

Session 7

WHAT CAN CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT THEORY TEACH US ABOUT STUDENT ADMINISTRATION? A CASE STUDY OF AUTOMATING STANDARD PROCESSES.

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Core to the theory of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is the dual creation of value, both for the organisation and the customer. As staff are increasingly called upon to improve processes and at the same time improve the student experience, this central precept has direct relevance for administrative areas working closely with students. In this context, CRM and in particular the enabling software, can be extremely beneficial. However it is important to remember that CRM is a strategy that pulls together technology, processes and people, and while technology and processes are critical, it is individual employees that foster a university's relationship with students. This paper presents recent work by the Faculty of Professions at the University of Adelaide. It examines an initial effort to automate standard processes. Although the work was a technological success, it neglected the need to engage with frontline staff, and subsequently created resistance to change.

The Faculty identified a shift in the way students wished to access services and information and decided to provide alternatives to traditional face to face channels. To accomplish this, the Faculty purchased software from RightNow and created a new website called "ASKthePROF" that allowed for web-based student self-service. Following this initial work attention was turned to using the software to improve standard processes by automating previously manual tasks. Within the Faculty, applications for supplementary exams constituted the highest number of forms processed. Through firsthand experience, it was estimated approximately 80% of all applications were approved on medical grounds, when a doctor confirmed the student was;

- ill the day of the exam, and
- the illness severely impacted their performance.

Once implemented 83% of all applications were automatically approved and the student notified. This demonstrated the potential for significant gains in efficiency when compared to individual paper based processing. At first glance it appeared that dual value had been created. There were improved response times for students and a decrease in manual processing for the Faculty. However, for the remaining 17% of applications, the automated process created a range of new complications. Some of the new complications were technical and easily resolved. However, the bulk of unforeseen issues arose from a failure to clearly communicate with staff. The drive to automate standard processes had led us to see the issue as a technological problem. We constructed the issue as students interacting with an automated system and forgot that behind the computer screen, were staff who needed to understand the purpose for change.

Presenters Biography

Nicole Waker has worked in the Faculty of Professions at University of Adelaide since 2009, where she leads a small team of staff dedicated to implementing RightNow. Her qualifications in computer science and previous experience private sector with databases have greatly assisted the Faculty to optimise the potential of the CRM software. Her skills and knowledge have been recognised by the University and she has recently been seconded to manage the roll-out of RightNow to the new Learning Hub.

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