

David Dadswell, *Consultancy Skills for Mission and Ministry* (London, SCM, 2011) pp.223, paperback, USD\$35 (paperback), \$15.30 (kindle), ISBN 978-0-334-04373-7

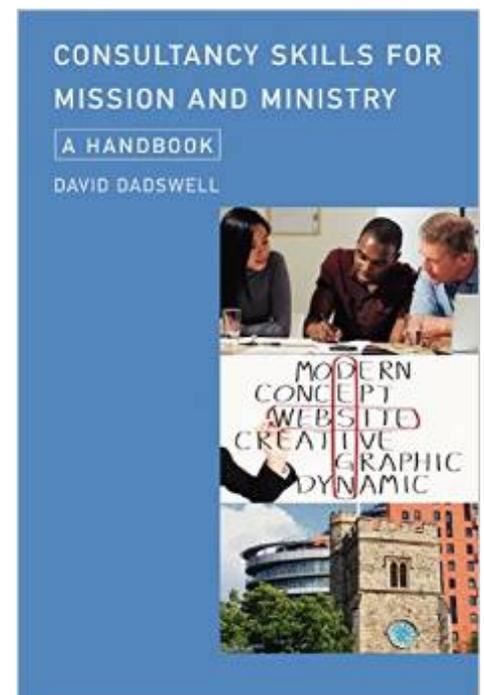
Reviewed by Darren Cronshaw

An increasing number of leaders, churches and denominations are turning to consultancies for help with responding to difficulties, dreaming about future possibilities, undergoing change or generally wanting to foster healthy systems. For example, the Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Baptist Union of New South Wales have well developed systems for training and utilizing church consultants. Churches are complex organisations with their own history and cultures, theologies and processes, rules and expectations. A skilled outsider who engages in well-designed intentional conversations can help church groups understand themselves, discern options and make wise decisions.

Revd Dr David Dadswell is an Anglican priest who has worked as a consultant in church, commercial and public sectors. He taught a Masters level course in consultancy for mission and ministry through the York Institute for Community Theology. The ideal use of a consultant, he outlines, is as a companion to help a leader and/or group reflect thoughtfully on what they are doing and where they are going. He wrote *Consultancy Skills for Mission and Ministry* to help his readers understand and make the most of using or being a consultant.

Dadswell presents a church consultant as a non-directive (or consultor-directed) joint problem-solver, who like a ministry coach helps a person or group find their own solution. To fulfill this role, he draws on frameworks from systems thinking, appreciative inquiry, management consultancy, psychodynamic understandings, chaos theories, action research, change theories, gestalt therapy, Tavistock, group relations and reflective practice. For background he explores the nature of churches, the role of clergy, the nature of different sized churches, church life cycles, boundaries, Covey's Urgent/Important matrix and biblical models of consultancy (Jethro and Jesus). For providing consultancy to churches, Dadswell counsels how to negotiate the consultancy relationship, contract the focus and identify the critical issue, and analyse and design a process. He offers valuable case studies of how consultants have worked well and advice on recruiting, training and supervising consultants. There is advice on the best consultancy resources available, and a broader extensive bibliography.

In our denominational tribe, the Baptist Union of Victoria, we are seeking to reimagine around mission and one of the strategies we will use is a newly recruited team of consultants. This book promises to be a useful resource. One of the things I was most interested in was Dadswell's frameworks for helping a church think through how best to cooperate with God in mission. I would have liked to have seen more on this, but he reframes the mission vs maintenance debate by suggesting we need to grapple with how to maintain churches so they can best support mission, that is if the church wants



to authentically be called a church. The most effective consultancy will have a mission focus, even if the presenting issue is crisis, change or church health.

At a local church level, I especially appreciated the discussion of Appreciative Inquiry. Some common consultancy approaches can assume dysfunction and weakness in a system rather than begin by looking at strengths and potential. AI's use of imagination, stories and memory is a more positive way of navigating planning and change. This prompted ideas for me of asking people in my church about the church storyline, significant events and people, and where the church has been at its best in mission and worship in previous years.

The book is more of a broad overview than an in-depth development of one model. Dadswell argues a consultant should be able to explain and justify their consultancy model, and he explains his approach is as a process-oriented work consultant, but he tends to outline issues and options more than proposing a preferred approach along the different steps of a process. That is consistent with his non-directive approach, but not as straightforward for the beginning consultant.

Nevertheless, this is an excellent and accessible textbook for church consultants and denominational workers offering a thorough introduction to consultancy models, skills, frameworks and processes. Coming from an experienced consultant and trainer, it includes passionate encouragement for consultants to continue active reflection and development in their skills. It encouraged me to consider pursuing training in church consultancy, and at least to continue reading and reflecting on the issues.

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