



Product Oriented Thinking And Expert Knowledge In Consulting Services

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Introduction

- Research question
 - Under what circumstances producing products out of expert knowledge is most efficient?
- Motivation
 - Article encourages theoretical discussion towards common concepts known as product, consulting and expert knowledge and offers a
- Contribution
 - Results of this study will provide a working toolbox for evaluating possibilities of merchandising services based on expert knowledge, as well as an up-to-date theoretical framework for studying different forms of services based on expert knowledge.

Method

- In this paper theory creating conceptual-analytical approach is used
- Theoretical discussion towards common concepts known as product, consulting and expert knowledge is encouraged and a new theoretical framework based on previous studies within the fields of consulting and product oriented thinking, as well as knowledge management is presented
- Study starts with a literature review, where concepts of product oriented thinking and characteristics of expertise are discussed. These are later used for further analysis of possibilities for providing consulting services under different circumstances
- Methodologically this new theoretical framework is created through induction, e.g. through generalizing and comparing findings from previous studies. Hence, using this approach a comprehensive theoretical framework about product oriented thinking is created and it is being enhanced with ideas concentrated on characteristics of expert knowledge. In this article authors have outlined the area to be studied to cover only consulting services, especially within the field of IT.

Consulting

- Consulting can be defined as *a situation in which one person has a problem or difficulty and seeks help from someone with special skills.*
- Usually consultants influence or advice others without any formal authority or choosing not to use what authority they have.
- Consultancy can also be defined as activity, recommending appropriate action and helping to implement those recommendations.
- In the field of information technology consultancy can be defined as professional activity, which provides customers with assistance in identifying and investigating problems and/or opportunities concerned with management, information technology, or some other things in the field of IT.

When to use consultant?

- Today's IT field has expanded to such an extent, that it is impossible for one person to master the whole field. Because of this IT management do need consultants. Situations where the use of consultant is well justified can be listed as follows:
 - assistance in establishing new venture,
 - additional resource for example in certain development projects,
 - source of information,
 - connector: utilizing consultants social network,
 - outsider, impartial and competent partner for discussion,
 - as a help in problem recognition, evaluation and solving,
 - developer of new methods and systems,
 - support for organizational change., and
 - trainer for managers and personnel.

Technology infusion in services

- Technology may dramatically increase the number of encounters a customer has with a firm, or in some cases eliminate them.
- Companies will have systems in place that not only monitor if and how an SST is functioning but also prevents failures before they happen.
- Companies provide real-time service recovery for customers as they interact with an SST.
- Companies are able to know more about their customers -> mass customization will become increasingly common.
- Companies will have an endless array of possibilities for delighting customers in highly customized ways.
- Firms cannot risk sitting on the sidelines as competitors deploy technology to help facilitate service encounters.

Consulting within IT

- According to studies concerning service quality, responsiveness (willingness to offer prompt service and to help people) is an important factor in the people-based industries like consulting.
- If we try to create products out of services, we should answer following questions:
 1. How we can make expert knowledge in consulting services concrete enough, and
 2. What kind of consulting services can be made to products?



Framework for consulting

- Because focus of this article is in product oriented thinking, all the good characteristics of a tangible products as well as intangible products like consulting services are taken into account in order to be able to outline the scope of product oriented thinking in consulting.
- One product may consist of services, product or information.
- Services can be quite naturally regarded as products, mainly because of the shared similarities between companies specialized in goods or companies specialized in providing services.

How to create service products

1. *We have product development competence in a firm and we can apply it also in service development.*
 - This refers to the fact that traditionally the development of services has not evolved like for example in product development has
2. *We can use process management and quality management practices in a firm.*
 - This refers to relevant working methods which are followed
3. *We can use technology.*
 - This refers to dilemma of “high tech” vs. “high touch”
4. *We can use tangible clues in a service.*
 - This refers to the way how the service is being presented

Creating products out of services (1)

Creating product out of expert service	Possible tools to improve expert service packages	Good new (service) product
<i>Definition</i>	–Process management practices: definition and describing, of processes	–Clearly defined service production process
<i>Description</i>	- “ -	–Is perceived as relatively easy to understand and to use, not too abstract

Creating products out of services (2)

Creating product out of expert service	Possible tools to improve expert service packages	Good new (service) product
<i>Planning</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Use of technology: SST, mass customization, real time service,...– Process management practices: planning of processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Is perceived as consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters
<i>Development</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Use of technology: an expert system that walks users through problem-identification and resolution processes without the need to directly contact a firm;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Is perceived as better than the idea it supersedes

Creating products out of services (3)

Creating product out of expert service	Possible tools to improve expert service packages	Good new (service) product
<i>Production</i>	– Use of technology: increase of the number of service encounters	– Has results which are visible to others (observability) – May be experimented with on a limited basis (triability)
<i>Continuous improvement</i>	– Quality management tools: process improvement, continuous improvement, etc.	– Good service quality

IT Consulting

Development of a consulting product	Tools and ideas to be taken into consideration while developing expert services
<p><i>Idea phase</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>–Process management and quality management practices to make product easier to understand, and to improve service quality (responsiveness, etc.)</p>
<p><i>Project formation phase</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>–Develop a service which is perceived as</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters, b) better than the idea it supersedes, and c) relatively easy to understand and to use, not too abstract
<p><i>Design phase</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>–Make results of a service visible to others (observability) and possible to be experimented with on a limited basis (triability)</p>
<p><i>Implementation phase</i></p>	<p>–Use of technology: SST, mass customization, real time service, an expert system that walks users through problem-identification and resolution processes without the need to directly contact a firm, increase of the number of service encounters</p>

Discussion

- Process-, and quality management practices are very beneficial in situations, where product oriented thinking is required
- Competence within product development is also required
- Access to existing technology is necessity
- Neglecting the significance of the role of IT both careless and hazardous
- With help of tangible clues even expert services could be made easier to understand
- It appears that product oriented thinking and it's applications in business context appears to be a question of organizational maturity
- When comparing services with product development techniques and traditions, there is still a lot to do

Questions?

Thank you for your
attention!