

A study of the evaluation consultant in its natural habitat

CES Ontario Chapter Annual Conference
November 30, 2007



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Agenda

- Early years (“The evaluation consultant as a young pup”)
- Education & career path
- Life as a consultant
- Advice for those new to the field



Early Years

- Personal interests and goals were in line with evaluation as early as high school, but did not know what evaluation was.
- B.A. in psychology (UW):
 - Solid foundation in social science research
- B.Ed. (NU):
 - Learned about the education system
- Early 90's recession:
 - Crappy jobs - MUST go back to school

Discovering Evaluation

- M.Sc. in Applied Social Psychology (MUN):
 - Supportive supervisor (Abe Ross) who was interested in evaluation
 - Course in program evaluation - hurrah!
 - Co-operative program – work term placements
 - Student member of CES
 - Student team evaluated 1998 CES conference, with Burt Perrin as mentor

Establishing a Career in Evaluation

- Consulting business with fellow students:
 - Learned the basics of business ownership
 - Learned about managing projects from start to finish
- Networking via 1998 conference evaluation
 - Obtained work with College of Nurses of Ontario and Peel District School Board
- Continued involvement in CES
 - Board member, committee chair
 - Conferences, workshops



Life as an Independent Consultant

- Established Zorzi & Associates in 2001
 - Getting established is a lot of work – most of it pro bono
 - Exciting to design website, logo, “look” for the company
 - Struggled with isolation and time management
 - Did some high profile work with CES
 - Wrote proposals – came in 2nd a lot
 - Won a few competitive bids
 - But really needed a stronger network to bring in work
 - Met Martha McGuire, did some subcontracts



Life in a Small Consulting Firm

- Joined Cathexis in 2003:
 - Team environment
 - Fast-paced, multiple projects, very demanding
 - Get most of our work through proposals
 - Adv/disadv of being “external”
 - More independent
 - Less flexible timelines & budgets
 - Less familiar with program context & topic area
 - Sometimes seen as more credible/valuable
 - Growing company, everyone wears many hats
 - Very little bureaucracy



Advice for New Evaluators

- Networks are essential
 - Volunteer
 - Meet people through your supervisor
 - Get high profile projects
 - Do information interviews with experienced evaluators
 - Find yourself a good mentor
 - Present at conferences, and attend the social events
 - Subcontract
- Find a workplace & role that is a good "fit" for you
- Don't neglect the soft skills
- Keep learning

Q&A