Sanofi Podcast Transcript

Rebecca Brizi:
Welcome to the Springer Nature podcast, in which we'll explore the topic of how information professionals can empower their end users to improve information functions. Today, we're talking with Lella Dal Ferro at Sanofi Pasteur, the vaccines branch of a global life sciences company based in Lyon, France. Lella is the Information Resources Coordinator with the Scientific Intelligence Platform of the R&D Efficiency and Portfolio Management Group.

I'm Rebecca Brizi, a senior analyst with Jinfo Limited. We are a global analyst firm focused on the business information industry, and we are proud to be the research partner to Springer Nature for this podcast series.

We asked Lella about how end-user empowerment has changed over the years, and what has led and pushed those trends. The information resources team is continuously working to ensure the right people have the right access and training for end products. But what does this look like in practice?

Lella Dal Ferro:
Well, certainly there's been an increase in user capability, user self-sufficiency. People have a much better understanding of using different resources.

The fact that a lot more information is available and accessible online has enabled the user to really be the main conduit of getting their own information. They don't have to go through an intermediary, which, in the past, when I started this career, we were the gatekeepers to a lot of reference information for people who didn't actually physically want to come to the brick-and-mortar library and actually look at journals physically. They would come to the librarian, us, and we would be the ones that would do all the different searching and help get different types of information for them.

Now that we've moved to a more virtual environment where a lot more information is accessible, even on free platforms, not even just ones that are on a subscription basis, this really has opened up the capability of the user.

But at the same time, I find that their focus can become a little narrowed. So depending on what their experience is and what they've used, they may see that as the only source or the best source. And so, there is a little bit of a danger there, in terms of resting all your decisions on a particular area that you know well, but you may not necessarily know what else is available to you.

Yes, the technical abilities have definitely increased, but I think there still is room for really integrating information for the end user to make sure that they're actually getting the whole picture, which is... It's so important now, with the fast pace of everything.

Rebecca Brizi:
How are you building and then nurturing those relationships in an ongoing fashion?
Lella Dal Ferro:
So, we do it a number of different ways. When we have an initial interaction with a particular client, it's really just trying to understand where they are, what are they doing, what is their level of information literacy, what exactly do they need? And then we'll come back with different sources. And sometimes it can be transactional and "there, it's done."

But for other ones, where we're providing ongoing support, really we're trying to create either alerts or things like that, that they will get periodic information from us.

And then, for the other client base, we're looking more at online training, having lunch-and-learns, just reaching out with different questions. When we see something arise within the company, we'll try to jump on that and either create, "Hey, this is how you find this information," or, "What happened to this particular resource? Let's talk about that."

And we have to say that we don't have them often, because you don't want to be in their face all the time. You have to be respectful of people's workloads. But we try to do it on a, say, every couple of months, having some kind of lunch-and-learn where you're able to interact with the end user, and there has been a very good turnout. There is interest. And I think it also offers a little bit of humanity. It's that breakup of being just isolated if you're not on-site. So it's a good way to keep that relationship going.

Rebecca Brizi:
Yes, and when we talk about empowering end users, we are talking about awareness, access, and usability. Can you give us examples of ways you present those three facets to your end users?

Lella Dal Ferro:
So, the one thing I do is, when we do an online training for either a particular resource or even an orientation, is to keep it simple, not to overload them with tons of information, because they're going to, A, become disinterested in three seconds, and they're going to forget. So, if you can keep it with three main points, that's usually the nice target number. The retention will be a lot better.

Also, if you can simplify it in a way that is actionable for them. So keep it something that you know it's something that they want to do. Like as simple as how to order an article, or how to find a journal, or something like that. And "Hey, here, I've got a reference card for you so that you can paste that by your screen, so when you come back to it three months from now, you can actually remember how to do it."

I find it's so easy as an information professional, because I think we get excited, and we give them everything. And that approach is overwhelming and it turns people off. Who wants to maintain that kind of attention? And not all of its useful! So you have to really understand what your target population is, and then tailor what you're going to train and keep it short and simple.

Rebecca Brizi:
How do you make that decision about what should be end user training and what should be kept in-house, so to speak? What should just be expert’s use or access?
Lella Dal Ferro:
I think that comes with experience, and also knowing the customer. When you change behavior, you have to do it in a way that is not so intrusive, not so difficult, that the user immediately pushes back and says, "I don't want to do this." Because people don't like too much change. And so it has to be introduced in sort of a very easy, step-wise fashion in order for people to say, "Okay, well, this is not too bad. I think I can do this." And if you can highlight that benefit and say, "This is what you can get," then they see it as, "Okay, this is something I need. I've got to learn this."

So, finding that, again, is experience, is knowing your client. You know that the clinician is going to have certain wants, to look a certain type of information, whereas a researcher really needs to know how to get deep down into the literature and find that esoteric piece of information. Whereas the public affairs person just wants a nice, broad view so that they can put it in a PowerPoint kind of thing.

So, there's a whole wide range of users, and it's just a matter of learning what their preferences are, and that kind of comes with trial and error, in the beginning.

Rebecca Brizi:
The other relationship essential to all this is, of course, with the vendors. How do you approach this relationship in terms of improving use by end users?

Lella Dal Ferro:
The vendors are essential. As an information professional and information resource group, we're not the priority within the company. So in terms of internal support from ITS or any groups like that, it is very limited. We're way down on the food chain, and that's totally legitimate. If the company is making widgets, that's their priority.

So, ourselves, we have found that moving out and interacting directly with the vendors, to be able to develop the tools that we bring in-house, is a much more efficient and effective relationship that we can have. So, for us, the vendor relationships really are our bread and butter. They're the ones that help us customize the different particular tools, and they listen to us and they develop their software as well.

So, it's really a two-way street, because we'll come up with certain ideas, and I'm sure other professionals are doing the same thing, and that gives the vendor some insight on where the trends are, who is needing what, and that will help them develop their services further or their tools further. So for me it's instrumental. I couldn't imagine doing this job without our vendors.

Rebecca Brizi:
Lella, thank you. That was Lella Dal Ferro of Sanofi Pasteur, speaking about the changes in expectations and needs of end users and the work she does to keep them productive. Listeners, thank you for joining us for Springer Nature's podcast on key topics on information strategy and management. Learn more about this project by visiting Springer Nature's Resources for Information Professionals.