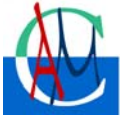


What does it take to be a consultant?

Consultants work in an ever changing and challenging business environment. Clients are paying more for your services than they pay for most of their own employees, so they expect more too. When you arrive you don't have a lot of time to get oriented and organized. You are expected to hit the deck running – to add value right from the start.

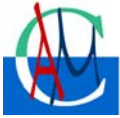
This little guide is written to help you decide if consulting is for you. It gives some insight into what you can expect and what people will expect of you. Consulting is not for everyone. It has a high “drop out” rate. Many get into it because they are stuck and need a job but they didn't really want to be there. They don't last long. Usually they find a “real job” as they put it, and bail out quickly. Others can't handle the stresses that come with the long hours, extensive travel and constant pressure to perform. Others thrive in that environment. Here are some things to consider before you make the leap.

- **Experience.** You can't hit the deck running if you haven't seen the clients' problems or situation before. Clients often prefer experience from their industry and discount any other as irrelevant. And they are right some of the time, but often they won't see how your “other” experience can help them until they've seen you in action. Your knowledge and insight are what the client really wants. Lack of it, in any form, is obvious to the client and unwanted. Less experienced consultants can be highly successful working with and / or under the direction of a highly experienced one. Inexperience itself, rarely “cuts it” and it certainly doesn't sell well. If we can't sell your services why would we want to add you to our costs?
- **Flexibility and comfort with change and uncertainty.** Change is why you were brought to the client. They are undergoing some sort of change. You must be a master at handling change or you won't be a help to your clients. Your own life will be full of change – a steady diet of new clients, new industries, new challenges.
- **Flexibility in your working habits.** No client adapts to your way of working. If they start their normal day at 7 AM, then so do you. Unless your own “different” habits are something the client is trying to emulate you will have to conform to your clients' norms of behaviour, dress code, etc. If you don't “fit in” you may find yourself replaced. Yes, some clients are more fun than others and you don't always get to pick and choose!
- **Self-starter.** As a consultant you will be teaching, advising and coaching your clients. You may be working on their teams as an “extra-hand”. You don't take

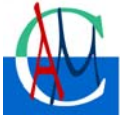


direction when it comes to what you've been brought in to deliver, you provide it. That doesn't mean you run their show. You lead by example, by suggestion, by steering through questions, rarely by decree. If you are not a self-starter you'll bomb. Many a consultant has been sent home because of a lack of initiative that the client noticed. They don't pay for you to sit around and watch the clock.

- Financial stability. Some firms will hire you as an employee but there's an increasing trend these days towards contract employment. When there's work there's a job, otherwise you are out looking for it. You need some level of financial stability to carry you over through the dry spells between client engagements and a level of comfort with the uncertainty about how long those dry spells can last. Many consultants can't handle the stress that comes with "no steady pay check" so they don't opt for the often more lucrative contract approach. We are looking for creative and entrepreneurial minded consultants so we will work with you only on a contracted basis.
- Mobility. Expect a lot of travel. Successful consultants are often busy on client work for more than 60% of their time, some for much more. Often that will require you to travel. Expect to be away from home a lot – don't ask for numbers, we can't give them to you. It depends on where the work is. You may not get home some weekends either. If your client is a day of travel away from your home and you need to be there more than one working week you may find yourself spending weekends away. That's not unusual and it isn't always bad. Clients don't want to pay a lot in airfares so they'll pay for weekend hotels and meals, but you don't have the added stress associated with the travel. A day of travel at each end of a client visit doesn't allow for many working days in a week so you may work long hours too.
 - Your clients may be close to home but oft-times they are not. It's not unusual to have to travel for hours, or in some cases days, to reach your clients so that the work can begin. You can expect to suffer a bit of fatigue just from the travel experience. Air travel these days is not a fun experience – long check-in lines, longer security lines, belligerent security screen personnel, over-priced but poor quality food in airline waiting areas, over-crowded executive lounges, long delays that don't get announced until the last minute and random events like weather all add to the stress. Driving is not much better. Poorly maintained roads, long drives, highly variable driving conditions, the other drivers, the unfamiliarity and surprises you always find in the rental car experience (not all bad), long waits at toll booths, etc. Expect to arrive stressed and tired wherever you go.



- **Benefits.** You are on your own. That's why we pay more for your services. There is no safety net unless you create your own. If you want employee benefits then find a job somewhere other than in contracted services.
- **Organized.** You need to be incredibly organized in your life. From how you pack to how you present your findings in a complex project to your clients' executives, you have demands on you that won't be satisfied if you are disorderly. Even packing for a business trip requires thought – if you can get it all in one small carry-on (remember the liquids restrictions at airports), then you save yourself an hour or sometimes more of travel time. That matters at the end of a long day or when you are headed home after a week away. Your thinking about the client situation must be clear and results must be presented concisely. A lack of organization with your client means lack of communication and clarity. That can spell disaster.
- **Get over your own ego.** Regardless of how much respect you got in your last full time position, no matter how senior you may have been, you are just another consultant. There are only a rare few consultants who are well known enough often because of books they've written, to command respect from the time they walk onsite at the client's offices or plant. You earn respect one client at a time. If you are egotistical, overly proud, like to boast, talk about your higher education, you'll bomb. Get over yourself. You are there to add value not star power.
- **You get along with people.** Your personal network of contacts might be a good indicator of how well you meet and get along with people. If it's large, and truly all yours, then you probably do well with others. Regardless of your network or address book however, you must be a people person. Consulting, even if it's of a highly technical nature, is all about relationships. Successful consultants are also well liked people. Clients will ask for you back. Extroverts are not always good people types either – they can be abrasive unless they keep it in check. However, extroverts won't be shy and withdrawn. They'll have an easier time delivering whatever message must be delivered in a meeting or a presentation setting. They'll have an easier time interviewing people, asking questions, probing. Introverts may also do well, but more likely in the role of analyst or report writing.
- **You can sell.** The most successful consultants sell themselves, their work, their company. They bring in more work for themselves and others. The more they bring in the better they do. Even in conventional large firms it's the consultants who sell who rise to the ranks of partnership. Being smart will get you just so far. You can't sell if you are not much of a people person. You've got to be a real star with interpersonal relationships.



- You are clear and realistic about your goals. You need to know what you want out of your arrangement with us so that you can state it up front. No beating around the bush. Be direct. If you are too expensive we'll say so. We can only get "so much" from a client and it doesn't all go into your pocket. If you want to do that, then find your own clients and see just how much you really do get to keep. If you are too cheap – we'll say so too. That's unusual. We've actually paid consultants more than they asked for because they didn't have a good idea of what the market would bear. We believe in win-win so we begin with our relationship with you, but you really need to know what you want. And keep it realistic.
- You are "low maintenance". Your role with your clients is to help them. You can do that very effectively if you yourself are constantly in need of help. A "high maintenance" consultant won't be asked back. Simply put, a high maintenance consultant isn't really a consultant at all.
- A supportive home environment. Your life style at home is your business but recognize that a choice to become a consultant will put stresses into your home life. You no longer work 9 to 5 and commute home every day. Your spouse will be home without you for most if not all of your business trips. That time apart is hard on any relationship. Both of you may find that difficult. Your children, if you have them at home, will miss you too. You'll miss them. Your schedule is not predictable, but you do have some control over it. Clients know you are a person too, so most of them are flexible. If they are not, and they won't listen to reasonable requests in favour of a decent work / life balance, then we don't want them as clients!
 - We don't want you around our offices. As a contract consultant you may also be working from your own home. That has some tax advantages and the commute is really easy to take, but it also brings stress into the home situation. Be aware of your choices and choose wisely.

This guide may be a bit blunt but it is pretty accurate. It reflects our experience and insight. We hope you found reading it helpful.