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How to use consulting effectively

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How to use consulting effectively

Fiona Czerniawska François Rivard

Fiona Czerniawska is a leading commentator on the consulting industry. She is the joint founder and managing director of Source (www.sourceforconsulting.com) which aims to help clients purchase consulting services in a more transparent, effective and efficient way. She is also Head of Research at the Management Consultancies Association in the UK. Her books include *The Intelligent Client* and *Management Consulting in Practice: Award-Winning International Case Studies*. She is also the co-author of *Business Consulting: A Guide to How it Works and How to Make it Work*, published by The Economist.

François Rivard is a partner at Logica Business Consulting. He helps clients transform their organisations. He presents seminars and conferences throughout the year and teaches in French universities. He has written five books about information system management.

Logica Business Consulting is the consulting division of the Logica Group, a business and technology service company employing 39,000 people. It provides business consulting, systems integration, and outsourcing to clients around the world, including many of Europe's largest businesses. It is committed to long term collaboration, applying insight to create innovative answers to clients' business needs.

Logica Business Consulting has a network of 3,500 consultants located throughout Europe. Logica's consultants help drive the success of clients' transformation projects. They stand apart through their European culture, ability to work closely with clients, and unique blend of sector-based, functional and technological expertise.

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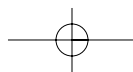
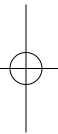
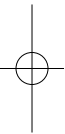
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Preface

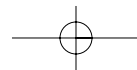
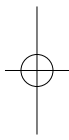
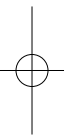
Twenty years ago, multi-million pound business consulting deals were something signed on the strength of a short slideshow and a handshake. And consultants rarely ventured beyond the boardroom. When their big ideas filtered down to the front line, they often turned out not to be fit for purpose. Processes had to be unlearned, redesigned and relearned, at a colossal cost.

No more. Today, clients rightly expect more for their money. They're not just looking for "thinkers" but "doers", people who can deliver measurable value and tangible results. People with real knowledge of different markets and cultures, and a global set of skills. Consultants have always needed relevant practical experience and innovative ideas, but today they also need to demonstrate a wider and more intimate understanding of the complex relationships between business processes, people and technology. From initial ideas, to managing operational improvements using IT, through to the final delivery and beyond.

To deliver real change, consultants also need the freedom to be creative. When purchasing departments start to get too heavily involved in defining the brief, they end up stifling the chances for serious innovation.

In this book, we take a fresh look at the client-consultant relationship from both sides of the table. It features contributors from across Europe, exploring the unique expectations and practices in different markets – and their best-kept secrets for getting the most from your business consulting partnerships.

Andy Green
CEO, Logica



Introduction

Mapping out a new client-consultant relationship

More from less: it will be the central theme of business in the 21st century.

Whatever type of organisation you work in, wherever you fit in its organisational structure, the people around you expect more from you than ever before. Your shareholders want better returns; your colleagues expect you to do the impossible; your employees look to you to set priorities and clear the way through the morass of everyday work in order to achieve what is important, not just what is urgent.

After decades in which organisations have sought to minimise their costs, the recent recession has taught us that, whatever costs you have cut, these will never be enough. Now, the still tentative economic recovery is teaching us that organisations have to deliver still more, of higher quality and with greater responsiveness, without allowing their costs to creep back up.

Management consultants play a crucial role, and one that has been steadily increasing over the last 20 years, as organisations become clearer about the functions and activities which are central to their long-term existence, in which they need to excel, and those which are required for only short periods of often intense activity. Consultants help clients in three fundamental ways. First and foremost, they provide specialist skills which can be crucial to a particular project or initiative but which are in scarce supply. Given sufficient time and money, other organisa-

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tions can acquire these skills too, but if the skills are only required for a short time, then bringing experts in straight away saves time and ultimately money. But consultants also help create momentum. Trapped in the daily rhythm of work, reacting quickly to immediate problems, it can be hard for managers to find the time to work on new projects. Even when they can, their day-to-day commitments inevitably distract them. By contrast, consultants are accustomed to working on projects, rather than in line-management roles, and can focus all their attention on a longer-term initiative without being pulled in other directions by existing commitments. Consultants not only bring experience of past projects in other organisations – a map of the road, if you like – but the energy to push projects through to their conclusion. Last, but by no means least, consultants bring an outside perspective and are therefore able to look at an organisation objectively and challenge existing assumptions, whereas managers, however senior they may be, become caught up and constrained by the organisational norms around them.

Consultants and the organisations that bring them in can each make important albeit different contributions; their skills and ways of working are complimentary.

This brings us to the central thesis of this book: one of the ways in which organisations can get more from less is to leverage the knowledge and experience of consultants more effectively, but doing this depends on balanced co-operation between clients and consultants.

Much literature produced by consulting firms is given over to the term “working in partnership”, but it has never been very clear what this means in practice. The whole concept of partnership has been misused to a point where, these days, it simply refers to the ability of two organisations to get along with each other. Clients don’t want such “partners” anymore, because getting the

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best value from consultants depends on far more than this. As this book explains, it requires co-operation at all levels, from the individual to the corporate, and a structure in which there is an equal contribution from both clients and consultants.

Imagine you're going on a long car journey, through difficult, perhaps even un-mapped terrain. You can choose to make this trip by yourself, but the preparations will take longer and the travelling itself will be tougher. You will have no one to share the driving with, no one to check that you're on the right route. No one will make sure that you have everything you need for the journey and for your destination, except you. As the day of departure approaches, you'll get pulled in different directions. Have you checked the oil and the tires? Have you packed the things you'll need? Do you have the right maps? You'll also have no one to bounce ideas off or to help solve problems. What do you do when the engine fails? If you've gone off course, what's the best way back? Perhaps most importantly of all, if you're alone when you encounter a problem en route, you're far more likely to give up and turn back. Sharing the journey with others gives you extra pairs of hands, different skills (someone who knows how to repair the engine for example), and different suggestions when you encounter a problem.

People who travel together are more likely to arrive.

The same is true in business. The work of a senior manager in any organisation can be a lonely one; often it appears that those around you expect the earth from you. Bringing in additional support – consultants – for a specific journey makes sense. But what you don't want is someone who is pleasant to talk to, as they sit in the front seat of the car, but who doesn't share the driving, help read the map, or pack the luggage. Interesting conversation may be entertaining but it doesn't help get you to your destination. Having decided that you need help, you need real, practical, tangible help.

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This book uses the metaphor of a journey to explore what that more meaningful client-consultant relationship looks like.

Part 1 (**Spark**) looks at the issues you need to consider when planning the journey.

The first chapter (**Knowing where you want to go**) explores in greater detail why organisations use consultants. When organisations decide to hire consultants, they typically focus their attention on the project or problem at hand. They might need an IT system replacing, or they might want someone to review the operational efficiency of their HR function; they might want help gathering data to support a difficult decision, or need advice on how best to manage the disruption involved in outsourcing their finance and administration. What they do not always think about is why they require external assistance at that point in time. What is it that the consultants will do or bring, that the organisation cannot do for itself?

This is the equivalent of deciding whether you want to make the journey by yourself or with others. You may decide that, because it is a short journey through familiar country, that you don't need any help. You may identify people in your own organisation who can share the driving with you, or who can read the map. Or you may conclude that, because you're travelling through uncharted territory and because your own staff are already very busy, you need some people to travel with you. Once you've decided you need support, the next question is the kind of support you need. Crucial to getting the best out of any consulting project is having a clear idea from the outset about what it is that the consultants can do that you cannot do for yourself – their *differential* value. Do you want specialist skills, or a road-map and the energy to help you complete your journey more quickly and successfully than would be the case if you were travelling by yourself? Or do you need an external perspective, someone whom you can trust to be independent?

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The answers to these questions will determine the kind of consulting firm you should choose to make the journey with you. As Chapter 2 (**Choosing the right travelling companion**) explains, there is no point selecting a small, specialised firm if you're looking for help in maintaining momentum in a large-scale project, or asking a firm that facilitates change if you want detailed analysis of an external market. Recent changes in procurement have made it more difficult for clients to debate their exact needs with potential suppliers, but it is crucial to do this if you want to ensure that you're using consultants, not only where they are absolutely necessary, but also where they can add the most value.

In Part 2 (**Engine**), we will turn our attention to what you need to do just prior to the journey, to ensure you get to your final destination as efficiently and successfully as possible. We will focus on three critical areas here:

- Chapter 3 (**Shaping the ecosystem**) focuses on how you establish an “ecosystem” in which clients, consultants and – where they form part of a project – hardware and/or software providers all co-operate. This is the foundation of a successful relationship.
- High-level commitment and sponsorship is the theme of Chapter 4 (**Building commitment to the journey**). It is pointless to expect people who work with the consultants, to be fully committed to a project if they do not think the people they work for are. Thus, every time a senior manager fails to come to a steering group meeting sends a message to everyone else that the organisation does not really take the consulting project seriously. Ensuring top-level commitment depends on the early involvement of those concerned and realistic planning. However, it should not be seen as a one-sided affair: the consult-

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ing firm needs to be equally committed and some type of performance-related pay may contribute to this.

- In Chapter 5 (**Creating the metrics for success**) we look at how both sides need to invest time and effort, even before a project has started, defining what success will look like and finding the appropriate set of metrics with which to monitor and evaluate the project as a whole.

Part 3 (**Acceleration**) tackles the issues you need to address during the journey – during the course of the consulting project itself – if you're to arrive at your destination as efficiently and successfully as possible. Here, we will consider five critical points of leverage which will ensure you get the maximum value out of using consultants:

- The more difficult the journey, the more vital is good communication. **Ensuring transparency** (Chapter 6) looks at the importance of open communication within the consulting ecosystem. Internal people need to understand why consultants have been brought in, if they are to work effectively with them, otherwise they tend to feel marginalised and undervalued. Yet most communication during a consulting project comes from the senior executive who decided to hire the consultants and his or her immediate team. Not all of it filters down to people who work alongside the consultants. Indeed, a law of inverse proportions works: the lower down in the project hierarchy an internal person is, the more important it is for them to be able to work with the consultants effectively, but the less likely it is that the top-down rationale for using the consultants will have reached them. To resolve this, the sponsoring executive needs to send out a clearer message, aimed at all levels, on a purely consistent basis. Without this clear and consistent centre, reminding everyone of what is at stake, there is a risk that the ecosystem will fall apart.

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- Unexpected problems are encountered in every journey, however well-planned they may be, and being able to respond and get back on the road quickly is essential. Chapter 7 (**Being innovative; being flexible**) examines what people mean when they talk about innovation in consulting projects. Clients should expect consultants to bring new ideas, but these can take many forms: insights into their business, a willingness to be flexible and tailor their approach to fit the client's unique set of circumstances, or better, more efficient ways of working. "Innovation" doesn't have to mean grandiose ideas which are supposed to revolutionise the world. However, where it does, play a vital role is in ensuring that the consulting firm can explore alternatives. When the road is blocked ahead, a firm's ability to think on its feet and be creative in practical terms will be profoundly important.
- Clients typically hire consultants to help them solve issues, but this should never result in long-term dependency. It is therefore important that consultants make **Sharing the driving** (Chapter 8) a priority, passing on their skills and experience in order to build the clients' own. But sharing skills does not happen by accident: consultants bring different skills – specialist know-how, an ability to engage people in a professional manner and their experience gained from helping other organisations solve similar problems – and passing them onto the people they work with requires careful planning. This chapter identifies four main barriers to sharing skills effectively, ranging from lack of time to organisational complexity, but also puts forward concrete ways in which the knowledge consultants bring can be passed on.
- Chapter 9 (**Engaging everyone's enthusiasm**) looks at an aspect of the consulting ecosystem which most people don't think about: the extent as to which the individuals from the client side, who work with the consultants during the project,

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stand to gain from its successful conclusions. Consultants themselves are usually highly motivated to succeed: this is, after all, their job, plus they have the advantage of not being distracted by other work so staying focused is easier. Moreover, many firms will only promote consultants who can show their clients are satisfied, so doing a good job has economic and career advantages as well. By contrast, employees can feel alienated by the presence of consultants, as though their employers are sending out the message that they are more prepared to listen to consultants than their own employees. To counteract this, it is important to consider how those people involved in a project from the client's side can benefit from it, whether that takes the form of acquiring new skills, accessing new opportunities for promotion or simply having the chance to meet senior people. Any project, whether it involves consultants or not and however well-planned it has been, requires people to go the extra mile, to put in discretionary effort above and beyond that which the project plan commits them to. For consultants, this is simply part of their job, but internal people need a reason and incentive to make it part of theirs as well.

- Chapter 10 (**Travelling together**) explores how clients and consulting firms should work together. There is little point, if you're travelling to the same destination, in taking parallel tracks. The balanced co-operation on which the consulting ecosystem is based is not just a function of structure and governance, but goes straight to the heart of how the different contributors to a project – the travellers on the same journey – operate. All sides have to co-operate: one is not imposing the solution for a specific problem on the others, rather everyone is working together towards a common goal. But co-operation still has to be balanced: it does not involve one side going along with a strategy someone else suggests in a sycophantic fashion, but means you treat people just as if they were part of your team.

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Part 4 and Chapter 11 (**Managing international projects**) looks at the specific challenges involved in managing international consulting projects. Detailing the differences between countries' approaches to consulting, it identifies four distinct types of international consulting projects, each of which has strengths and weaknesses. The key to success, therefore, is to ensure that the right type of project is used in the right circumstances.

Two over-arching points emerge from all this material.

The first is that, in the consulting ecosystem, the same rules apply to all sides. Thus, clear communication is not just something that you should demand from your consulting firm, but something you should also expect internally. Similarly, consultants are less likely to be committed to a project if they believe that their client isn't committed to it either. "As you sow, so shall you reap", we're rightly advised.

The second point relates to the difference between "doing the thing right" and "doing the right thing". The first is a process point: it is the means to an end, not the end in its own right, yet it is extraordinary how often this becomes the focus of all attention and effort in business. We define what our job entails and we get on with it, perhaps without regard as to whether or not our job is actually achieving what our organisations needs. For example, the software supplier implements a new system, fitting it precisely to the agreed requirements and delivering it on time and within budget – but without considering whether it will, in fact, do what the organisations wants. Similarly, the consulting firm defines the scope of its work, then focuses on delivering a perfect result, but within the confines set and ignoring broader problems. The client refuses to put in more effort than they agreed; even if they are aware that a small amount of additional help would increase the chances of success, they may demand that their suppliers make up the short-fall. "Doing the right thing", by contrast, refers to acting

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in support of the ultimate objective of the project: you know the contract says one thing, but that doing another is the right thing to do. “Doing the right thing” is not, in fact, just about contracts and process: it is an outlook, a compass for the journey, if you like, always correcting your course to true north.

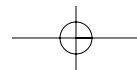
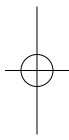
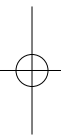
A year or so ago, a multinational company carried out a survey about why consulting projects over-run. Like most other organisations, much of the consulting work they bought was paid for on a traditional time and materials basis, so the company was spending (or losing) considerable sums each time a project went on longer than expected. In trying to answer the question, they talked to a wide range of organisations, some buying consultancy, others consulting firms themselves. “Clients think we’re trying to deceive them,” said the consultant, “but they don’t put in the time and resources we’ve told them they need to contribute. I worked with one client team who never did any of the actions assigned to them during our weekly project steering group meetings. After a while we stopped asking them to do anything because it was pointless and you can’t tell a client off. Yet, when the project over-ran, they claimed it was our fault.”

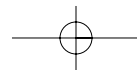
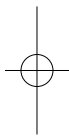
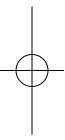
As Machiavelli rightly observed more than 500 years ago: “A prince who is not himself wise cannot be wisely advised... Good advice depends on the shrewdness of the prince who seeks it, and not the shrewdness of the prince on the good advice.” In other words, you do not get to be an effective and intelligent client because the consultants and other advisers you work with make you one; rather, you use consultants well because you are already a good, “shrewd” client.

That is the heart of our book.



Part 1
SPARK:
PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY





1

KNOWING WHERE YOU WANT TO GO

It's first thing in the morning. Double espresso in hand, you stride purposefully down the corridor for a meeting with your business unit's human resources team. The subject is talent management: how can you identify the people with the highest potential in your business and what can you do to nurture their skills? It is an issue that has been on the agenda for a couple of years and you are aware that your head office has one such programme in place, although you are not convinced it will meet your specific requirements, nor – if you are quite honest – are you really sure what it involves. However, the whole subject has been thrown into relief by the economic environment. You would have thought that a tough market would have made it easier for you to retain your best people. It has certainly made it easier to retain people in general but it certainly has not stopped two people, whom you had marked out for early promotion, from quitting in the last month nor one of your competitors from trying to poach your head of operations. So, as you enter the meeting room, you are aware that, this time, you really need to get something done.

Your HR director is flanked by two of his most senior colleagues. Already on the case, they have put together a presentation highlighting the failings of the status quo. So why, you ask, if the business case for action is so compelling, haven't we managed to put a programme in place before now? The HR director shifts uncomfortably: it's partly time, he explains. His team is already fully-stretched and being able to dedicate resources to this is difficult. He's also not sure that they know enough about best practice in other organisations: the last thing he wants to do is

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waste time repeating others' mistakes. Finally, the director points out, an area such as this is clearly very sensitive: he doesn't want any of his team accused of being subjective or biased. These are all reasonable points and you start to see where he's going with this: should we bring in some consultants, you ask.

A changing way of doing business

Conversations like this are happening every minute, in every type of organisation. The last 20 years have seen enormous growth in the use of consultants to the point where it is now hard to find a Fortune 1000 company or major public sector organisation which does not use them, and on a regular basis at that. Several factors have driven this:

- **Economic growth:** Because consulting is something organisations choose to buy – unlike an audit, they do not have to buy it – it grows fastest when profits are high and the rate of return on investments looks positive.
- **New technology:** The last 20 years have seen successive waves of technology wash over business. Taking advantage of these innovations has required specialist, often scarce skills.
- **Globalisation:** Multinational companies tend to make greater use of consultants than national ones, partly because they have more complex, cross-border issues to resolve, but also because they encounter different competition and have to be able to respond.
- **Recruitment freezes and labour inflexibility:** Organisations turn to consultants for short-term resources, often when they cannot recruit full-time employees either because they do not have the budget to do so, or because the skills they are looking for are especially scarce.

Knowing where you want to go

- **Changing management philosophy:** The last two decades have seen significant shifts in our ideas about how organisations should be organised. In particular, we no longer expect even the largest corporations to do everything in-house: functions and processes have been outsourced to specialist service providers, whether that is an advertising agency, a cleaning company or a strategy consultancy. Managers no longer expect to do everything themselves; instead, they can tap into a reservoir of expertise outside the boundaries of their own organisation.

While this explains why the consulting industry has grown, why do individual organisations use consultants? Why, for example, does the HR team described above want to hire consultants?

Your first reaction – if you are the executive described at the beginning of this chapter – will probably be that this is an easy question to answer: you want the consultants to help your people establish a process for identifying and nurturing the best people in your organisation. The problem with this answer is that it is too high level: it focuses on the service to be provided (“talent management”) rather than on what the organisation wants to achieve and why it cannot achieve this without external help. To use our analyse of a journey, it tells you what the car will do, but not where you want it to take you.

What do you want to achieve?

Organisations which are considering bringing consultants sometimes confuse the means and the end. They focus on the skills the consulting firm has and the outputs of the project they are working on, not on the business outcome those skills and outputs are intended to deliver. In our example, it would be a mistake for the managers of the company to think they are buying a talent management programme: they are buying a better way to retain and develop their managerial stars. This is the end they are seek-

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ing, and talent management is simply one of the means by which they may be able to achieve this end.

The starting point should always be your business objective: the place where you want your journey to end. Even this may not be as easy as it sounds: you may be clear about where you are trying to go, but your colleagues may not; they may even disagree with your end point. Such differences of opinion and approach need to be ironed out before you even think about hiring consultants: if the people who matter in your organisation are not in complete agreement about what you are trying to do, it is more than a little unfair to expect the consulting firm to deliver much in the way of value. From the consultant's point of view, there is little more frustrating than working in an organisation where you receive conflicting messages about what is expected from you.

Once you are absolutely clear about what you are looking to achieve, only then should you start to think about what the key components of your approach should be. For instance, you may decide there are several aspects to retaining and developing your best staff: a systematic assessment process which everyone accepts as fair or an executive MBA scheme onto which your high-flying staff can go. You may need to change the way you run your annual appraisal process. Your existing HR systems may need to be upgraded. You may also have to work with senior managers to change the way they treat their staff. Whatever components you identify, you should always remember that these are a means to an end, not ends in themselves – and you need to make this clear to the consultants you use, should you choose to use some.

Why do you need external help to achieve this?

The service a client wants and their decision to use consultants to provide it are two quite separate issues. If we simply think about

Knowing where you want to go

consulting in terms of the service provided, we will never really grasp why consultants are necessary, and, if we cannot work this out, we will never get the best possible value from them. We need, instead, to consider the *differential* value that consultants bring – the things that consultants can do that organisations cannot do for themselves. To use our journey analogy again: every organisation could – eventually – get to their chosen destination, but it may take years and considerable effort to do so. Consultants may help them get there more quickly, more comfortably, and more safely.

Go back to our talent management example and ask yourself why it is that the HR team thinks they cannot do this work by themselves. The HR director gives three answers: he thinks that his team lack expertise and knowledge in this area and are already so busy that they cannot take on this extra work. In fact, the HR director is citing the most common underlying reasons why organisations bring consultants in.

Knowledge

Around half of all consulting projects happen because the client organisation lacks the specialist skills to do a specific piece of work. A bank that wants to set up a customer contact centre will hire a firm that specialises in this area. A university that wants to review its operational efficiency will turn to someone who has experience of doing similar projects.

Consulting firms are huge repositories of knowledge, but it is important to know that they have the knowledge you need and do not already have. Your starting point should be finding out what your organisation knows: the bank that wants to set up a customer contact centre may discover that one of its businesses in another country has already done this and be able to learn from that experience. If you cannot find it, the next question is how best you can

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acquire it. You could decide to hire a full-time member of staff with prior experience in setting up contact centres, but the right person might be hard to find and prohibitively expensive to recruit. You could decide to train one of your existing managers in this area, but that is not always practically possible and may take too long. When you have exhausted these possibilities, then – and only then – should you turn to a consulting firm for help. The specific – differential – knowledge consulting firms bring usually falls into one of five categories:

1. Technical skills – specialist areas of knowledge in specific fields.
2. Rigour – a highly disciplined and systematic process to collating and analysing information.
3. Cross-sector experience – a firm’s ability to identify valuable parallels across different sectors, such as applying Lean manufacturing skills to public sector processes.
4. Global experience – the ability a larger firm has to pull together information from different countries.
5. Network effects – the extent to which a firm can put you in touch with other organisations or individuals who may be able to help.

Process and project management

Many clients know what they want (“talent management”), but they do not know how to implement it. Such organisations look to consulting firms to provide a clear road map that takes them from where they are today to where they want to be in the future. Sometimes, also, they see a benefit in using a consulting firm that can supply a dedicated team of resources to give the project the energy and momentum to ensure it will be completed on time. Consultants can focus all their attention on a specific project in a

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way that regular line managers, pulled in different directions by a multitude of objectives, cannot. Process projects account for around a third of all consulting and are the fastest growing reason why organisations use consultants – a testimony to how difficult organisations find execution.

As with knowledge, this reason for using consultants has several aspects to it:

1. Flexible labour – consulting firms can field dedicated teams to work on a specific problem very quickly. For clients that struggle to free people up from the existing jobs, whose resources are already limited, or who are reluctant to take on full-time employees perhaps because of economic uncertainty, consulting firms provide short-term assistance.
2. Experience of similar projects – the ability to draw on lessons learnt elsewhere in order to help clients avoid common pitfalls and emulate best practice.
3. A tried-and-tested methodology – where a consulting firm has had extensive experience of a specific project or issue it may codify that to provide clients with step-by-step guidance.
4. Technology and other assets – a consulting firm may be able to help clients manage their work through the better use of technology and other tools.

People, perspective and politics

While consultants may bring with them specific knowledge and methodologies, the way they work and their role as outsiders can provide value in its own right.

Clients can, over time and with effort and investment, acquire technical skills comparable to those of a consulting firm. They can set up their own internal consulting function which brings many of the process and project management advantages of a

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consulting firm. But the thing they find hardest to do is to be able to look at their own business with sufficient detachment. A consultant is an outsider who can challenge accepted assumptions, communicate ideas effectively, and help build consensus over difficult decisions. In our example, the HR team might find themselves in an awkward position, caught between business units pushing their own candidates forward for the new talent management programme. In such a situation, a consultant will be the neutral judge: someone who can bring an objective viewpoint.

In this respect, consultants offer:

1. Softer skills – perhaps in communication or facilitation, which help organisations deal with difficult issues.
2. Change management – acting as catalysts or helping people deal with periods of turmoil.
3. An outside perspective – the ability to see the wood for the trees.
4. A holistic view – an ability to see an organisation as a whole, not as the sum of separate parts (which is how internal managers tend to see it).
5. Unbiased advice – it is almost impossible for internal people to be objective because they have built up friendship and spheres of influence, and because they will inevitably have projects and initiatives they favour.

In summary

At a time when almost every large-scale organisation is making unprecedentedly extensive use of consultants, it is important to stand back and question exactly what your objectives are, and how a consulting firm may be able to help you achieve them in a way that your own organisation cannot. If you think it is appro-

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priate to use consultants, be absolutely clear how they are going to help you:

- Are they going to bring specialist **knowledge** which your own organisation does not have and which it could not acquire relatively quickly or cost-effectively?
- Do they have **process and project management** strengths, based on a breadth of experience and flexible resourcing your organisation cannot match?
- Will they send **people** with the personal skills, **perspective** and professional detachment to help organisations deal with difficult times?

Being completely clear about why, at this fundamental level, you need the input of consultants, is the bedrock to the effective use of consultants. As we will see in subsequent chapters, it will help you select the right firm to work with, ensure that your staff work effectively alongside the consultants and understand the value that has been added once the project has been concluded.