

What Does It Take to Become a Successful Consultant?

So, you want to be a consultant? Here are some tips and techniques to follow so you can become successful in the consulting field.

What is a consultant?

A consultant is an externally employed professional who is an expert in a specific field. Consultants provide services on a temporary basis to companies, non-profit organizations and government organizations.



Are there different kinds of consultants?

Professional consultants can either be independent or body shop consultants. As an independent consultant, you can expect:

- Frequent traveling
- Project-based jobs
- Variety of work and people to work with
- The juggling of sales/delivery thought, leadership and learning
- Tolerance for variable cash flow

- Out-of-pocket expenses for phones, computers and backup
- Out-of-pocket expenses for benefits and both sides of the tax equation
- Variable and often demanding work hours
- Free flowing (though your clients will create their own bureaucracy)

If being an independent consultant doesn't interest you, you may want to consider becoming a body shop consultant instead. Some examples of what you can expect as a body shop consultant include:

- Company choice drives travel
- Long-term focus on a blend of operations and projects
- Generally consistent team members
- The client pays for phones, computers and gear

- One primary role
- Steady cash flow and company benefits, taxes, 401k, etc.
- More regular or planned work hours
- Bureaucracy and rules

What skills do successful consultants have?

A certain skill set is required to become a successful consultant. Generally, these skills include:

- A working knowledge of business basics, including financial analysis, writing skills and speaking/presentation skills
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills – you must be comfortable dealing with different personality types, collaborating with others and mediating
- Creative problem-solving
- Graphical visioning
- Researching and networking
- Intellectual creativity
- Quick thinking
- Parachute in and go!
- Organizational skills
- Adaptability/tolerance for change
- High drive and “enough” energy
- Mathematics and analytic skills are a plus

What should you expect in a day in the life of a consultant?

A typical day in the life of a consultant involves analysis, innovation, administration and survival. Adopting these techniques will ensure a successful consulting business and a satisfied client base. A breakdown of a consultant's day includes:

Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluations• Validations• Comparisons• Fix or repair• Make or buy• Financial models• Listening to needs	Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New applications to solve existing problems• Innovative design to meet planned objectives
Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proposals, proposals and more proposals!• Document (e.g. workpapers)• Billing	Survival <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Political savvy• Observational skills• People skills

What do clients expect from consultants?

To build a successful consulting organization, you need to know what your clients are looking for in a consultant. In general, clients expect:

- Objectivity
- Big picture
- Strong communication skills
- Expertise in selected areas
- An understanding of the client's business/problems
- Results – hard work doesn't count here!
- Good sense of balance
- Honesty
- Fast responses
- High "touch"
- Added value
- Flexibility



What do successful consulting organizations have in common?

Not everyone can build a successful consulting organization. So, what is it that sets apart a successful consultant organization from an unsuccessful one? Successful organizations:

- Are customer driven
- Focus on the market and serving customer needs
- Spread information across the entire organization (groupware)
- Concentrate on profitability
- Focus on customer care and satisfaction
- Leverage to the most effective level
- Add value to as many transactions as possible

Tips for becoming and staying successful

To become successful and stay there, consultants must work to maintain their level of expertise and knowledge of the field. To do this, it is recommended that you should:

- Read useful documents, such as Beyond Trade journals (e.g. Red Herring), information published by Gartner Group/IDC, consultant reports and technical/industry press
- Join speaking club
- Undergo formal training
- Get online
- Attend and participate in trade shows
- Constantly upgrade your skills and knowledge
- Learn how to research



More information

For more thought leadership and resources please visit our website at SuiteCX.com

Contact us

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