

Why do I need a consultant?



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A great question that deserves an effort at a really good answer. Speaking as someone who has spent their entire professional career as a consultant I believe the main reason to engage a consultant is for our wit and charm. Okay, let's look at some better and more compelling business reasons. A consultant is sometimes called "someone who takes your watch and tells you the time". That remark is shortsighted. David Sarnoff put it this way, "Always put someone between you and the problem".



Courtesy reverselogisticstrends.com

While not all consultants are business consultants, it is a business problem that typically drives the decision to engage a consultant or consulting service. There are actually only a few major categories that consultants fall into, but within these categories there are many disciplines. These disciplines are not based on skill sets but on the type of consulting performed; technical, management and business. In each category the consulting may take the form of advisor, solution architect, negotiator, implementer, and project manager.

Interestingly, there may be many different reasons for engaging a consultant, they distill into a relatively small identifiable list that might even breakdown per category. In each of the categories there are many different consulting firms and individuals that specialize in one or more of these areas.

1. **Business**
 - a. **Analysis**
 - b. **Advisor**
 - i. **Growth**
 - ii. **Planning**
 - iii. **Change**
 - c. **Financial**
 - i. **Management**

Consultants by their nature, work on different projects, under diverse circumstances and in different corporate, political, geographic and demographic cultures. The benefit of this type of exposure and experience is that it brings fresh ideas, knowledge and information to a project. In this scenario the consultant is an advisor who can take an objective look at a project and bring their experience to recommend possible or alternative solutions.

In many cases, consultants specialize in a specific area or develop deep familiarity with specific systems or technologies. It is impractical or not the best use of available resources for the organization to focus on this one area. A consultant or consulting team may be brought in for that specific knowledge set. This could be a financial system, media asset management system or new optical transport network.

Consultants can provide a critical role as an advisor, providing objective analysis and recommendations that are unbiased. It is not unusual for internal resources to analyze and solve problems or design an upgrade or introduce new systems and based on the same methodologies and philosophies that the existing systems were built on. The consultant can bring a fresh perspective with different technology and operational concepts.

The introduction of new technology, systems and workflows require an adoption process. Change management is a critical component to the implementation of new systems. Change management and training is an area where consultants provide high value.

Over the course of my career, while there is a common thread to my engagements, they have all been different. An outside person can become part of a startup team, where there is only a project concept, a compelling business reason and the finances to support the project. On these projects, the role may be to act as a technology design architect to understand the vision in a tangible way and create the master technology plan, complete with specifications, budgets and project plan.

In many cases if the project is approved, the consultant is retained as the project executive to implement the project. As the new business begins to create an organizational structure and hire the management team and the operations and technical staff, the role transitions to advisor and trainer to give the new team members adequate background information and documentation.

In this role, I was part of a team that launched new commercial television networks in Central Europe, working closely with local partners and once they were fully staffed and the networks launched successfully, the consulting team moved on to the next project.

Many times, clients are existing organizations that need to upgrade facilities, relocate or migrating to next generation digital production and broadcast technologies. On these projects there may be different disciplines and the owner needs a single project executive to coordinate the required transition.

Today, I'm often called in to advise on the transition to IP. Here my role is to help organizations plan, design and implement file based technology and new workflows. This transition requires new concepts in media management and the integration of enterprise and broadcast systems, metadata and the delivery to multiple delivery platforms have created challenges to organizations. Often the required steps to effectively implement

such growth is beyond the current staff's capabilities.

Engaging a consultant is a often a good strategic move for any organization. It introduces other experiences and knowledge sets, provides the needed additional resource for a project and brings a dedicated resource to focus on and execute a new business initiative.

A good consulting engagement should be like having your own elf, getting lots of work accomplished in the background allowing the accolades of success to be credited to the wise decision maker who brought in the necessary support.

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