

Reading Summary

Statistical Consulting in a University: Dealing with People and Other Challenges

3 Things Learned:

- For the second stage of the consulting process – identifying the research problem, it is very important that the consultants take notes during this session. For complex project, it would be a good idea to provide the client a written summary of the understanding of the project and the agree-upon course of action. However, this is not always necessary for less complex projects, a verbal summary would be enough. Additionally, if the project involves an unfamiliar area, try to request for a few days in which to think about the project before getting back to the client.
- Consulting roles vary with pros and cons respectively. Helper role will be handling detailed and smaller tasks as a technician in the team to perform whatever analysis requested. This could lead to bad consulting when inappropriate analyses are conducted resulted from wrong questions or missing critical details of the data. Leader role will be taking control of the entire project and actively involved. This could lead to bad science if working in areas with little or no expertise. The most ideal roles would be the collaborator role and the teaching role. This allows the client and consultant to pool their talents and to learn from each other while achieving a satisfied and complete project.
- It is possible for a consultant to negotiate for a desired consulting role instead of simply accepting what is given. The most significant principle is to understanding the underlying concerns that motivate a client's behavior and then deal with the concerns rather than the behavior. A few approaches are as follows to achieve success negotiation. A consultant should avoid attacking the client's position even if you do not agree with it. A consultant should first focus on the shared interests before getting into what are opposed. Make sure a consultant be fair, reasonable and honorable and let the client know your desire to achieve these.

3 Questions:

- How to ensure the point of contact in the early stages of the consulting session is the real client we are working with? How to ask for clarification or for a contact with other stakeholders without being offensive?
- It was stated that disappointment is often one of the consequences of failing to spell out the details of a consulting relationship. Isn't the relationship supposed to be agreed in advance at the beginning of the project on paper or so? If that's the case, are there still problems regarding violation?
- How should consultants negotiate for his or her role for the project if the client side already has a team or a professional who are strong in statistical knowledge?