduct a workshop to generate advisor enthusiasm, this plan may neglect such possible causes of advisor apathy as problems in the structure of advising responsibilities or in the advising reward system.
3. A consultant should avoid allowing personal interests, experiences and biases to lead to imposing a special or favorite diagnosis, regardless of the particular circumstances of the client institution. It is easy to overgeneralize from an advising problem at a college with which the consultant is familiar, and to read that institution's particular need into a similar situation the consultant has been asked to address on another campus.
4. Problem identification and diagnosis are not ends in themselves and should not be pursued beyond the point of their usefulness in fulfilling the goals of a consultancy. Extended diagnosis may complicate a consultation unnecessarily and hinder developing an agreement on constructive action.

Resources for Improving Advising Effectiveness

Advising consultants are usually engaged chiefly for the purpose of assisting institutions in their efforts to support and strengthen advising programs. Information gathering and diagnosis are generally expected to lead to contributions by the consultant toward improving advising. These may take the form of coaching or counseling advising personnel; implementing workshops or other programs for improving advising services; collaborating in resolving specific advising problems; and submitting a written evaluation or other type of report. From social scientific research, and consultants' experience applying a variety of resources to organizational change, some principles may be summarized:

- 1) The "culture" of the institution, especially as it affects the advising system, should be carefully taken into account in efforts to influence changes in advising. Studies of many organizations show that change strategies do not succeed if they are inconsistent with the basic beliefs, values and modes of operation which constitute the culture of the organization. Since an advising consultant is not likely to be able to significantly alter an

¹ Kurt Lewin, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics, Concepts, Methods and Reality in Social Science", *Human Relations*, 1 (June 1974), pp. 5-42.

institution's culture, efforts should be directed toward adapting recommendations and programs to maximize the potential of the institution's existing cultural norms.⁴

2) *Key institutional personnel* constitute a major resource for implementing a consultant's efforts. Not only are well-positioned, supportive individuals an important source of information, the crucial outcomes of a consultancy often depend on them. A consultant should seek out those persons in the client institution who has similar basic values, possess vitality and imagination, and are willing to learn. A consultant can best assure the lasting value of a consultancy by working with these people and facilitating their mutual support of one another.⁵

3) *Workshops and training sessions* are a frequently used resource in consultations. Important consideration in planning such programs include: clearly defined objectives; a variety of learning experiences and approaches to workshop themes; adaptation of exercises and activities to the particular advising circumstances of the campus; opportunities for participants to practice the concepts or skills being taught and to receive feedback on this practice; a carefully-sequenced schedule of activities, with allowance for alternate plans for contingencies; and, opportunities for action-planning or follow-up activities.

4) *Reports and evaluations* represent a resource both to the institution and the consultant. A thorough but concise report can focus on issues identified in the consultancy and provide a basis for carrying forward its objectives. Such a report may also serve to document the consultant's work and support the initiative of key advising personnel. Evaluations may include both those of participants in workshop or training activities, as well as institutional evaluation of major aspects of the consultant's performance. In addition to documenting accomplishments, these evaluations may be useful in planning subsequent consulting projects.

CONCLUSION

This brief summary has sought to outline some basic consulting strategies applicable to the task of advising consulting. Knowledge and expertise in academic advising is not enough to make a successful consultant. In addition, the consultant must know how to perform the difficult function of assisting others in analyzing and solving their own advising problems. The suggestions in this article have been formulated with a view toward assisting consultants in planning and carrying out this role.

⁴ W. Warner Burke, *Organization Development: Principles and Practices*, Boston MA: Little Brown and Co., 1982, Chapter 5.

⁵ Herbert A. Shepherd, "Risks of Thumb for Change Agents", *Organization Development Practitioner*, vol. 7, no. 1 (November 1975), pp. 1-5. Publication of the National OD Network, Plainfield, N.J.

A Different Approach to an Old Problem

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Students who lose credit or are given "general elective" credit for courses they believed would satisfy specific requirements at a four-year institution are quick to communicate their plight to friends who may be considering the community college for the first two years of an undergraduate degree. Transfer programs at community colleges usually earn their credibility by virtue of how courses are evaluated and granted credit by the receiving senior institution.

Oftentimes, the community college is not the sole source of the problem and neither is the receiving institution. Articulation programs and agreements between institutions have become more frequent and problem free as both sender and receiver recognize that a smooth transition benefits both interests. Communicating the details of these programs in a timely way to students then becomes critical to the transfer process.

However, many community colleges do not require students to participate in counseling or academic advising sessions. In fact, colleges with on-line phone registration programs may allow students to enroll in courses without ever coming to the campus. Students residing in distant rural areas who wish to avoid traffic congestion are spared the commitment of time and money to register, solving one problem. This solution, though, may create another problem by facilitating a high potential for enrolling in courses not directly articulated with an ultimate goal.

The college's attempt to remedy this situation focused on the integration of articulation data, master student record, and fee statement generation. The first step was to build a crosswalk of course transfer equivalencies for each of the senior institutions to which most of the students would transfer. All but a small percentage of students transferred to one of eight Michigan schools. Thus, eight banks of crosswalk data were created in the computer system.

Next, it was necessary to provide a linkage between these crosswalks and the registration process. Each senior institution was assigned a code number, and the registration program was expanded to allow the input of one of these codes as identified by the student. This served as a pointer to the appropriate crosswalk for that particular student's proposed schedule.

Finally, since the statement of fees includes a schedule of classes into which the student has enrolled, this seemed to be an ideal vehicle by which to communicate transfer messages. All