

**Concurrent Session A**  
**Monday 12 September 2016**  
**10.50am – 11.40am**



**Session 6**  
**Build It and They Will Come: Engaging Staff in the Service Excellence Journey**  
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*Sharone Ciancio has worked in the tertiary education sector for over 20 years in a range of leadership and management roles. She joined Australian Catholic University in 2013 as the Portfolio Manager for Corporate Services, where she is currently leading a major university program to implement a university-wide service improvement framework. Sharone is a registered psychologist and holds a Bachelor of Behavioural Sciences, a Post Graduate Diploma in Educational Counselling and is currently undertaking the Master of Tertiary Education Management.*

*Bill McKendry joined Australian Catholic University in September 2013 and is currently the national manager of the Service Matters Improvement Team. Prior to working in the higher education sector, Bill had extensive project management and policy experience in various management roles in the Victorian public sector. He holds an MBA, Post Graduate Diploma in Criminology, BA and a Graduate Diploma of Secondary Education.*

Build it and they will come: engaging staff in the service excellence journey

It could be assumed that building a service culture in a University which has a mission and identity grounded in concepts of the dignity of the human person and the common good, is a relatively straightforward if not unnecessary exercise. However, the reality for Australian Catholic University (ACU) was that 'serving others' did not necessarily result in the delivery of high quality services. Whilst everyone knew that service was a key aspect of every job on every campus, there was not a shared view of what service excellence was, who was accountable for it or how to achieve it. As a result, in 2014 ACU launched the Service Matters Framework; a comprehensive service strategy for the university community. The strategy is an ambitious program to enable ACU to achieve its goal of service excellence by ensuring the best possible professional services to support teaching and research.

This presentation will share ACU's experience in translating that goal from rhetoric to reality, with a particular focus on how ACU is engaging staff on the service improvement journey. It is the latest instalment in that story, following previous presentations on the Service Matters Framework and the new 'Service Lead' role. The literature describes engagement as the harnessing of organisational members' selves to their work roles, with employment as an expression of self in the role - emotionally, cognitively and physically (Kahn 1990). Part of ACU's strategy is not only to instil a commitment to service excellence in the hearts and minds of current staff but also to tailor recruitment and selection policies to ensure that new staff are selected on the basis of their skills and commitment to the university's recently adopted Service Principles.

Securing the emotional as well as rational commitment of staff to achieve service excellence is a challenge for any organisation, no less so for higher education institutions where 'customer service' has not been an explicit priority. This presentation will discuss ACU's response to this challenge by

outlining the benefits and lessons learnt from engagement strategies to enhance the service experience at ACU, including:

- Developing a common understanding of service goals and objectives and the service roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders.
- Building capability to ensure staff have the attributes, skills and tools to operate within a service excellence organisation, including through the adoption of Lean as an endorsed improvement methodology.
- Collecting evidence about service performance and responding to staff perceptions about service quality at an operational as well as strategic level (whole of university surveys, workshops).
- Creating a collaborative service delivery model including the value of the role of relationship managers.
- The benefits of a dedicated team to help drive the service excellence agenda, with the imprimatur to 'inquire', 'analyse' and 'recommend'.
- Creating opportunities to share best practice.

Anyone with an interest in strategies for engaging staff and implementing cultural change to achieve service improvement outcomes will benefit from this presentation.