

Abstract of Presentation for *inFIRE*

The Consultant and the Library

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The fire protection consultant is part negotiator, part researcher, part expert and part stargazer. It is the "part researcher" role that is of most interest to the inFIRE group.

Fire protection consultants are frequently called into situations in which the client has limited technical and documentary knowledge of the issues that must be defined and resolved to provide solutions for operational, managerial and planning challenges. The key to success for both consultant and client is the ability to access the latest information in an expeditious manner and to be able to turn that information around in the shortest possible time.

The research needs for consultants range from technical information on fire apparatus, fire equipment and fire protection systems to the codes, standards and legislation of multiple jurisdictions. Few consultants are able to maintain adequate reference sources in their personal libraries.

At the same time, fire libraries serve a diverse customer group that is contained within a small, specialized field. The customer may be an entry level firefighter, a newly promoted officer, a fire service instructor, a fire academy or fire college student, a consultant, an engineer or a researcher. Beyond fire protection disciplines, the general public, from citizen to new reporter, occasionally has a need for the service of a fire library.

The Consultant and the Library

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Public Safety Consultant

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Public Safety Consultant

The Consultant

- Part negotiator
- Part expert
- Part star-gazer
- Part researcher

The Negotiator

- Resolve disputes
- Become well versed in history of issues
- Suggest alternative strategies
- Gain consensus

The Expert

- Personal knowledge
- Professional knowledge
- Professional experience
- Consulting experience

The Star-Gazer

- Perspective
- Inventor
- Abstract thought
- An absence of baggage

The Researcher

- Technical facts
- Community and issue history
- Statutory requirements
- Peripheral issues
- Other disciplines

Types of Consulting

- Problem solving
- Technical
- Validation
- Investigation
- Prostitution

The Consultant's Information Needs

- Process assistance - tools which enable the consultant to understand and rearrange data
 - statistical methodologies
 - demographics
 - benchmarking techniques
 - computerized mapping

The Consultant's Information Needs (cont.)

- Develop better understanding of client community's environment, culture, climate and history
 - Local history
 - Newspaper archives
 - Prevailing standards of service
 - Political realities

Example: Fire Department Consolidation

- Review of one year of newspapers
- Law library research
 - consolidation statutes
 - legislative acts related to fire organizations
- Budget analysis

Consolidation (cont.)

- Apparatus standards
- Insurance Services Office "standards"
- Occupational Safety and Health
- Organizational issues and dynamics

Example: Rescue Related Death

- Staffing standards and patterns
- Interpretation of Federal Regulations
- Budget Analysis
- Dangers of radiation
- Dangers of carbon dioxide

Rescue Related Death (cont.)

- Ambulance transport standards and practices
- Psychology of conflict free egos attempting to function effectively in a competitive power cauldron
- One death, four critically injured, one billion dollars

The Fire Library

- Focus tends to be narrow rather than broad
- Need for combination of technical “fire stuff” with resources from other disciplines

Other Disciplines

- Psychology
- Sociology
- Political Sciences
- Chemistry
- Physics

Why Do We Need All This Other "Stuff"?

- Community safety issues have grown much too complex for a single-discipline solution
- The "Fire Suppression Rating Schedule" is just one management tool - not the final and definitive word

Consultants Need to Broaden Their Focus, too!

- We must recognize the need for a multi-disciplined approach to problem solving and decisions making
- We must become very knowledgeable about the “helping” disciplines and their resource materials

The Challenge

- Consultants are frequently called into situations in which the client has limited technical and documentary knowledge of the issues that must be defined

The Key to Success

- Ability to access a broad range of the latest information in an expeditious manner
- Quick turn-around of information
- An understanding of the library index system

Questions?

