



Catalysing the Future for Pharmacists

Sue Sharpe, Director of Professional Standards at the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain used Catalyst Associates Limited to explore the future roles for pharmacists. Here she talks with Paul Dawes to discuss the methodology they used and its outcomes.

Paul: *When you commissioned this work what were you looking to achieve?*

Sue: The world of health care is changing rapidly. Not just because of government pressure for value for money, nor just because of the leaps and bounds of medical research. Patients themselves, for example, as well as those who want to avoid illness, are becoming increasingly vocal. Pharmacists need guidance through this complexity to identify the future demands they can expect and the roles they will have to fulfil. So we set ourselves the question “what skills will pharmacists need to be able to deliver the services people will want?”

But, as it is made up of pharmacists, the Society must have a good idea of what is to come?

Yes indeed! Some very clear ideas based upon pharmaceutical knowledge and experience. But no matter how accurate those ideas are, **they only come from our perspective.**

We wanted to find the perceptions of our health service colleagues, the public, as well as patients and their advocates. **We wanted to see how the world was likely to change, not just how we would like it to change!**

So you employed the Catalyst Process to explore the future from many perspectives.

Yes - and to develop the methodology so that we could continue to explore.

Tell me about the approach?

Well, the technique extracted and clustered the root causes of problems that people are struggling with right now. The process allowed us to deal with hundreds of statements - so it is rich in detail. In addition the Perception Mapping gave us some clear pictures of how all this data fitted together. It showed us the current world as others see it.

This allowed the Skills Group to look carefully at the drivers of change and to predict future roles for pharmacists.

It is important to note that the Skills Group were directing the process. This is a team of people from within the Society. We were faced with the information and had to turn it into predictions. That is as it should be - this is after all our 'business'. What was different was the information made the opportunities crystal clear to us.

Can you give us an idea of the sort of results you obtained?

Yes. For example, the process made us recognise just how many problems are caused by poor usage of medicines. Medical developments, in areas such as genetics, will not change the world overnight and there are other changes taking place that are perhaps less glamorous but just as important for pharmacists.

Similarly the ageing population brings with it, not just increasing ill-health, but also a more informed and politically active generation. Both of these factors have significant implications for the future shape of services, the roles of pharmacists and the skills they will need.

It has been particularly striking how the drivers of change, that the process has

identified, have appeared in newspaper articles and journals. It is as if there is nothing new - you just need a technique for looking.

What do you consider to be the outcomes from this project?

Suffice to say that we have a large list of roles for pharmacists. These we will discuss with those who develop and provide postgraduate education. We have

a clear picture of the skills that we want to see emerging very quickly so that Pharmacy can take a lead in these areas.

As a project how successful was it?

Well the acid test is what your colleagues say and at a recent Strategy Workshop it was

recognised as an exciting and important piece of work. Council Members, including the President, described it as 'brilliant' and I guess that is as good as it gets!

And the future.....?

That would be telling. But we certainly intend to continue to explore it, using our new methodology.



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