

How should Information Specialists obtain client feedback to inform service improvement? Developing a new pilot method



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Problem

The Information Specialist (IS) team has collected feedback from our literature search service clients via online surveys since 2012. Feedback is collected for our 2 most common styles of search:

- 1) short scoping searches (0.5-1 days)
- 2) HTA/systematic review-style searches (several days)

Our feedback revealed that clients were grateful for the service BUT did not provide useful information (constructive criticism) to help improve services.



What we did

We aimed to identify and pilot methods to acquire more meaningful feedback data to inform service development by:

- **Literature search** for existing methods used by IS or embedded LIS professionals
- **LIS-Medical** request for examples
- **Expert advice** from a researcher of feedback and service improvement (SW)
- **Semi-structured interviews** with 6 recent clients to explore their views of giving feedback for IS services

What we found

Expert advice: SW examined our feedback forms. To improve, he suggested we increase the satisfaction scales from 5 to 10 points and rephrase our open questions to elicit more detailed responses.

What our clients thought: the questions in our original forms were too general to give meaningful feedback:



“If the questions are very standard then actually they are not explicitly related to the project that you went through”

Clients preferred to provide feedback for HTA/ systematic review-style searches in person or by telephone:

“I always wondered when I got sent these... I said if there was a problem I would have said so...I would always be willing to sit down and have a conversation like this for half an hour”



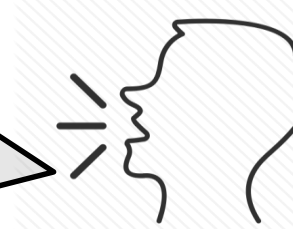
Some clients felt the original feedback forms did not capture all elements of what was important from the client's point of view:

“I think what people get as an outcome in terms of the intervention with you will be really, really different. For some people it will be purely the difference of the literature search but for me certainly there was a big educational component as well, which if it was just assessing the project wouldn't capture because actually some it was some of the impact that it had on me and my learning as well.”



Clients receiving IS services should be prepared and willing to give feedback:

“If you say part of us providing you this [literature search service] is that we'll be asking you some questions at the end because for a lot of the time the service is absolutely crucial and fundamental to what we do. So people should be prepared to actually give you that feedback.”



Staff working in our department were reluctant to give negative feedback for fear of offending colleagues or potentially risking the chance of future work. Some questioned why we collected feedback and whether literature searching should be considered a 'service', stating they consider IS's to be key partners and collaborators rather than a service to access.

New pilot methods

We decided to pilot 2 new methods for obtaining feedback:

1. **Revised online forms for short scoping searches**
Utilising the improvements suggested by SW.
Due to the high volume of these searches it was not feasible to hold face-to-face/ telephone meetings .
2. **Brief semi-structured, 'wash-up' style meetings to discuss HTA / systematic review searches**
To ensure consistency between IS, using a structured meeting discussion template incorporating questions on the strengths of the service and areas for improvement

Reflections so far

10-point satisfaction scale: based on responses from our pilot online forms (5 to date) the larger range of scores gives greater detail. A score of 7 or 8 is more revealing than their equivalent average score of 4 on a 5-point scale.

Discussions in person/ telephone: discussion meetings (5 to date) have elicited more useful and varied information than the original online survey.

Feedback meeting tips

- An **informal setting** encourages a relaxed atmosphere
- Stress that its **constructive criticism**: to reassure the client that negative feedback is important to help improve the service.
- A **discussion template** prompts you on the aspects you'd like feedback on and to record your notes. It also ensures consistency across the team.

Recommendations

1. Focus feedback methods on gaining meaningful feedback that can be part of a strategic continual improvement process.
2. Meet and discuss HTA/systematic review searches with clients to gain more meaningful feedback.
3. Phrase survey questions to encourage detailed or specific responses