



The Business of Forensic Science: A New Paradigm

Max Houck

The concept of operations of the provision of forensic science services can be thought of as an enterprise of non-profit, production-oriented organizations staffed by knowledge workers. Forensic scientists convert physical items and data (evidence) into knowledge using (forensic) science, in the form of reports and testimony; this is their manufacturing function and their product, respectively. They specialize in these conversions, occupying a specific and necessary space as translators of complex scientific information, simplifying it into a format suitable for consumption by non-scientists. Forensic service providers and their parent organizations use terms such as 'cost-effective' vaguely without reference to other disciplines that use these as well-defined technical terms in evaluative phrases or formulae. Despite the great concern and administrative angst over forensic service providers' 'performance' and 'capacity,' these metrics go undefined as industry standards. This presentation offers a perspective on how to view the "business of forensic science" in a way that lays a foundation for service providers to strategize, operate effectively and efficiently, and assess performance for improved service provision.