

## **Scenario 5: Business services**

### **Consider the following case history**

The Tropical Conifer Society (TCS) has recently sold the magnificent Arts and Crafts building it was housed in for 50 years and is now leasing the same space from the new owner and has the money from this sale in the bank. At the March Publications Committee meeting the committee passed a motion that the publishing group no longer needs to generate surplus for the society and there should be a move to spend any surplus generated on funding new initiatives. Three such initiatives have been proposed by prominent and vocal members of the Committee already. The Publications Committee noted that a commercial publisher had already launched two of the new publishing ideas that had been suggested and discussed at the March 2004 meeting but went no further. They feel strongly that opportunities to provide new services to society Members, and build the societies brand within its community are being missed.

The Publications Manager comes from a production background and has done an excellent job at streamlining the journal workflow and speeding up the publication times for the journal – so all three are now highly competitive, submissions are increasing and the most recent Impact Factor showed an increase from the previous two years. However, this new strategy for the societies' publishing activities is worrying to him. He is concerned that not all the ideas proposed are in fact sound but has no experience of preparing new publication proposals or business plans, and he wonders how to test these new products in the marketplace before making a commitment to implement them. He also knows that new products are unlikely to generate surplus in the early years and so now needs to be sure to prepare a 3 to 5 year budget for the publications, for approval by the Publications Committee in August, to show how the surplus from the journals is being plowed back into the new business development. He has never done this before as an annual budget is all that has been required.

His knows his job is likely to be on the line if he is not seen to move these ideas ahead. He needs and wants to do this in the most rigorous, responsible and professional way. He has begun to talk to providers of strategic business services including new product development and strategic planning.

In discussion with your group please answer the following points based on your and your group's combined experiences and reflecting on this case history:

1. What information and questions must the Publications Manager acquire from each Business Service provider in assessing the suitability of each group for the tasks he needs help with?
2. Instead of finding help from outside the Publications Manager would quite like to enroll on an MBA course and develop the skills himself. Would your group recommend this option?
3. What other business services might this Publisher seek in order to help support the new society strategy?
4. What process will the Publications Manager need to implement in order to be sure that the new business development can move ahead without the Publications Committee's involvement in every step of their individual "pet" projects?
5. How would you judge the success of the outsourced solution 12 months after it was implemented?