



Collaboration and its Benefits – lessons from the Victorian Disability Service Managers Network

RICK BOFFA, RMIT

ANTHONY GARTNER, SWINBURNE

Collaboration and its Benefits

May 2010. My boss said: “Find a colleague in the industry, someone to talk to! I hear Rick Boffa is pretty good. Give him a call”

Our first cuppa and what we discovered:

- ▶ Dealing with the same issues
- ▶ Problems of dual sector institutes and the different issues within TAFE and HEd
- ▶ We both enjoyed the chat

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ Let's build a dual sector group so we can talk to our other colleagues. Contacted Vic Uni and Ballarat Uni (now Federation Uni)
- ▶ Lets run some joint training – RMIT, Swinburne and VU – AHRC, Employment agency
- ▶ More cuppas over a couple of years
- ▶ Let's build a model of best practice!
- ▶ Road Trips to Deakin in Geelong and Monash in Clayton
- ▶ Lets build a network!

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ Getting together
 - ▶ Many things in common
 - ▶ Shared interest in best practice
 - ▶ Joint training through SHEDN, all in.
- ▶ Let's do a joint benchmarking student satisfaction survey
 - ▶ Working out the details, lots of discussion
 - ▶ Changes
- ▶ What did we do? Asked lots of questions

Collaboration and its Benefits

General and Enrolment Information

- ▶ Q1. What year did you first register with *AccessAbility Services*?

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ **2. How did you find out about AccessAbility Services (Please check all boxes that apply)**
- ▶ Direct email to my student email account
- ▶ Orientation week
- ▶ Enrolment form
- ▶ Ad on TV Screen located in campus buildings
- ▶ Student News email
- ▶ Student HQ
- ▶ Swinburne Lecturer/Teacher
- ▶ Faculty or Department staff member
- ▶ Friend
- ▶ AccessAbility Services website
- ▶ Swinburne Twitter
- ▶ Swinburne Facebook
- ▶ Noticeboard
- ▶ Other (please specify) _____

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ **3. Please indicate the category that best describes your situation or condition/s (Please tick all boxes that apply)**
- ▶ Developmental
- ▶ Hearing
- ▶ Intellectual
- ▶ Learning
- ▶ Medical
- ▶ Mental Health
- ▶ Neurological
- ▶ Primary carer for a family member
- ▶ Physical
- ▶ Speech/Communication
- ▶ Vision

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ **4. What is your age group? (Please tick one box only)**
- ▶ 15-18 years of age
- ▶ 19-24 years of age
- ▶ 25-34 years of age
- ▶ 35-44 years of age
- ▶ 45-54 years of age
- ▶ 55-64 years of age
- ▶ 65 years of age and over

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ **5. What is your program type? (Please tick one box only)**
- ▶ Pathways and Vocational Education (TAFE)
- ▶ On Campus Higher Education
- ▶ Swinburne On Line
- ▶ Open Universities Australia (OUA)
- ▶ Diploma/Tertiary Enabling Program
- ▶ Undergraduate
- ▶ Postgraduate

Collaboration and its Benefits

6. How often have you used any of the following AccessAbility Services in the past 12 months

Extensions of Assignment Due Dates
Accessible materials
Notetakers
Participation assistants (assists student in participating in the class and activities)
Auslan interpreters
Live captioning
Advice and assistance on how to manage University life
Assistance negotiating with academic/teaching staff
Assistive/adaptive technology
Alternative examination arrangements
Accessibility website

Collaboration and its Benefits

7. Rate your level of satisfaction with the following AccessAbility services during the last twelve months

Extensions of assignment due dates
Accessible materials
Note takers
Participation assistants (assists student in participating in the class and activities)
Auslan interpreters
Live captioning
Advice and assistance on how to manage University life
Assistance negotiating with academic/teaching staff
Assistive/adaptive technology
Alternative examination arrangements
Accessibility website

Collaboration and its benefits

8. Rate your level of agreement with the following statements

Information about AccessAbility Services is well promoted and is easy to locate and access

The registration process with AccessAbility Services was straight forward

AccessAbility Adviser usually replies to my phone or email messages within 2 working days

Reception staff were helpful

The AccessAbility Adviser and I were able to discuss my needs and agree on a series of adjustments that I was satisfied with

My AccessAbility Adviser made me aware of relevant University procedures

I was able to continue with my studies and succeed due to the adjustments I negotiated with the AccessAbility Adviser

I was happy with the content of my Education Access Plan

Academic/teaching staff were aware of my Education Access Plan

Collaboration and its Benefits

Q8 Cont.

The adjustments as detailed in my Education Access Plan were implemented by academic/teaching staff

Information about my condition/situation was not told to other staff without my knowledge

Information about alternative examination arrangements is clear and easy to follow

University/TAFE computers are accessible and suitable for my needs

Support from AccessAbility Services helped my academic performance

I am aware that the University has a complaints process

Swinburne University is an inclusive environment

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ **9. Does the disability you have sometimes result in issues with physical access within the University?**

Yes

No (Go to Question 11 in Support Service Section)

- ▶ **10. Please detail those physical access problems:**

Collaboration and its Benefits

11. Please select the other support services you have used.

Academic learning and language support

Counselling

Career planning and advice

Financial assistance (unforeseen expenses / student loans)

Student leadership, volunteering and mentoring programs

Orientation and transition support

Library services

Clubs and Societies

Collaboration and its Benefits

12. Please rate your level of satisfaction with the other support services you have used.

Academic learning and language support

Counselling

Career planning and advice

Financial assistance (unforeseen expenses / student loans)

Student leadership, volunteering and mentoring programs

Orientation and transition support

Library services

Clubs and Societies

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ **13. Overall, how would you rate the standard of service provided by AccessAbility Services? Ratings are from one to five, with one being the lowest and five the highest. (Please cross one number only)**

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Poor Fair Excellent

- ▶ **14. Please tell us why you picked the rating? _____**
- ▶ **15. Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve AccessAbility Services? _____**
- ▶ **16. Are there any other comments you would like to make about AccessAbility Services? _____**

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ What did the survey reveal?
 - ▶ Majority of respondents in HEd
 - ▶ Some students need additional time to complete
 - ▶ Disability categories showed mental illness at top of list followed by medical conditions.
 - ▶ Patterns of disability type consistent across institutions
 - ▶ Significant number of mature age students with disabilities studying or returning to study – complex students
 - ▶ Disadvantages – significant gap between study, lower computer skills, complex disabilities

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ How do students find out about us?
 - ▶ #1. Referral from staff
 - ▶ Staff need to be aware and responsive
 - ▶ Disability Services need to reach out constantly and continue to raise awareness
 - ▶ #2. Website
 - ▶ Easy to find and navigate
 - ▶ #3. External professionals
 - ▶ Reach out to peak bodies and create awareness of disability service in tertiary environment and guidance around supporting documentation
- ▶ Consistent pattern of satisfaction with services provided

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ Throughput vs. Care of individuals
 - ▶ Students appreciate advice and assistance on how to manage Uni life
 - ▶ Flexibility around alternative exam arrangements
 - ▶ Info about service is well promoted and easy to find
 - ▶ Students general less satisfied across the board
 - ▶ Don't assume that because students have agreed to their learning access plan that they are happy with it! Why?
 - ▶ Self advocacy
 - ▶ Aware of review options
 - ▶ Changed circumstances

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ Happy with DLO's?
 - ▶ Generally very happy, consistent across institutions.
 - ▶ Staff well resourced and networks of best practice work

Collaboration and its Benefits

- ▶ Conclusions:
 - ▶ Work harder to get feedback from VET
 - ▶ Promote ourselves better
 - ▶ External service providers
 - ▶ Teaching and academic staff
 - ▶ Clear institutional communication strategy in place
 - ▶ Student and staff comms,
 - ▶ Web site
 - ▶ All areas within institution
 - ▶ Survey results support establishment of networks and sharing of ideas and strategies.

Collaboration and its Benefits

▶ Future

- ▶ Liaise with ATEND to run the benchmarking survey nationally
- ▶ Competitive space yet responsibilities to support students with disabilities are national and require collaboration.