

How to make best use out of consultants

28 March 2007

Mark Lound

Director

Statistical Coordination

Image of a Consultant



Why use a Consultant?

Cost effective for agencies to utilise consultant's facilities, expertise and survey knowledge.



Examples of problems with a Consultant

- ▶ **Lack of technical competence**
- ▶ **failure to identify client needs**
- ▶ **not delivering what is promised**
- ▶ **poor communication with client**
- ▶ **ineffective and inefficient management**
- ▶ **failure to take account resource limitations of client**
- ▶ **failure to complete project on time**



Examples of problems with an Agency

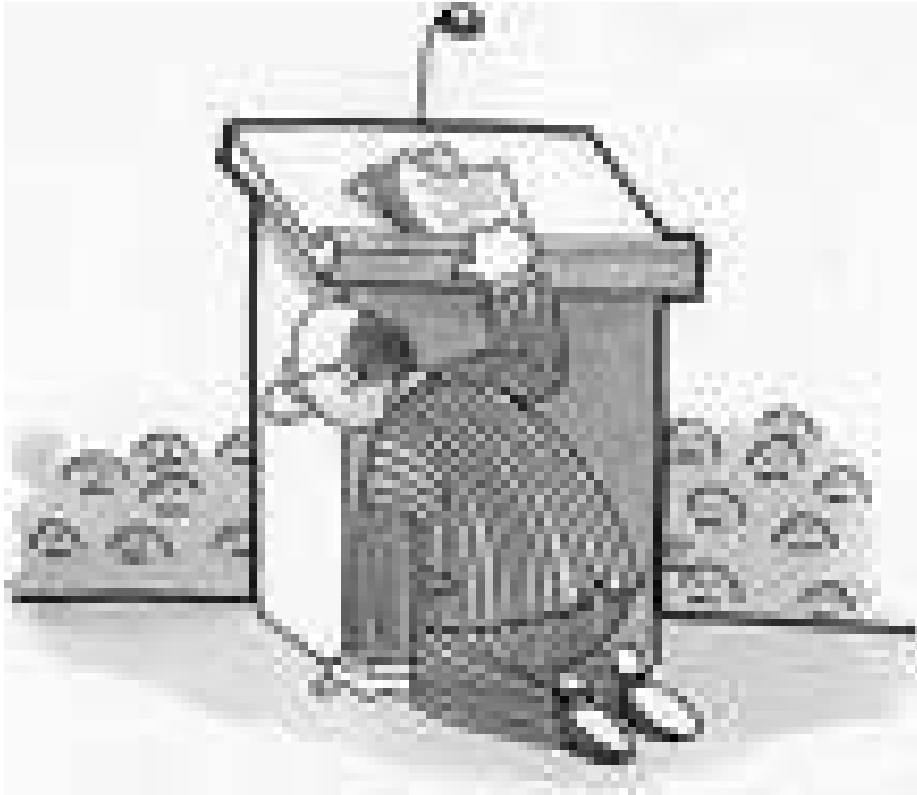
- ▶ failure to identify problems or requirements
- ▶ failure to identify objectives
- ▶ poorly written Request For Tenders
- ▶ unrealistic client expectations
- ▶ unrealistic time frame

Examples of problems with an Agency (continued)

- ▶ withholding information from the consultant
- ▶ poor consultant/agency relationship
- ▶ lack of communication
- ▶ poor management of the project by the agency



When are the survey results going to be available?



Draw up a Plan

- 1. Analyse and define the data requirement**
- 2. Identify if a consultant needs to be engaged**
- 3. Prepare the rft**
- 4. Evaluate consultants proposals and make a decision**
- 5. Risk management**
- 6. Finalise the contract**
- 7. Manage the project and liaise with the consultant**
- 8. Evaluate the consultant's performance**

3. Preparing the Request For Tender



Content of RFT

- ▶ **Background**
- ▶ **Scope**
- ▶ **Objectives**
- ▶ **Detailed Requirements**
- ▶ **Methodology**
- ▶ **Payment Schedule**
- ▶ **Further Information**
- ▶ **Proposal Content**
- ▶ **Selection Criteria**
- ▶ **Conditions of Tender**

Acquisition Strategy

- ▶ Expressions of Interest
- ▶ Sole Supplier
- ▶ Selective Tender
- ▶ Open Tender
- ▶ Panel

Timetable

- ▶ Draft RFT = 1-4 weeks
- ▶ Obtain approval of RFT = 1-2 weeks
- ▶ Obtain approval from procurement = 1 week
- ▶ Advertise RFT
- ▶ Hold Information Session = 1 day
- ▶ Tenders close = 2-4 weeks after advertising RFT
- ▶ Announce successful consultant = 2-3 weeks after close of tenders



Information Session

- ▶ **Definition of survey**
- ▶ **Current survey methodology**
- ▶ **Information about survey collection**
- ▶ **Survey timetable and penalties**
- ▶ **Other information i.e accreditation of interviewers, other costs**



Consultant's Proposal must include:

- ▶ **Consultant's understanding of the research issues**
- ▶ **Proposed sampling and methodology**
- ▶ **Methods to ensure data quality**
- ▶ **Detailed timetable**
- ▶ **Detailed breakdown of costs**
- ▶ **Details of similar projects the consultant has worked on**
- ▶ **Details of personnel who will be working on the project**

7. Ongoing Work with Consultants



7. Ongoing Work with Consultants



Project Management

The role of project management is one of effectively organising and using available resources:

- ▶ Consultant should be considered a resource
- ▶ Provide methodology, sampling and other information asap
- ▶ Monitor consultants progress against the timetable
- ▶ Agency staff provide effective liaison and support
- ▶ Agency to avoid interfering and imposing unnecessary constraints on the consultancy work

Monitoring Projects

- ▶ Frequent meetings between agency and the consultant
- ▶ Attendance at the training of interviewers
- ▶ Attendance at focus groups
- ▶ Attendance at some interviews
- ▶ Submission of regular progress reports by the consultant



Handling Unsatisfactory Performance

- ▶ Unsatisfactory performance generally revolves around data quality or late delivery of data
- ▶ Very difficult to quantify data quality
- ▶ Agency should carry out spot checks on data to make assessment of data quality
- ▶ Initial step should be writing to consultant outlining concerns
- ▶ Meet with consultant to discuss areas of concern
- ▶ Important that the RFT and contract clearly states issues such as sample size, data quality and timetables

Handling Unsatisfactory Performance (continued)

If the consultant accepts responsibility there are two courses of action the agency can follow:

- ▶ they may use the issue as a warning but state that another occurrence will incur a penalty
- ▶ Apply the penalty immediately

Important that however you handle the situation, it is important to keep an ongoing relationship with the consultant even if you have to apply penalties against them



Dispute Resolution

Details of dispute resolution should be in the RFT and contract. Usual treatment is:

- ▶ Agency and consultant meet to resolve the issue
- ▶ If this fails then both parties meet again with a mutually agreed mediator
- ▶ If this breaks down then legal proceedings may result



How to make best use out of consultants

Questions?????

