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Measuring what we do

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Measuring what we do

Abstract

When I first joined the University Library in 2000 the Library was in the process of establishing formal agreements with many of its monograph suppliers in the form of Service Level Agreements. Our first SLAs were signed with all our major suppliers in either 2000 or 2001. The SLA's not only document the agreed terms of trade between parties but they include scope for mutual benefit between the parties by sharing of information and collaboration. The benefits of establishing SLAs and improving performance measurement information include:

- Improved business relationships with suppliers;
- Increased confidence by both parties;
- More accurate information for comparison of suppliers;
- Better understanding of trends in information, and
- A basis for future developments.

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Measuring what we do

Kim James, University of Wollongong Library

Presentation Summary

When I first joined the University Library in 2000 the Library was in the process of establishing formal agreements with many of its monograph suppliers in the form of Service Level Agreements. Our first SLAs were signed with all our major suppliers in either 2000 or 2001.

The SLA's not only document the agreed terms of trade between parties but they include scope for mutual benefit between the parties by sharing of information and collaboration.

In order to ensure that the performance targets were achieved a quarterly review cycle was established and meetings held with representatives from both the Library and the supplier.

Initially many of the suppliers did not produce reports for these meetings and the amount of statistical information we produced was minimal. Discussion generally focussed on specific problems that occurred and the general interaction between the Library and the supplier.

Over the last 2 years these performance meetings have evolved into a much broader forum for the discussion of advancements made by suppliers and the future directions that the Library is considering.

We run an Innopac library management system so many of our measures such as price variation, percentage of orders received and delivery times are produced using standard Innopac reporting functions.

Our other measures such as customer service are based on responses and follow-up received from customer service agents and evaluation of these interactions by our team.

The major change that I have made to our reporting to suppliers has been the reporting of delivery times.

I now create two sets of delivery performance statistics. The first set is for all orders placed in the quarter. The second set is for a subset of orders placed in the quarter that have not been delayed by events such as being not yet published or out of print.

By studying the statistics that I had been producing and also conducting an investigation into the frequency of order status reports received from suppliers it occurred to me that there was a significant number of items that we were ordering that were not available immediately. However, the reasons for the delays were beyond the control of the suppliers.

Of course these figures are only as reliable as the order status information received from suppliers. In using this type of comparison the frequency of order status information received and how it is recorded on your system must be considered.

In the past we were concerned by the fluctuations in delivery times during the year. However the analysis of this improved data has shown us that there are seasonal fluctuations which increase supply times in the first quarter for orders with statuses of not yet published or out of stock. These same patterns have been experienced over the past 2-3 years.

Our suppliers are very pleased with the way that I now report delivery performance because it allows for more meaningful discussion of variations. As mentioned previously we now have trend information that has highlighted seasonal variations in delivery performance. Significantly different variations outside of these seasonal influences would immediately highlight a problem.

I believe that the improvements in reporting that I have developed have served to improve the communication process with our suppliers and therefore have improved the business relationship as a whole.

We can now more accurately predict supply implications for financial management. By better estimating the delivery times and comparing estimated and actual prices we can more accurately estimate our commitment figures.

Another major benefit that flows onto our clients includes the improved accuracy when calculating estimated delivery dates for client's orders.

Conclusion

The benefits of establishing SLAs and improving performance measurement information include:

- Improved business relationships with suppliers
- Increased confidence by both parties
- More accurate information for comparison of suppliers
- Better understanding of trends in information, and
- A basis for future developments.

All in all the University of Wollongong Library has gained a great deal by collaborating with our suppliers in firstly formulating Service Level Agreements and secondly by using the measures and targets in the SLAs for the development of meaningful and accurate performance information.

{This paper was delivered at the Acquisitions National Seminar 'Collaboration: the key to a success for Acquisitions' held in Melbourne, 5 September 2003}