

Murphy, Nietzsche and the art of managing external evaluations



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Presentation outline

- Context
- Formative Adventures
- Key Learnings
- Questions

Context

External evaluations and DPI

- External consultants or experts will be used strategically to address skill gaps, human resource shortages, and/or requirements for independence.
- External evaluation may be perceived as being more credible.

(DPI Draft Evaluation Framework 2008)

Terminology

- Contractor: to provide goods, works or services which **implement a decision**
- Consultant: to provide expert analysis and advice which **facilitates decision making**

(DPI Accredited Purchasing Unit 2008)

Context

“Well-organised agencies appoint experienced staff as evaluation managers to handle all aspects of the evaluation process, from the development of the brief to the acceptance of the final report.”

(Owen 2006)

Formative Adventures

5 case studies

- Brief description
- Murphy moments
- Nietzsche strengthening insights

Case 1 Pest Management Strategy

<i>Murphy</i>	<i>Nietzsche</i>
Selection criteria not in Request for Proposals	Need clear, published selection criteria
Sub-contractor underperformed	Always check references for any sub-contractors
Unauthorised media release by consultant	Contract conditions can be difficult to enforce

Case 2 Attitude and Behaviour Change Surveys

<i>Murphy</i>	<i>Nietzsche</i>
Unauthorised presentation of baseline data by consultants	Retain control over release of material
Failure to hand over electronic data files for baseline survey	Stipulate data files as deliverable, and receive before final payment

Case 3 Effect of Prosecution

<i>Murphy</i>	<i>Nietzsche</i>
Stipulated SPSS files as deliverable, but received SPSS output files	Always stipulate and check format of data files before final payment

Case 4 Pest Awareness and Behaviour Change

<i>Murphy</i>	<i>Nietzsche</i>
Selected Market Research consultants, not Evaluators	Target Request for Proposals to Evaluation Professionals
All members of consultant team communicating independently	One to one communication essential
“No news must be good news” delusion	Management takes time and attention. Have regular progress meetings
Poor quality of final product	Relationship management more important than contract management

Case 5 Big Science & Technology Initiative

<i>Murphy</i>	<i>Nietzsche</i>
Request for Tender package: many documents with tight approval windows and cascading dates	Early familiarisation with critical dates, approval windows, and forewarn for high level sign off
High value contracts attract big legal interest	Leave legal matters to the experts
Temptation to 'squeeze' more outputs from consultants	Focus on outcomes, not outputs
The later the Steering Group becomes involved, the more diverse their expectations	Involve Steering Group early, preferably when developing evaluation project brief

Key Learnings

- Clear selection criteria and process
- When negotiating focus on outcomes
- Early involvement of Steering Group
- Management takes resources and attention
- One to one regular contact
- Debrief important for improvement

- It's about relationships



Questions?