CHAPTER 7
DELIVERING ON YOUR PROMISES

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Innovation does not come shrink-wrapped

In order to be effective innovators we must first learn the lessons of those who have gone before us. Due to the collaborative nature of knowledge exchange activity inevitable 'bumps' will occur on the road to a successful outcome. We begin by examining the differing perspectives and issues of the three key protagonists – the client, the academic and the institution.

The client

The party paying either the academic or the institution for a knowledge exchange engagement to address an organisational problem may encounter any or all of a common series of issues of which the entrepreneurial academic needs to be cognizant:

- Due to the established and tested nature of their legacy organisational systems and technologies, the client may find it difficult to integrate cutting edge new systems and technologies. The academic needs to be sensitive to the client's current level of maturity in the area being ad

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dressed, and even though the practices being promoted by the academic may be 'world-leading,' if the client cannot integrate, for example, new production technology with its quality control, materials sourcing, finance systems or operator skills levels without significant investment across the business, then this will form a major barrier to adoption. Be sensitive to the client by not being overly critical of their legacy technologies – they may have served the client perfectly well for many years and contributed returns to stakeholders significantly in excess of their operating costs.

- Expensive investment to achieve tenuous speculative long-term benefits may also be a turn-off for commercial clients. Consider their situation. They may not have the certainty of fixed annual budgets that many institutions enjoy. Their existence is uncertain where daily challenges vary between survival, managing growth and investing to gain an advantage over its competitors. A focus on short-term profit will mark your client out as a shrewd manager of the client's cashflow. Be sensitive to this challenge by offering incremental improvements if large sums are not available for radical change. You may also consider flexible payment terms and non-financial options.
At all times (for your own benefit as well as that of the client) you should be aware of the benefits – short, medium and long-term – that could be enjoyed by the client's engagement with you. This will help the client through their moments of doubt and keep you focused on the purpose of your work.

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The academic

You face a heavy workload. In addition to teaching, tutorials, research, supervision of colleagues, recruitment, assessment, reporting, ad hoc requests, short projects, new course development, promotional activity, budget management and a range of committees you are now seeking to expand your knowledge exchange activities. This workload does not often fit well into the standard 35 or 37 hour full-time week. Very few successful professionals in any field are 'clock watchers'. They often seek new opportunities to invest in their development, enhancing their experience and expertise. We chose this career because it interests and stimulates us. It's difficult to give up teaching a course we love, or to hand over a research project that we have been with since the early days. Abandoning committee duties may appeal as a short-term relief but will often take you away from influencing the direction and pace of your field of interest. To win extra breathing space to undertake knowledge exchange activity we must work smarter, not harder. Knowledge Exchange practices integrate well with all of the activities listed above, as follows:

Academic activity	Contribution from knowledge exchange work
Teaching and assessment	Current case studies, contemporary issues, more effective and relevant pedagogies
Research	Insight into industry challenges, new solutions to evaluate.
Supervision of colleagues, budget management, reporting	Learn new methods of work (knowledge exchange should be a two-way activity)
Ad hoc requests and short projects	Grasping unexpected opportunities or learning to say "no" when appropriate and with good reason
New course development, promotional activity, recruitment	Relevant knowledge delivered in a timely and effective manner to an eager audience
Committees	Guide the agenda from an informed position

Figure 39: Contributions from knowledge exchange to academic practice

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Have you noticed that at no point has money been mentioned as a justification for knowledge exchange activity? As with any business, money it is important to pay the bills. However, an obsessive focus on money alone is unhealthy for the business as it forces us to exploit our clients and fail to invest. These are two sure-fire ways to bring any venture to a quick and inglorious end.

Client relationships (especially the mutually enriching ones) should be long-lasting and ever-changing affairs. If you are being asked by your client to keep returning to fix the same problem, either you've missed the root of the problem, are failing to communicate effectively or are working with a client who doesn't really want to fix it. This is frustrating and should be terminated as soon as is decent. It is tempting to see a client engagement as just another project (as you may view a term's teaching or a research paper – both having a defined beginning, middle and end). This frame of mind can limit opportunities and alienate the client from treating you as a business partner, rather than just another supplier. Focus on current challenges, but also keep your mind open to future opportunities.

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The institution

As the academic has many competing priorities, so does the institution. On a regular basis, your executive team will face challenges as diverse as recruitment targets (either missed or exceeded), losses of key personnel, funding shortages, adverse publicity, Government policy changes and complaints from disgruntled members of the local community. This makes prioritisation of any single activity a self-imposed limitation, whereas leaders need to be mindful of all and any factors affecting the institution. As you can understand, this makes it a challenge to retain a clear and unfettered focus on the knowledge exchange agenda. You will often hear knowledge exchange described as a 'third mission'. This belies the current institutional thinking of it being a work stream in addition to teaching and research, whereas it is really an activity integral to the traditional mission of universities.

Institutions will need a convincing argument to invest funds in knowledge exchange activity beyond those granted by HEFCE for the express purpose of developing such activity. These funds are supplied in England as part of the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) and are designed to stimulate – not sustain – KE activity. Often, external funding will need to be sought from business partners who see the commercial potential of the IP to provide a return greater than the resources invested.

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Once institutions are aware of the value of their intellectual property, there may be a tendency towards over-protectiveness of its knowledge resources. Such a stifling approach was identified by Lambert (2003) as being a key barrier to the transfer of knowledge to business and the community. Measures can be taken, such as the use of confidentiality agreements, to protect both parties where there is no existing legal relationship to protect each party's IP interests. When it comes to apportioning a share of the net income from the commercialisation, a reasonable assessment should be made, based on the value of the investment made by each of the parties. When valuing IP, which has no intrinsic value, parties should assess its commercial value and share the benefits accordingly. IP cannot achieve its true earning potential without the support of finance, marketing and operational expertise.

they will have a series of expectations based on their previous commercial experience

The Higher Education sector does not currently have a strong reputation for customer service. The reasons for this are easy to address. Imagine you are dining with friends in a nice restaurant. When the bill comes at the end of the meal, you are more likely to tip if your expectations have been exceeded: for example helping with an unusual request or getting additional seating at short notice. A tip may not be so forthcoming if your expectations have not been met, as it is reasonable to expect that showing a diner to their seat, taking their order, delivering the food followed by the bill is exactly what you would expect to happen at a restaurant and may not represent excellent customer service. When dealing with a commercial client, they will have a series of expectations based on their previous commercial experience and you need to be aware of what they are. Typically, expectations centre on cost, quality and time, all of which can be measured and committed to in order to agree reasonable expectations with the client that can be exceeded or jettisoned.

- **Cost –** if your costs are higher than those of a competitor, your quality of work and service must be at the appropriately high level. Clients may pay a premium for high quality product and service.

- **Quality –** this can be measured against standard objective parameters agreed with the client, typically centring on reliability and longevity.

- **Time –** this can refer to the responsiveness to enquiries through to the anticipated completion date. Don't be tempted to over-promise at this point, for example by promising to complete a piece of work in two weeks that you well know will take four weeks to be done to a reasonable standard, even if a client offers you a premium for rapid completion. All you are doing here is allowing the client to force you to let them down as at some point, the work will have to be delivered on time to an inferior quality or late, which may have costly consequences for the client. So, if you think a quotation will take five days to pull together, tell the client it will take seven and when you deliver either on time or ahead of schedule you will have demonstrated professional service. One last point on speed: commercial clients appreciate responsiveness but this can sometimes just mean timely communication, so to get that relationship off to a happy start, you need to communicate reasonable expectations to the client that you know you can exceed.

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Common project delivery issues

Responsible, Accountable, Consult, Inform
For the sake of illustration, imagine that your institution has been asked by a client to deliver a one-day training course in-house at your premises. The process of organising this day involves a series of tasks undertaken by a range of personnel. These roles can be broken down into four main categories:

> **R = responsible.** The person who actually does the task
> **A= accountable.** The person who ensures the task is per formed appropriately
> **C= consult.** The person who should be consulted before an action is taken
> **I= inform.** The person who should be informed once a task has been completed

See Figure 40 for how this allocation of roles works in our fictional scenario.

Task	Client	Academic Team	Trainer	Institution Services*	Delegates
Learning outcomes	R/C	A/R	C/I	I	I
Trainer and Content		A/R	C		
Venue and date	C/I	A	C/I	R	I
Quote and purchase order	A/R	R		C/I	
Recruitment	A/R		I	I	C
Evaluation	A	R	R	I	C
Invoicing and payment	R	A/R	I	C/I	
TOTAL WORKLOAD	R=4/A=4	R=5/A=4	R=1/A=0	R=1/A=0	R=0/A=0
*Includes: Room Booking, Catering, ICT, Finance, Security, Personnel					

Figure 40: RACI chart

Whilst all four roles – Responsible, Accountable, Consult, Inform – are essential for successful completion of the task, the Responsible and Accountable parties carry the greatest burden in terms of workload. Figure 40 demonstrates that the Client and the Academic Team will need to subdivide or reallocate tasks to avoid a 'bottleneck' situation to the smooth execution of the project.

Mission creep (change of focus)

As projects develop, some preconceptions are proved to be incorrect and emergent opportunities are identified. Being sensitive to a changing situation requires flexibility and effective communication. Whilst you should not unreasonably resist a client's wish to change the scope, objectives or activities of a work in progress, you should be diligent not to redesign an unworkable and poorly-resourced project 'on the fly'. Instead, revisit the original agreement and renegotiate as appropriate.

Key staff changes

People move on. These changes will affect the leadership and impetus of the project. Take time to get the new people up to speed, recalibrating the project if necessary to take account of the change in resourcing. For longer-term projects, in the event of a change of responsibility amongst senior staff, the future of the project might be put in question. There is always a possibility that projects may be cut – especially in the current economic climate – but if a project contributes more than it has cost and has a significant strategic importance, funding support could be increased in order to achieve returns more quickly or on a much larger scale.

Communication

The key reason for a failure of consulting projects is the failure of the client to communicate accurate information or decisions, in a timely manner. A good rapport and a close relationship with the client will go some way to overcome this.

Intellectual Property

- Background/foreground – agreeing at an early stage who owns what

- Exploitation rights – whilst the client might own the IP, you could negotiate a permanent, free and exclusive licence to use it for teaching and research purposes

- Revenue share – this may be some compensation for a low rate of upfront payment

- Publication/teaching versus prior disclosure/commercial confidentiality – it is possible to do both. This can only be achieved by protecting the IP first (as any prior disclosure will jeopardise protection) and publish later.

Delivery resources planning

As your project goes from approval into implementation, resources need to be moved into place to take effect. These resources include:

- **Budget –** this will include staff time planning for the project and if necessary, a capital and consumables (eg travel, catering) budget

- **Resources –** this applies to specialist equipment and facilities required for the project, and the means of transporting them if required

- **Winning champions and supporters –** any activity will have multiple stakeholders (see Figure 27) who will influence the success of the project. Good relationships will help tackle any unexpected barriers that arise.

Managing expectations

The key principles in the effective management of expectations are to establish clear objectives to be delivered via a plan of action, monitoring your progress as you go and adapting as necessary to achieve the goals of your client. Objective-setting can use the SMART framework:

- **Specific -** what you want to achieve (eg building a consultancy client base)

- **Measurable –** how you will measure whether you are meeting the objectives or not (eg five clients generating an income of £10,000)

- **Achievable –** do you have the necessary resources (staff and finances) to achieve it?

- **Realistic –** has this been done before under similar cir cumstances? If we were to consider an alternative measure of 50 clients generating an income of £100,000, then this may seem less realistic. Is £10,000 over a 12-month period realistic or does the institution need longer?

- **Timescaled –** when do you want to achieve the set objectives? In our example, you have set yourself a period of 12 months to achieve the £10,000 income target.

Objective types:

- **Turnover –** total amount of income (net of VAT) before costs are removed

- **Profit –** what is left from the turnover after costs have been removed

- **Employees –** how big do you want your team to be?

- **Customers –** how many customers do you want of a certain description?

- **Orders –** this will help you plan operational efficiency (50 orders of £200 may be more troublesome than five orders of £2,000 each), depending on how you are organised

- **Products –** to achieve your goal, will you be providing one product, such as consulting, or a range of products such as consulting, training and contract research? A range of products reduces trading risk but may lead to a loss of focus.

Reporting

Progress monitoring can be communicated and tracked using a Flash Report (Figure 41).

Accomplishments			
❖ Feasibility review completed identified £1m potential savings ❖ Core team stabilised	❖ Assessment of target segment identifies £5m unmet demand		

Key Issues	Next Steps: What	Who	When
❖ IWIK current training gaps	❖ Identify training needs	RL	18.7
❖ IWIK detailed customer product needs	❖ Conduct interviews	HS	15.7
❖ IWIK our 5 year objectives	❖ Identify strategic objectives	DS	6.7
❖ H2 draw conclusions from current dataset	❖ Analyse statistics	AB	20.7
❖ H2 get staff on-board with change programme	❖ Conduct workshop	SS	1.8
❖ IWIK the key emerging niches	❖ Industry research	WM	30.8
❖ IWIK our promotional effectiveness	❖ Audit marketing activities	RL	15.8
❖ H2 get approval for phase II of the project	❖ Reporting and Consultation	RL	1.9

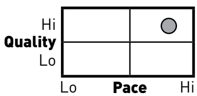
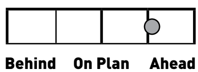
Lessons Learned/Best Practices	Quality v. Pace Balance	Progress v. Plan
❖ John Smith from Washington Widgets is a guru in the flange industry ❖ Willie Mitchell (Marketing) recently completed an MBA specialising in change management		

Figure 41: Flash report

Designed as a one-page update, the Flash Report format is both dynamic and concise. Its key components are:

- **Accomplishments –** starting off with recognition of how far the project has progressed puts the client in a positive frame of mind to tackle the challenges ahead.

- **Key issues –** typically you will either need to know some thing or get something done. Working to the principle that to get a good answer you need to ask a good question, the Flash Report employs action-based statements.
For example "I wish I knew . . ." become "IWIK" for short and "How to . . ." becomes "H2". Phrasing questions in this manner makes clear the required next steps.

- **Next steps –** these give transparency to the client about what is happening

  • What will be done

  • Who will do it

  • When it will be done

- **Lessons learned/best practice –** projects often lose knowledge through closure and staff turnover. This simple mechanism helps us to track unexpected knowledge.

- **Quality v. Pace Balance.** Commercial and academic audiences can behave paradoxically. It is a generalisation that academic colleagues are trained to achieve a high level of quality in their processes.
This rigour takes time. On the other hand, commercial audiences operate within windows of opportunity dictated by consumer tastes, competition and resource availability. These factors may force a more dynamic approach where time is of the essence, possibly with trade-offs in relation to quality.

- **Progress v. Plan** – this simple analysis of where we are, against where we said we would be, brings three possible alternatives:

  - Behind plan – how can we speed this up to get back on track? Do we need to drop some activity and put more resource into priority activities? How did we get into this situation (avoiding a 'witch hunt' wherever necessary, instead looking for 'lessons learned')

  - On plan – good news. Could we be doing better or would this risk the quality of outcomes?

  - Ahead of plan – even better news. If this remains the case, are we are within budget? Can we complete this project ahead of schedule, thus saving money Otherwise, can we do other things with the resources available, achieving greater benefits?

Risk and contingency planning

It is easy to get carried away by the positive potential of a client project. Risk and Contingency Planning asks us to consider what might happen if something goes wrong. This is not us confessing that we believe the project will fail. It says that we are realists who accept that things occasionally can go wrong. By recognising these events, we can plan to avoid them or mitigate their effects should they occur. For example, what would be the implications to your own organisation if any of the following events took place?

- A major supplier went out of business or supplied faulty products to you
- A large customer went bankrupt owing you a substantial sum
- Investors decided to withdraw promised funding
- Employees defraud the organisation
- The organisation is sued for infringing a patent
- Spending spirals out of control and the organisation runs out of funding
- A senior employee leaves to go to a competing organisation

Any of these events could be catastrophic for a small organisation. For a larger one, it will be expensive and time-consuming to rectify, leaving behind damage to the organisation's reputation and future prospects. Planning to mitigate these risks considers the following factors:

- **Event -** describe the specific event
- **Probability -** how certain are you that it will happen?
- **Effect -** what is the implication on the unit?
- **Impact -** what is the impact upon the business?
- **Timing -** when might it happen?
- **Contingency –** what will we do about minimising the risk?

Figures 42 and 43 provide worked examples of two scenarios relevant to our work. Firstly, we consider what might happen and how we could respond in the event of the failure of a new CPD programme. Secondly, we consider a failed consultancy project.

Scenario	CPD
Event	New programme is very slow to recruit
Probability	Medium (first time in the market; team with excellent skills)
Effect	Very little spent on development. Old courses re-packaged.
Impact	Setback for commercial development of HEI. Fragile commercial confidence is damaged. Sceptical academics protesting over waste of resources. Expensive marketing campaign and recruitment of HPLs cost £25,000.
Timing	3 months
Contingency	• Refocus in smaller market (offering in-house courses) • Revisit expectations (market adoption) • Consider partnership with existing provider (non-complete) • Begin by offering short courses

Figure 42: Risk analysis - CPD

Scenario	Consultancy
Event	Advice given is proven to be faulty
Probability	High (research academic with little industry experience)
Effect	First KTP for School
Impact	Trial batch of 3,000 products manufactured at cost of £65,000 to company. Fault discovered by customer's customer. Emergency re-source cost £10,000
Timing	Last week
Contingency	• PVC to visit Chief Executive • Collaborative assessment of processes used • Insurance/contractual cover • Supervision of novice knowledge transfer practitioners

Figure 43: Risk analysis - consultancy

It is clear from this that we cannot guarantee arrival in any client project. We can only plan for its delivery and manage the process. You may choose to share your risk analysis with your client. There are two schools of thought as to the wisdom of this. On one hand, it might raise concerns with the client that you are seeking to make excuses before the project has even begun. On the other, the client will appreciate your thoroughness and professionalism in bringing the project together. Your honesty will help to build an even stronger bond.