Views on Sea Grant Advisory Service Work

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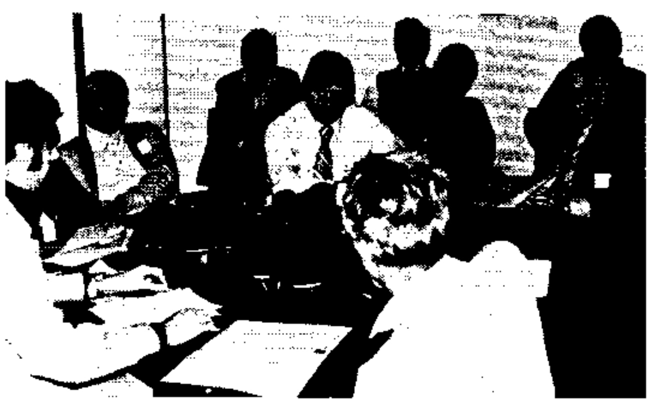
Introduction

Establishing and directing an advisory service program for the past five years have provided certain experiences and understandings that may be useful to other Advisory Service workers. This booklet was developed because of repeated need to share such understandings with Advisory Service staff in New York and program leaders and staff in a number of other states as well.

Although the sections were written primarily for Advisory Service program leaders and staff, they may also be helpful to others interested in the operational details of certain aspects of Advisory Service work.

The materials were developed while on sabbatic leave as Visiting Sea Grant Professor at Oregon State University and have benefited greatly from insights, reviews and comments by staff in New York, Oregon, and many other states.

Bruce T. Wilkins
June, 1977



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Views on Sea Grant Advisory Service Work

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I Program Leadership of Advisory Services

Leadership of an Advisory Service program is not only complex and important, but it also can be satisfying. It usually entails both planning for and managing staff and program while ensuring fiscal and program accountability.

Program support is necessary in secretarial, personnel, communication, and fiscal areas.

The leader is responsible for ensuring such support is available and functions smoothly, but his involvement with the mechanics of these functions should be minimal.

Rather, the majority of his time should be devoted to program staffing, planning, performance, evaluation, and reporting.

These seem to be best carried out through:

- Staff recruitment;
- Staff training;
- Program planning;
- Program execution;
- Program evaluation;
- Personnel evaluation;
- Creating rapport with other groups and individuals;
- Internal Communication of results, including negative as well as positive achievements.

To implement most of these, staff are hired to execute the program.

Professional Staff Recruitment

This is of key importance. A poor staff produces a poor program. A good staff is essential in generating a good program. Most program leaders can identify more important tasks than can be undertaken with available resources. Thus, before staff is hired, two questions should be answered — "With what audience will they work?" and "What disciplinary background will they need?". Once these answers are known, recruitment can begin.

Staff characteristics

Academic training in the discipline is needed, and ability as an Advisory Service educator is essential. No effective predictors of these abilities are available, but certain personal characteristics appear frequently in potentially successful, but inexperienced, Advisory Service workers:

- They listen well, absorbing not only what the other person is actually saying, but also sensing other unspoken clues;
- They are concerned about people and interested in helping them solve problems. They empathize without losing perspective;
- They are organized and goal oriented, but also recognize the need for flexibility;
- They are critical thinkers, able to both give and receive suggestions in a non-threatening manner;
- They are personally vigorous with energy and commitment;
- They are neither shy nor overbearing;
- They write clearly and concisely.

It is desirable, but not initially essential, that they have knowledge and skills in:

- Communication techniques including public speaking, writing, and visual aids;
- Adult education theory and practice;
- Their audience's work and problems;
- The physical and social dimensions of the locale in which they will be located.

Where do we get such paragons? Because disciplinary orientation is important, the primary sources are academic programs and marine-related agencies and firms.

A low grade point average can indicate those without promise; however, high averages do not necessarily ensure competency.

Courses taken, employment experience, and volunteer activities can suggest areas of an individual's commitment.

Writing samples of Advisory Service type material can be helpful indicators.

Letters of recommendation can identify important weaknesses or emphasize strengths.

A personal interview is imperative.

Altogether, these are useful, but not totally reliable, predictors of effectiveness in Advisory Service work.

Staff Training

Effective training will enable the Advisory

Service staff to do a better job and will give them greater job satisfaction. Too, deficiencies in their training and background will need to be corrected.

Training includes several components. Some of the more important are:

- New agent or specialist training;
- On-the-job training;
- In-depth, subject matter training.

New staff training

Any new staff member needs immediate help in the areas of organizational structure, mission, and activities. Because no two Sea Grant programs are identical, training must be developed uniquely by the program administration. Sea Grant proposals, annual reports, printed media, films, reports, etc., are useful training aids.

More current views and philosophies can be transmitted effectively by audio tapes. These save repetition and are useful resources when sent to candidates prior to job interviews.

A packet of forms used by the organization such as expense claims and car reports/regulations, as well as directions on completing these forms, are useful training components.

Within the first month of employment, each new staff member should visit key persons including the Sea Grant Director, nearby Advisory Service staff, citizen leaders, and appropriate researchers.

Written material on Adult Education and communication techniques should be provided to each staff member.

Material on the area and discipline can be compiled from state and national Sea Grant publications.

An orientation check list enumerating such tasks has been useful in more quickly familiarizing staff with their work and giving them a sense of accomplishment in their first month or two on the job.

On-the-job training

While much of this will take place on a day-by-day basis, it is valuable for new staff members to spend at least a week at the offices of other experienced staff. Office procedures and a host of other details can be learned this way.

Periodic meetings of Advisory Service staff are important components of on-the-job training.

In-depth training

Attendance at short courses and conferences should be an integral part of any Advisory Service worker's efforts. Communication techniques can best be practiced, and current developments and trends in subject fields can best be learned at such meetings.

Not more than ten percent of a person's time should be spent in all such efforts combined.

Program Planning

This is one of the most important tasks in any Advisory Service program. The leader can only do a component of this; the staff must do most. Therefore, one of the important tasks the administrator has is to ensure his staff understand and carry out effective planning.

Training, counseling, and providing examples are major components in ensuring the staff gain this skill. Program planning should have an annual focus, reflecting a long-range plan. A variety of resources should be included in developing this plan, including leaders among the intended audience. Having concrete, quantifiable educational goals or objectives should be the ultimate test of effectiveness here.

New staff should note they are expected to have several solid objectives prepared within three months of their hiring. Such objectives should be viewed as highly tentative, but seen as important at that time. Writing these will often require several days effort by both the staff member and the Advisory Service administrator.

Program Execution

This is the most important Advisory Service role. All else is to support and enhance program execution.

The objectives prepared provide the framework for execution. The Advisory Service administrator should periodically comment extensively on an element of program execution (meetings, conferences, bulletins, newsletter) in which the staff member has had primary responsibility. This means the administrator must have attended the event or carefully scrutinized the material. The comments should include positive elements as well as areas where improvement could have been made.

Program Evaluation

Increasing the program's effectiveness requires evaluation. Again, if the staff are to achieve a high proficiency in evaluation, training needs to be conducted, and some framework must be created in which to carry out evaluation.

Written reports are of primary importance here; however, personal interaction (face-to-face or by telephone) is a potential alternative or, in some cases, necessary substitute.

Personnel Evaluation

Staff will also have responsibilities, though varying in degree, for the above. Personnel evaluation is a component that traditionally rests more heavily on the administrator.

Two approaches commonly used are:

1. Evaluation based on achievement of objectives;
2. Evaluation based on important components of an Advisory Service worker's role.

The first, based on the individual's established educational objectives, relies on the basic question "Did he achieve what was intended?".

The second focuses on "Does the individual demonstrate the necessary traits generally required to carry out an effective job in Advisory Services?".

The first seems more valuable in terms of stimulating program achievement, but the second seems more structured in helping both the staff member and the Advisory Service leader identify areas of possible improvement. A combination of the two seems to provide the best approach.

Creating Rapport with Other Groups and Individuals

Advisory Service work requires close and congenial relationships with researchers, state and federal agencies, industry groups, and citizens. A means of keeping them aware of Advisory Service efforts is needed. Newsletters can help, but periodic meetings seem necessary. The frequency of such meetings and the agenda will vary with the importance of the group to each program at a particular point in time.

Internal Communication of Results

Individual conferences with staff are important to demonstrate interest, provide guidance, and provide opportunity for sharing concerns. Such conferences should be held at least once every three months in the staff member's office. A conference with a new staff member in his office within the first month is necessary to recognize his importance.

Written reports including those described in Section V should be routine and responded to appropriately.

SUMMARY

Important program leader tasks are often pushed aside by more urgent, but less important, details related to finances, office management, and the like. An interesting exercise is to identify what proportion of time you feel should be spent in each of the eight areas mentioned, then estimate how your time was spent in those areas over the past year. You too may be surprised at the comparison.

II Writing Annual Educational Objectives for Advisory Service Workers

In any work it is important to know what we are trying to do. That seems trite, yet one of the major difficulties we face in Advisory Service work is describing clearly what our activities are intended to achieve. Why bother? Several reasons exist. A clear statement of our intended results helps others see where their efforts can assist us and how ours can assist them; it permits ready comprehension on the part of those we ask to support such efforts; it gives administrators a tool to see what will not be done. Of particular significance, clear statements of objectives give us a self-determined basis for measuring achievements. Two common problems of Advisory Service workers are reflected in statements such as "What have I achieved?" and "I'm so busy, I don't seem to get to the important things." Both can be minimized if clear educational objectives are set forth. Carrying out good evaluations minimizes those frustrations but also requires that clear objectives be established.

A Good Objective

I define a good educational objective as "a one sentence written statement of how people will behave differently a year or so from now because of our educational efforts."

To accept this, of course, we would have to agree that one of our roles as Advisory Service workers is to stimulate change. Indeed, I write this with the view that the Advisory Service roles are to:

- Transfer knowledge in a form useful to people;
- Stimulate adoption of knowledge by appropriate people;
- Stimulate people to conduct research needed to solve coastal problems.

Only one word is common to all three roles — people. Our role is to change people — not to generate knowledge, not to hold meetings, but to change people.

It would be helpful if you stopped at this point to get out a previous objective you have prepared or write down one educational objective for your program next year.

Really — DO IT!

To be most useful to you, an objective would normally identify:

- the audience;
- that audience's change because of your effort;
- a measurable component.

One of the most difficult aspects of writing a useful objective is establishing an appropriate level of generality. The Sea Grant Act states an objective "... to increase the understanding, assessment, development, utilization and conservation of the Nation's ocean and coastal resources ..."

That's a pretty broad objective. (Some would differentiate objectives that broad and call them goals.) It's non-ending, and while we can make progress toward it, it's not achievable in any ultimate sense. Also, it does not have all three elements suggested above.

Thus, most objectives useful to us should break off chunks of effort toward those broader goals or objectives.

Consider an objective stated as "To have 30 marine operators attend a meeting." That *seems* to have the three elements suggested above, but it really doesn't. The change you really seek is not having 30 people attend a meeting, rather the meeting is a technique useful in moving marina operators toward some other change in knowledge, skill, attitude, or behavior you have identified.

Problems with yours

Let's look at the objective you wrote earlier. If yours is like most we write, it probably starts out "to help; to provide; to develop; to study; to hold; to inform, etc.". Note, objectives like these usually are self-directed. They tell what you will do, not what change will occur in someone else. While it's easier to tell if we write a newsletter or inform fishermen, our role is to change the audience in some way, not simply to expose them to information.

Starting the objective with "to have" will usually get us off on the right foot. Naming the audience is next — school youth, homemakers, shrimp processors, draggers, or charter boat operators. State the audience as precisely as possible.

Now, try writing your objective again. Start out with "to have" (or other appropriate words) and be as specific as possible with the group you expect to change. Does "to have" make sense for what you wanted that audience to be able to do or know as a result of your activity?

About that audience — is it really what you mean? Some folks write objectives such as "to have commercial crabbers" or "to have youth." That means every crabber and all youth — do you really expect to achieve that? If so, you probably are not being realistic about how effective education of the sort Advisory Services are involved in can be in the short run. So I'd say put a measurable component to that audience — a total of 50 people, or a proportion, 80%. And certainly a quantitative component is better than a descriptive statement such as "most," "a lot," or "nearly all."

The general audience with which you will work was likely identified for you, and even the subject area you initially would emphasize is largely directed by others. You were chosen because your training, interest, and abilities were seen as useful to that audience. That's why I say the audiences and the subject areas are largely given to you. (If you are an economist, it's likely some administrator felt that economics was the area to be emphasized, rather than your working on fishing gear, improved sanitation, etc.)

Your unique skill and talent is required in specifying the change appropriate to that audience. You need to know the situation and the problems that education can correct.

This, of course, is not all there is to the planning process. Both a statement of the problem and a detailed list of activities to achieve the objectives are also needed. Too, annual objectives should fit within longer term goals.

Also, we should not be so wedded to the objective as to be unwilling to change or drop it. Administrators particularly must recognize and accept this.

Problems with This Approach

Two problems will creep up if one attempts to implement the above. One is not knowing how many objectives are useful. I'd argue each worker should be able to identify four or five, but if he notes more than seven or eight, usually he is generating objectives too specific to be significant for a year-long effort. As another guide, an objective requiring less than 15 days to achieve is usually too specific; those with more than 40 days will require substantial sub-objectives and perhaps indicate other separate objectives are warranted.

The second problem is not knowing how to handle long term basic operating situations such as office routine, fiscal matters, facility maintenance and the like. I recommend adding them to a specific area of improvement. For example, "To have two counties provide financial support for our efforts, and maintain existing fiscal, administrative and physical support to staff."

Many people find it difficult, for several reasons, to adopt these suggestions.

- A major reason is captured in the thought that it's "too specific." For example, "How do we know that 50 percent of the fishermen should adopt a new trawl?" Well, if it isn't seen as useful to a significant number of the audience, then it's probably not worth doing. If it is worth doing, why not set a target and go for it? After evaluation you'll know if the target was wrong or if your efforts were weak in some way. Note too, we earlier suggest changing "appropriate people." We are not in a position to know a person's situation sufficiently well to be certain if he or she might benefit from a suggested change, but clearly there must be a significant number of such people or we shouldn't be bothering with this effort.
- Another concern is "How can new important tasks be undertaken if all our time is allocated to these previously decided efforts?" It was never indicated all of your time should be allocated, indeed probably no more than 60–70 percent of your time should be planned for important projects and significant problems. This will permit you to respond to important, but unforeseen, needs.
- An additional argument is that important educational goals take longer than one year to achieve. Certainly they do, but annual bench marks can be established to see if we are making progress towards those goals.
- A final major problem, particularly for new staff, is that we may not yet know the needs of people. Here is one of two instances I can envision where you yourself are the target audience and an objective "To identify three important problem areas of (an audience)" is certainly appropriate. A second instance where you are the appropriate audience is in your own professional development. Plan to increase your professional ability in some structured way.

In my mind, the most significant criticism of such objective setting is that it more clearly exposes your objectives to possible challenge by others.

"That group isn't that important" or "You ought to be working on this instead" reflect such criticisms. Clear objectives do permit such detailed attacks and many find obfuscation a neat way of avoiding or postponing this. I'd argue good documentation of why the objective is important is a better approach to defending those objectives you see as important.

Writing objectives as described above has many benefits — a greater sense of self-achievement, better setting of priorities, and a persistent reminder that our job is to help others change.

Here are some objectives which seem to avoid many of the mistakes noted above:

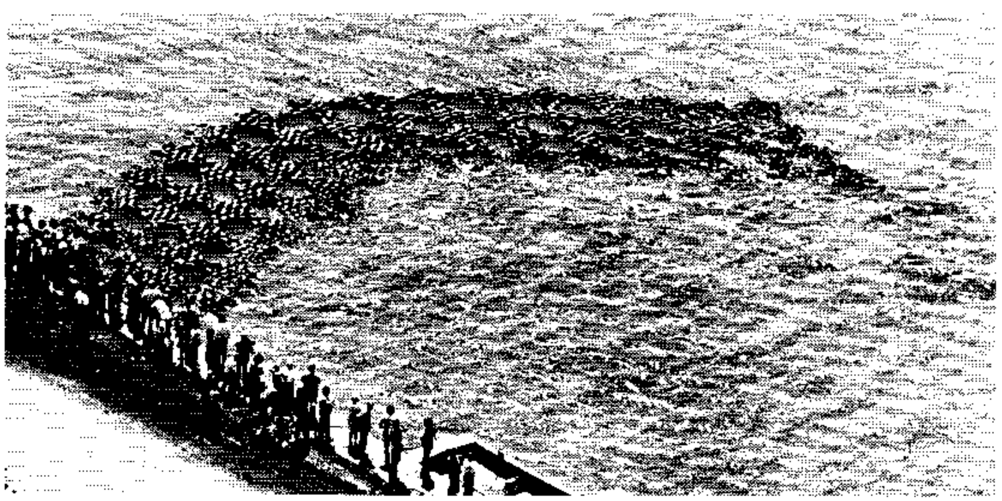
To have 50 new fishermen begin harvesting eels commercially;

To have one processor install and operate a fish deboner;

To have the average time marina operators experience in obtaining a dredging permit reduced by 4 months:

To have five towns decide whether to adopt wetland controls;

To have two firms or harbor commissions install floating tire breakwaters.



Selecting Objectives

In the prior discussion on writing educational objectives, we noted Advisory Service workers are change agents. But how do we identify to which audience and toward what changes our efforts are to be directed? This decision needs to be based on several elements, and it depends on where we are in the administrative hierarchy. Someone, or some group, is responsible for identifying audiences with whom we ought to be working. That decision will hang on the importance attached to change in that audience, the knowledge available to aid them, the probability of change (Can education have a useful influence on the outcome or are human values a major constraint?), and the predilections of the institution or individual making the decision.

Federal Sea Grant legislation directs Advisory Service attention to ocean and coastal problems. Too, our goals must be achieved through education. Objectives chosen should reflect incorporation of all of the above considerations.

A situation statement indicating why an important problem exists and how proposed educational efforts will help correct this problem can be an important aid in clarifying and selecting objectives.

The situation statement should describe in objective terms (numbers, dollars or some other quantifiable unit), the extent of the problem, why that problem is important to society; and the important change or changes you expect education could make in that condition. The statement should reflect emphasis on a longer term goal (three to five years) as well as carry sufficient detail to provide the base data useful in setting the annual objectives.

III Evaluating Advisory Service Field Programs

All effective Advisory Service workers, and most of the ineffective ones, are constantly evaluating. But few communicate the results of their evaluation, and even fewer carry out "good" evaluations.

The focus of this section is on how we evaluate whether we have attained our educational objectives. I'm defining evaluation as determining if what we did achieved what we hoped for or intended; and what among the things we did to achieve that goal worked well, or how could they have been done better?

For adequate evaluation, an educational objective similar to that described in Section I must exist. Objectives were defined there as "a one sentence written statement of how people will behave differently a year or so from now because of your educational efforts."

Why Bother with Evaluation?

One increasingly hears calls for evaluation of advisory services and of other educational groups. This suggests inadequate evaluation has been going on, or that there has been poor communication of that evaluation.

Most of us do evaluate ourselves and others, and this helps us learn how to do a better job in the future. We gain greater professional competency by learning what worked and what didn't; that's part of evaluation.

Of equal or greater importance to us, evaluation is a common characteristic of eminently successful, effective, and satisfied Advisory Service workers. Indeed, I would argue a major value of evaluation is that it helps us gain self-satisfaction from our work. This we all need.

Sharing or communicating evaluations means that others can learn from our experience — avoiding our mistakes and capitalizing on our successes.

Evaluating whether we have attained our objectives can yield:

- Increased moral, educational and fiscal support from others;
- Increased effectiveness of our work and that of others;

- Increased personal and shared feelings of accomplishment.

Most involved in Advisory Service work would quickly realize the feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction gained when someone says "I tried that, and it worked" or "I used your idea, and it was helpful."

It would seem evaluation is something we would seek and do regularly, involving others if we can. But do we? Typically, Advisory Service workers have not conducted and communicated valid program evaluations. The reasons for this are many. Perhaps paramount, we often don't have clear-cut objectives. But assuming we do, what holds us back from communicating effective evaluations?

Since you may question the assertion that poor communication of evaluation does occur, let's test it. Choose a Sea Grant Program in a state more than 1,000 miles from yours. Now, identify two highly effective Advisory Service programs carried out there last year, and identify how they said their effort could have been improved. Chances are, you cannot do this because the program:

- Didn't do a good job of evaluation;
- Didn't communicate it well to you.

Even more challenging, can you give me today an evaluation of your two most effective programs from last year? Only in a few cases can the answer be yes, and if it is we can look more closely at such questions as: Did more than 70 percent of the folks you worked with provide feedback? Can you tell me what percent actually changed because of your efforts? Have this year's efforts changed because of the feedback? Unless you can answer yes to all these questions, your evaluation needs enhancing.

Communicating Evaluation

But for now let's stick with communication of evaluation. A major problem in communicating evaluations is we have relied heavily on verbal communication. You've told your co-workers how something worked, you've phoned the Sea Grant Director and told him of a very successful effort, and you've surely mentioned to co-workers (at the last social hour) some things that didn't work well.

But note, this is verbal communication. It is done very easily and quickly with little thought or time required. Note also, the highly transitory nature of that communication. It's not useful to anybody who didn't speak to you directly or subsequently hear about the effort from someone you told. And certainly, the evaluation is lost over time.

Written communication is permanent and easy to reproduce, permitting us to reach more people.

The hazard, of course, is that you can't readily retract a written communication or say it wasn't there. We are always more careful in writing than when speaking and much more reluctant to put things on paper than to say them. It takes longer to write something out, and time constraints often cause us to avoid writing. But, communicating evaluations in a written form is really the best and only way to share results with substantial numbers of fellow workers.

Another major impediment to putting our evaluations on paper, or even voicing them for that matter, is fear that others will judge us poorly. If you don't know my evaluation, you can't say my conclusion is wrong. If you do know my evaluation you can challenge me; so, I may seek refuge by not clearly recording my evaluation. Advisory Service workers are among those critical of researchers for not publishing research findings more rapidly, but the same concern and time constraints stalk them.

It is important to note, however, that while it may be true that not knowing your evaluation means one cannot responsibly attack your conclusion, neither can he responsibly support your program.

Perhaps an even greater restraint on taking time to write evaluations is the knowledge that often little feedback will be received from others, and the feedback received will often be critical. Another stimulus to using verbal communication, of course, is that we tend to get less negative feedback in face-to-face communication.

And, people will criticize our evaluations. Hopefully, though, we will also strive to share our positive reactions to evaluation of our peers, and

they and our supervisors will do the same with our evaluations.

To this point we have looked at: what values evaluation has; the need for more effective communication of the evaluation; and the importance of providing feedback on others' evaluations.

How Much Time Is Needed?

Earlier, we said we were not carrying out a sufficient number of "good" evaluations. While the next section will focus on how to carry out a "good" evaluation it may be useful at this point to look at how much time should be devoted to such efforts. We are already spending some time doing evaluations, but most supervisors would say we need to spend more time in carrying out and documenting them. On the other hand we should be leary of spending too much time evaluating and too little time educating!

Probably most of us should spend more time on evaluation and its communication than we now do. I've heard some say five percent is the appropriate time proportion to spend on evaluation. I would agree not more than 10 percent of your time should be spent on this effort. Further, as a simple guide, I'd argue that any activity in which you spend 20 or more days a year or that brings you into direct contact with 100 or more people, warrants a written communication of your evaluation of that effort.

What Evaluation Won't Do

Evaluation cannot do everything people sometimes expect of it.

It can tell us if we achieved what we hoped to. It can tell us what worked well and not so well. Properly designed, it can even suggest why those things happened.

It cannot tell us which programs and objectives should be emphasized. That requires judgment. And while evaluation can contribute to that, it cannot dictate proper decisions. Your expertise and your judgment are needed for that.

IV Enhancing Evaluation

We've seen the values of evaluation and the potential threat they provide us as individuals. Maximum benefit and minimum threat can accrue from "good" evaluation, but what is a good evaluation? A good evaluation tells us (or someone else) what we want to know, typically whether we achieved what we intended to, and identifies the weak and strong points in the approach chosen. Evaluation requires:

- Knowing what we intended to do;
- Knowing prior conditions;
- Knowing important influences on our audience.

To evaluate we have to know in clear terms what we intended to achieve. Thus, an objective "to help fishermen" could be evaluated. Tying one knot for a sports fisherman would achieve the objective, but it's unlikely that's what we meant. Is the problem here with the evaluation or the objective? Even saying "to help commercial fishermen" is not very useful — buying a pound of fish could achieve that objective. A clear objective that can be evaluated might be: "To have all draggers in Freshport able to mend their nets." (An 80% level would seem more reasonable.)

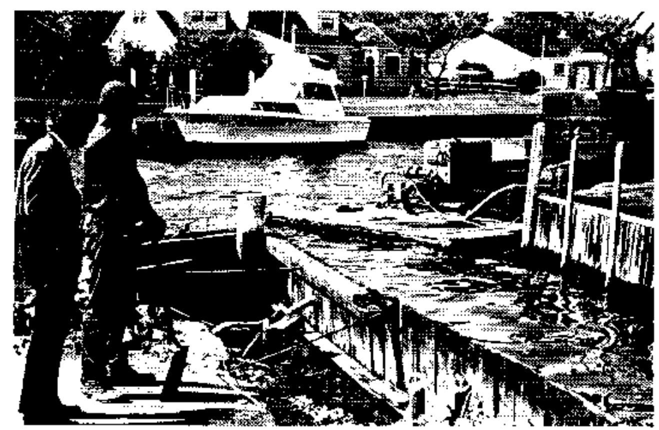
We now have a clear objective. Do we know the present situation? Perhaps all draggers already are able to mend a net, or maybe one-third or two-thirds now do it. Or perhaps because it is a new dragger fishery, no one is able to mend a net.

If we know the prior level of competency, we can evaluate our effectiveness. The example used suggests a skill should be learned (not taught, there is a difference that is important for you to distinguish). How do we evaluate? We could ask people if they can mend a net, or we can determine by test or observation that they can do so. But note the objective said *all draggers*. Thus, if one dragger cannot do it, you've not been fully successful.

An Example

Let's assume your educational efforts consisted of two identical meetings at which instruction was given and fishermen could try their hand at learning how to mend a net. The proportion able to do so at the end of each meeting would give one evaluation. For example, there are 100 draggers in Freshport. Fifteen attended the first meeting and 25 attended the second. By the end of the meetings, 35 of the 40 could mend nets. You knew about 30 non-attendees knew how to mend nets, so about 65% of Freshport draggers can now mend their nets. Personal instruction to five others plus eight others who picked it up from those at the meeting is evidence your more reasonable objective was basically achieved. Note here, observation was the evaluation technique used. This is a good technique when applications or skills are the intended goal.

Of course, it's an easier evaluation to say 40 attended the meetings, but that is less valid as an evaluation — after all, our role is not to hold meetings, they are a technique used to achieve other goals. Since 25 attended the second meeting it might be useful to clarify if that was because the first was so well done and word got around, or if the lower attendance at the first meeting was because of the time it was held, the location, etc.



Observation is a relatively painless evaluation technique but requires personal presence. This can be extremely costly if your audience is dispersed. Also, most things we work on probably are reflected more by a change in knowledge than in observed physical applications or skill. But let's not forget the knowledge or even attitudinal changes we endeavor to achieve almost always have an eventual goal, a behavioral change. If the audience will act identically, with or without the knowledge we provided, then we are useless.

How do you evaluate knowledge gains? First, do it only as a last resort. Behavioral change is our main goal. But knowledge gain can also be discerned. We can ask people either verbally or in writing if they can recite the items we wanted them to learn. An even better test is to see if they retain that knowledge as time goes on.

There are substitutes for testing whether a person gains knowledge. We can determine if she was exposed to the information; we can ask her if she feels she gained; and we can even see if she resubmits herself to new opportunities. All these give us a measure of values she attributes to the new experience.

Whom to contact

What group do we ask or observe? The group we intended to change can be one group, or we might restrict it to those we know were exposed. In either case, the same group should give evidence of "prior condition." Thus, you wouldn't say we want 80% of the draggers able to mend a net and then say 87% of those attending the meeting could do so; therefore we achieved our goal.

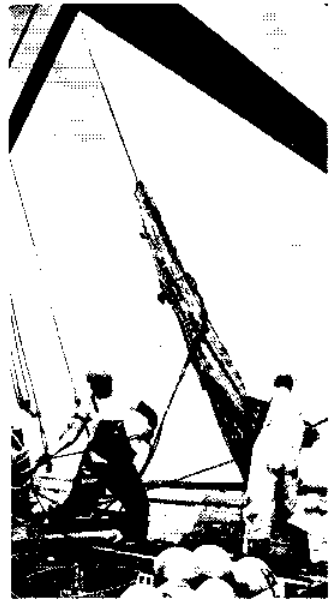
How many do we ask or observe? It is not necessary to contact every person in the group. It usually is not feasible physically or economically. The major point is to be as unbiased as possible about it. Don't just contact those you know; contact others as well. And go after each of those folks hard! You probably need to check 10 or more persons for others to have much faith in your results. In our work, it seldom is valuable to contact more than 200 persons or 50% of the audience, whichever is lower. A simple approach is to take every name at some interval, say every 2nd, 4th, or 10th person, and use them as your sample.

By now, certain things should be clear in enhancing your evaluation:

- We need to be clear about what we intended to do;
- We need some idea of whom we tried to reach;
- We need some idea (even if only a hunch) of the prior situation relative to the change we seek to make.

Let's consider as an objective "To have 30% of prospective Loran A buyers over the next year be aware that Loran A will shortly be phased out."

We should ascertain how many now know that. Knowledgeable people may say few do, and that may be okay. Usually, someone can benefit from that knowledge, so we will set a target number or percent that should know this change is imminent as a result of your efforts. It may be 30 or 50 persons or 30% of the buyers—you set the objective. And how do you isolate that audience? That's one part of the creative educator's role.



Checking the Parts

Articles, meetings, and bulletins can be used to achieve objectives. They should be evaluated. A "before and after test" at a meeting is very simple and, if done with clear explanation as to why, can be very useful. Note here, you isolated your audience (those at meeting) and have queried all of them (most but not all will cooperate, but it's relatively unbiased and it's a quick and inexpensive approach). Also note, however, you aren't evaluating the objective, but rather one component of the effort to achieve that objective. Similar evaluations can be done with virtually all segments of our program.

What should we include when asking people? Three groupings would generally be included:

- Information on the respondent;
- His reaction or change;
- A means of stimulating him to respond.

Some Other Forms

The illustrations used here have been structured evaluations of educational objectives or activities. Other forms of evaluation include:

- Quantitative indices of effort or participation—40 people attended meetings on net mending, and 200 known Loran A users were sent a changeover notice;
- Subjective appraisals—"I thought you guys did a great job";
- Anecdotal—The tale of one person whose life was saved by your program on boating safety.

The last is an unscientific, highly biased evaluation and one of the most effective means of generating support and understanding, but only if it's *communicated.*

Many of us respond to the need for evaluation by saying, "I should do it, but I don't have time." You now know that is wrong. It is a natural and active part of our job. Our challenge is really to better communicate evaluations and to make them valid and useful.

V Written Reports for Advisory Service Workers

No public agency survives very long without some form of written report. Is this because of bureaucratic red tape, or is it because they serve essential purposes?

Clearly, they do serve essential needs. Clarifying what these are, how they can best be achieved, and how to stimulate people to provide written reports can be of particular value to Advisory Service administrators.

Written reports can serve many functions. Among the more important for the Advisory Service worker's purposes are:

- Record of accomplishments and failures;
- Record of what works;
- Record of what doesn't work;
- Record of names and organizations with whom we worked.

These have value to the individual worker (and those who may follow him in the position), administrators, and higher echelon decision makers, including the public.

No one reporting procedure will meet the needs of all interested parties. For example, names of persons worked with usually have little value beyond the administrator's level. Similarly, failures are seldom usefully shared with the general public.

This section focuses on written reports intended for the individual, fellow workers, and those involved in administering state Advisory Service programs; and it is directed to those administrators.

Stimulating Staff to Write a Report

The individual must first be stimulated to write a report. Clearly, several stimuli are available. It may be a directive, but are you willing to make this sufficiently important and enforce it? A more productive approach will seek to stimulate the individual to see the report as useful to himself and worthy of taking the time required to do it.

Why should the individual do it?

- He can help others benefit from his experience;
- He can get better aid and inputs from those who read his report;
- He can gain support from others;

- He can benefit by others' experiences if he reads their reports.

To get staff to write written reports:

- They must know what is wanted in the report;
- The reports must be simple to do;
- They must know others do use the report;
- They must know it is viewed as important by others.

Knowing what is wanted

Suggestions of what to include will be clearer if the staff is periodically reminded of the purposes reports can serve.

Feedback on how the information was useful and helpful clarifies what is wanted.

A listing of important considerations will help in implementing report writing. One such listing to an Advisory Service staff was:

- Emphasize in the narrative why a thing was done, what was done, the result, how it could have been done better, and what worked well;
- Don't tell everything you did—it's not an activity report;
- Use hard numbers where possible: not "a large crowd" but "145 persons";
- Completed activities should make up the bulk of the report. Don't note for three months running that you're working on such and such;
- Be concise and precise. Seldom would more than one page single-spaced be needed in a monthly narrative;
- Even if more than one agent in an office is involved, have only one person report the activity;
- Human interest anecdotes of accomplishments are very useful;
- Keep your individuality!;
- Note where you've used others' ideas or have ideas others may find useful.

Simplicity

This conflicts with an objective of completeness but is important if busy staff are to, in fact, write reports.

Brevity is of importance to both the writer and the reader. Thus, only significant items should be included.

Routineness has value. While a form is useful here, the disparate nature of significant activities seems to argue against a very detailed form.

Knowing when reports should be done can aid in routineness. If one a month is expected, it can be a month-end routine (along with expense claims). Some apparently find weekly or quarterly reports satisfactory. Others claim a weekly report is too frequent and quarterly reports are too infrequent to permit including important and timely items. A report only when "significant" activities take place can work but seems to suffer from clear placement in a routine. There is one clear advantage of "timely reports" and weekly reports — agents will often share more recent or current material; however, verbal sharing or memos do this as effectively, perhaps more so.

Knowing others use it

Reports can become so routine that no one bothers to note how they are being used. This deters staff from doing reports in the future. Consistent attention and response to reports with liberal feedback to the writer is essential to maintain production of reports. Feedback several times a year to each person would seem minimal.

While the Advisory Service administrator has a key role here, he must also ensure staff provide feedback to each other on the usefulness of reports.

Tell them how their report aided others and have them tell each other!

Knowing it is important to others

The administrator must achieve this by example (getting his own out on time) and also by statement. When reports repeatedly are not sent in, a visit to that person is necessary. This should not be done to harass, but rather to remind him his input is important.

There are many ways to demonstrate that writing reports is important — hold sessions on writing better reports and comment on reports at staff meetings.

Also, don't go back for similar statements; let the staff know these reports will include their accomplishments and that no further listing will be called for.

SUMMARY

The values of report writing to an Advisory Service administrator are many; they include:

- Easing the writing of annual reports and listing of achievements (such as on NOAA Form 2);
- Serving as an indicator of performance of staff;
- Indicating areas of inactivity useful in directing program emphasis;
- Spreading useful experience among the staff.

Written reports are needed, useful, and easy to generate, if program leaders are concerned and emphasize their importance.

Conclusion

The preceding material certainly is neither a complete overview nor exact directions for carrying out effective Advisory Service work. It is a collation of items developed to respond to gaps in information otherwise available to meet the pressing needs of Advisory Service workers.

These views should not be seen as hard and fast "rules" nor is it suggested that other modes of operation can not also be effective. Rather, the views presented attempt to encapsulate experience, observation, and study in a few of the major areas critically important in the formulative years of an Advisory Service. The reader will need to adapt and alter the suggestions to his or her unique situation.

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