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VIVIENNE CORCORAN:

Don't feel that you have to write down everything I say, otherwise you will get RSI.

The only people who can grow your organisation are you and those you work with, so it is something you have to work into your working day, week and year. Services have a particular challenge because they are intangible and nobody can see them. You can't touch what it is you do, you can't see it. It really demands trust, particularly in the disability, caring sector and for not-for-profits.

There is an enormous amount of trust that you will do what you said you are going to do and that you will do what you said you will do with the money. So trust is a big issue.

Services also include people. If I go out and buy a washing machine, it is relatively easy to see what's on the box and I can test drive the washing machine, someone can show me how it works. It's pretty simple. Services are not so easy, because delivered services are different. They are delivered by people, so every service is different at both ends - the person delivering the service is different each time and the person receiving it is also different each time.

Services are all about relationships and reputation. There is nothing more valuable than your reputation and what it is you do with that. That's why the people who deliver your service are important and it's why they are a critical part of what you do and your brand.

It is also about the people you deliver to. We had people with polio, acquired brain injury, people with a range of brain stem injuries. What they needed and wanted was very different. It was about finding out, what do we do and who do we do it for? THE people you provide the service become as much a part of defining who you are and how people see you as the service you deliver itself.

So what does the client need?

We start by setting goals. You need goals attached to your vision and plan. A vision is wonderful to have, but at the end of the day it won't fit in and get the budget sorted. You have to work towards goals. You need agreed values within the organisation so that everyone involved in delivering the service really lives and breathes those values.

In the corporate world, values seem to be lip service. They are not really important, I don't feel. And the reason for that is, most of the time people are there for the money and they are prepared to do what they are being paid to do. In our sector we have people who are really passionate about what they do and it is important that we harness that passion. That we bring them along with us and make sure that everyone has the same values. That the services delivered the way we want it to be delivered, when we want it delivered.

We need to create action plans and follow up on them, making sure that they go into the business plan. The business plan - I could run a whole session on that, but we don't have time today - but it should only be a couple of pages long. If you have paid a consultant to give you one the size of the dictionary, pay someone else to cut it down to a size that is manageable. A couple of pages is usually all that we can work with.

If your business plan is not something that everyone in your organisation can roughly rattle off in a couple of sentences, it's too complicated. The business plan is core and contains those values. It is fundamental. It is useful not only in the delivery of the service but also reporting the services to the board and to the government.

Now we need to look at the client. We need to know our clients. That sounds like a truism. Everyone in

this room thinks they know their clients backwards. Look at what they need, where they live, their funding - all of those things. These are the criteria you need to get your head around. In each organisation you might have different ones.

It is important to say, how do we define our clients? How can we put a circle around them and say, this is what we do and who we do it for? A key part of marketing is making it easy for people to understand what you do. A lot of the marketing you do is to people who are not disabled, who are not carers, who are not involved in your sector. It's important that they find it easy to get their head around to whom you provide your services.

The other reason you need to understand this is that you need to get a handle on what it is that affects their decision-making. All these things and more affect their decision-making. Increasingly clients are making their own decisions about where their services will come from. They are choosing you over another organisation, deciding that maybe they will go somewhere else. It's important you know what's affecting that decision-making.

Disability is only part of a client's life. We are not dealing with a disabled person, we are dealing with a person who has challenges. They might be a small or huge range. Everybody is different.

Just as important as their disability, if they have one, is their opinions.

We spent a long time working with a guy, all he wanted to do was learn to swim. It was very important to him. He was going to spend his money with an organisation that would let him swim. We could have delivered the best service on the planet. If we didn't let him swim, it wasn't going to happen. He would take his funding elsewhere. It was important to know the whole person, the whole client. And what their families need. The family didn't want him to swim - how do we deal with that? They thought it was a dumb idea.

We had to make decisions about who the client was and wasn't. We had to help him manage his preferences and manage those needs of his family, so they could get the management through. They also have nonphysical needs. It's important that they are considered. It's very easy just to look at the physical aspects and say that we have it managed.

Clients are not the only stakeholders. We have carers, guardians, staff, the government - all the people you see them. Their attitudes towards you and the service you provide is a critical part of your marketing. Stakeholders might sound like a corporate word, but I think in the disability sector you have more stakeholders that have a larger sway over your market and in any other. It's important we get our heads around all these people and understand what they want, what they need and their influence on the market and what their issues are.

What is the client considering when they make a decision? What do we need to put in the marketing mix? They are looking at convenience, obviously. It's important that the service is easy for them. So I can find somewhere for Robert to swim, but it's important that we find somewhere close by, that he can get to and he is comfortable with. He can spend time checking it out before he takes the spectacular leap of getting in the pool. So those things are important.

We know some other stakeholders. What do we do now? Now we really need to know the market. We need to know who our competitors are. Competition is a new word in the disability sector. Every client can choose to take their money and their funding elsewhere. A family can decide that they will go elsewhere.

There are many organisations who have been dealing with competition for a long time. Particularly when an organisation is new, what is the competition? Who are they? What are they offering? What are the Alternatives? As much as we think we have a burning need to provide this service. Not every client will

want what it is you have to offer. How do we make that work?

There is a whole range of people we need to work with.

'Business development'... Another thorny phrase. If you are looking to market and growing organisation, you are in business development. Developing organisation is what it is all about. There are some ways of doing it that are very similar regardless of whether you are not-for-profit or you are for profit, whether it is disability services or anything. We need to know where the clients come from. How are the clients coming to your service? How did they hear about you? Who recommended them? How did they come here in the first place?

It is very easy once a client is in and you have the funding to take them for granted. How did they hear about us? How did they make the choice between us and the competition? Knowing that is really valuable. There is almost nothing that you will do that is more valuable than finding out where your clients come from and recording that somewhere. You need to know how they came to you.

We really need to make sure that every client knows everything we do. Good service delivered to a client is the best recommendation. They will then recommend you on. This is really important. There might be a whole raft of services but a client to take up with you that they are not taking up. If a client comes in only using one service from you, what else could provide a client with? What else could we help them with? Packaging it up on them and be much more efficient. Think about how that could work.

You need to make sure that every client knows everything you do. Not just a service they are using for you at the moment. The full range of services. Just that everybody else, they have friends and networks. It is really important that the service you provide them they can tell their friends about. Also that they know all the things that you do so that they can be referrers for you.

Develop a networking plan. Know where the clients came from. Was there a particular therapist? Was there a particular service? Was there a particular referral service? Who recommended us? Once you know that, then you know who your referral base is. You know who your network is. You know who the people are who are bringing the clients to you. That is really important.

If you find they are coming from a particular government agency, then it is important that you feed it back to the agency. They need to see and get feedback. Every year I make clients do basic things like seeing how many came from the Yellow Pages, flyers or service sheets. Otherwise we are paying for advertising and we don't know what is happening with it. It is really important that we get the most bang for our buck. We get the most out of our income and our promotional costs.

By developing a networking plan it is about saying, in this last year 10% of our clients came from this agency, 5% were referred by that other service, 35% came from somewhere. That way you will have a map. It doesn't have to be considered accurate. The more accurate you can get it the better. That is as simple as recording where the client came from. How did they come to you? What was the key issue that helps them make their decision? Which other organisations were involved? Then you can work out who we should be talking to and why.

What is it that you sell? What is it that you provide? It is more than whatever it is that you say you do. It is also about trust and freedom and flexibility. None of us would work in the service if we didn't feel that our clients is would be better for having used our services. Apart from the physical service, what else does a client get? It is those things that affect our opinion and if they stay.

It may be that your service is similar to another. How do you do it? How they feel about it? Really important things. Clients and analyse and balance what they want and need. What they can access and what they can afford. It is a really sophisticated decision and it surely topic at it. It is important that we

make it as easy as possible.

Who is involved in a service? There are some of you are designing the service, some delivering and some selling. Who are all the people that the client comes to contact with? Are the people who are providing the service the best people to be defined people of your organisation? You can have all the glossy brochures you like and the best website on the planet, if the people who deliver the service to the client are not really embodying the service you deliver and living the values, then it is wasted. They are the most important part of your service. Those are the need to be the best people possible I know as much as possible. They will be major marketing champions. They are your sales force.

It is important that they are on top of everything they do and that they really are living the values. They are doing all the things you want your organisation to be known for. One bad situation can seriously impact your business. It is putting in processes to manage consistency and quality of the services being delivered by the people who provide it. You really need to get their commitment.

A lot of people work in the system because they believe in it. They believe in doing good and doing the right thing. That is fantastic. It is really important when they work for you that they are doing that your way. They are delivering your service. They are not is helping to make themselves feel good, they are delivering your service the best way possible. Make sure that the clients know everything that it is that you do. That is really important. Make sure you get that right.

Your position in the market? Where do you sit? What does your organisation stand for? What are you paid for? It is important to get the balance. Very obvious but it is important that we make sure that we know what it is we do and who we do it for. What is involved in your brain? Position yourself against the competition. Is it on property, price, location or the type of client? All of these things and how you sell it a really important part of the you are in the market.

What is the cost to deliver? What is the cost to sell? In some alternatives it will be doing nothing. How is it affected by your positioning? Are you providing the same service to everybody or just a niche service? That will affect what you do and how much it cost. How much will be affected by volume? To more people make it easier for you not? It will depend on the kind of service you provide. What is your brand? It is what you become known for. It has a lot to do with your physical location and the people who work for you. All of this impact your business as well. Those little things are really important. You need to develop some meaningful messages.

Promotion - who wants the service and why do people want the service? What benefit does it give them? Who influences that decision, and how do people who we sell it to get their information? Verbally, in writing, do they have to have it explained to them? How do they access information? Those things are important.

You have so many people to communicate to in different ways, often the cost of promotion can be extortionate.

We have looked outside the organisation, we have looked at the stakeholders, networks, clients. Now we need to look inside.

A client relationship management system is very good. Don't spend too much on it. What do you need to say to them, and how often? Of your clients, you need to know who they are and where they came from - what we covered before.

You need to make sure you are communicating to your clients yesterday, today and tomorrow.

Developing presentation skills - you will be dancing for your money, unfortunately. You will be pitching to

people all the time in order to get funding. It's important to know what to do.

Do some gap analysis, and make sure that you work out how to close the gap.

Marketing tools - there is a string of them and I could go on forever. Try not to do everything at once, otherwise you will find yourself bogged down in a website and you will never recover. Make sure you have a list of all the things you need to do in order to sell. Make sure you communicate effectively as well. There has to be good client-stakeholder communication, and make sure that what you are saying is what people understand. And make sure your staff are all saying the same things. Getting staff in regularly and getting feedback from them is really important, so you can keep strengthening those messages.

When in doubt, communicate. Clients really complain about being communicated with too much. Tell them once, twice, and when they complain about being told too many times, then stop.

So it's simple. Make a plan, set goals, look at your stakeholder relationships, work out who you want to work for.

Look in the mirror - is this what you want to be doing? Is this what the organisation set up to do? Look at your marketing tools and set out to do what you want to do, on purpose.

(Applause)

VIVIENNE CORCORAN:

We have 5 minutes for high-speed questions.

QUESTION FROM FLOOR:

(inaudible)

VIVIENNE CORCORAN:

I can summarise that. The lady asked - in a situation where you don't want to be defined by the disability of the people you work for, but the stakeholders and people who are clients - it's important for them to understand the services you provide. How do you balance those things?

It's challenging. I think the important thing is, while in many instances in the changing marketplace you may be able to take the services you provide for, for example, paraplegic. You may be able to provide that service to a wide range of people who are not necessarily paraplegics. That may be part of your marketing to clients and people who are not paraplegics, but it's a question of how to get the money and what you want to be known for.

We had a paraquad, for example. Even though people have a range of disabilities, at the end of the day their specialisation was working with people who were paraplegics or quadriplegics. They have now gone on to Independent Australia and they are shifting their vision. That helps to understand that anyone in a wheelchair was up for grabs - that sounds crude, but it was easier for the government to get their head around.

I think it's about having two messages. It's about making sure that stakeholders see clear things and that clients understand we are more flexible than that. It's a question of, in that sense, I would make sure that if a website and external communications make it clear that we do that, but when people talk to potential clients they say that we work with a range of people, so don't be hung up with that issue. It is a difficult balancing act.

You have to make sure that you have spent the majority of funding delivering services to the people the funding was for. So it's a challenge. It's about channelling your communications based on the market.

Any other questions?

Presentation will be available on the website, so Miriam will load on the website and you will be able to get it from there.

Yes?

The question - are there other resources that would help apart from my presentation? I would say there are plenty of things. There is a lot of stuff available on the Web. When you look for a business plan, for example, you will find that they can get very complicated. A lot of the templates are horrific, 50 pages long. Keep looking until you find one that is four five pages long. I have a template I could give to Miriam as well. I have a book, but I'm not here to spruik that.

There are some good resources on websites.

What has been the one message that has won them over to make them realise that this is what they need to look at?

VIVIENNE CORCORAN:

Asking clients what they think and why they came is one of the most valuable things. Interviewing client is one of the most I think I have ever done. It is really time consuming. To get from the client in their own words has been really important. You might deliver day services and the client who receives a day services, when you asked them what service they get, they talk about freedom, funding and a bigger horizon. They use quite different language because they are not buying that way. They are looking for something bigger in their life. It is really important to talk to clients and get in their words what it is that makes a real difference. It really helps with staff and providers. It helps to put it in perspective.

It is very easy to get bogged down in jargon and disability-speak. I do a lot of that at scope. I talk to them about why they come, stay and choose to spend their money here. That put a rocket to the organisation. If you only have time to do one thing in the next six months, interview clients. Those words will be much better than a marketing person can come up with. You are not marketing to me, you are marketing to the client. It is important to know who they are and what they think. Right down the back.

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Just with regard to doing consultations, is it better to have someone independent do it or is it better to have some within the organisation to it with regards to her on the people they?

VIVIENNE CORCORAN:

That is a good question. Sometimes it is affected by cost in terms of what it will cost you and what you can afford. If you can find some good management consultants who are prepared to volunteer their time, I think independent is better. Because it is a people delivered service being able to say what they think is really critical. That said, in most instances I have had to have planners with me while I have done it. I haven't found disability clients to be shy. I think I got the truth. I probably would have got the truth if I was an internal person as well. I don't know whether I am one or the other. It is important that the person asking the questions just ask the questions and that's all.

If you have got somebody outside the organisation who is prepared to donate you some time, that is

good. They just need to ask. It is not about what I think what they think. If you have got good listeners, they are the right people. Physical therapists are often great. I would think there would be some people who would be prepared to volunteer and do that work. I am sure they would love to do it.

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Thank you for that robust presentation. Can we put our hands together for Vivienne?

(Applause)

– END OF TRANSCRIPT.