

Concurrent Session E
Tuesday 1 September
2.25pm – 3.15pm

TEMG
Leading
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30 Aug – 2 Sep 2015
Novotel North Beach Wollongong



Session 5

Getting to the Promised Land: ACU's Leadership Model for Achieving Service Excellence

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Bill McKendry joined Australian Catholic University in September 2013 and is currently the national manager of the Service Matters Improvement Team. Prior to working in the higher education sector, Bill had extensive project management and policy experience in various management roles in the Victorian public sector. This primarily involved improving government services across a range of areas including crime prevention, road safety and the corrections system. He holds an MBA, Post Graduate Diploma in Criminology, BA and a Graduate Diploma of Secondary Education.

Nicole Van de Gard joined Australian Catholic University in April 2014 and is a business analyst in the Service Matters Improvement Team. Nicole started her professional life as a teacher before completing a law degree and working as a lawyer in the NSW public sector. She then embarked on a legal publishing career for 10 years, writing publications for lawyers. Nicole holds an Honours degree in Education, a Bachelor of Laws and a Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice. She is currently studying her Master of Education degree.

Leaders must be close enough to relate to others, but far enough ahead to motivate them – John Maxwell

In 2014, Australian Catholic University (ACU) implemented a new service strategy in response to significant growth – the Service Matters Framework – to ensure service delivery is fit for purpose and aligned with our goal to achieve service excellence. This presentation will focus on one component of the strategy – the Service Lead role – and its significance in leading service delivery efforts within an increasingly competitive local and global environment.

ACU's service strategy recognises that goodwill alone is not enough to deliver excellent service – universities need solid systems and processes as well as the active involvement of everyone to suggest service improvements and help to implement them. Perhaps most importantly, staff need strong leadership and clear roles and responsibilities to be guided to excellent service delivery. The "Service Lead" role is a new concept at ACU and a critical component of the Service Matters Framework. It refers to the executive who has the mandate (i.e. the delegated authority from the Senior Executive Group) to define a category of professional service at ACU and to monitor its delivery through a collaborative process involving Faculties/Institutes, Directorates and Campuses. While many managers previously had input into how a service at ACU was delivered, the Service Lead role formalises the best practice approach that a designated person is ultimately accountable for the delivery of a service.

The implementation of the Service Lead role has not been without its challenges and this presentation will provide an overview of ACU's experience of implementing this critical role and the leadership lessons that it can share from this experience: the importance of providing Service Leads with a roadmap/process that outlines steps to understanding the scope of their responsibility; the value of collaborating with all service stakeholders to address cross-functional issues; and the need for the right tools and techniques to inform evidence-based service delivery decisions, including development of service standards. Importantly, ACU's experience highlights the challenge of

implementing a role that has a wide national ambit across multiple campuses and takes a “global” view of service improvement while still responding appropriately to local issues and pressures. There have also been significant success stories and this presentation will profile case studies that highlight the importance of the role: Service Leads who feel empowered to make service delivery decisions and associated resourcing and budget decisions (even when not all staff responsible for delivering a service report to them); the value of identifying service improvement opportunities using data and staff feedback; and the cultural change it fosters in all staff to develop a customer service mentality to more effectively support teaching and research efforts.

The Service Lead role has been applied broadly across ACU – from Facilities Management to Finance and Student and Academic Services – so anyone who has an interest in fostering and facilitating a service culture will benefit from this presentation.