

Will you succeed as a consultant?

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THE PERSONALITY TO SUCCEED

1. I have the drive to succeed by myself. There will be nobody to push me.
2. I can work without supervision or encouragement. There is nobody to give it.
3. I work to deadlines. I recognize that if I do not meet my consultancy deadlines, I will have to carry on working without pay. I may even face penalty clauses.
4. I am independent mentally, and able to state my own view: I recognize that much of my work will involve challenging the existing system.
5. However, I am not pig headed and opinionated: I know that I have to have the facts and analysis before I come to a conclusion. I also know how sure I have to be.
6. I can take responsibility. I recognize that in consultancy the buck stops here.
7. I am objective: I do not let my personal prejudices affect my judgement.
8. I am creative: I think beyond what has been done before. I can tell which are real constraints, and which are just habit.
9. I am not context bound. I can see where the theory I use in my present job or the techniques I use in my present job could be applied in quite different industries.
10. I project self confidence, even when I am not terribly confident.
11. I project objectivity.
12. I project integrity.
13. I listen to people. I do this actively, finding out what they want to say rather than waiting for them to say something.
14. I like people.
15. I have good people skills. I do not annoy or irritate them accidentally.
16. I understand office politics and other micro-politics.

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17. I can cope with the many failures, disappointments and conflicts with clients that I can expect in this job.

18. I am healthy: there will be no employer to give me sick pay.

WHAT YOU HAVE DONE

You will be working in short bursts: hours, days or weeks rather than years. Say what sort of thing you have done in such periods

I did	I analysed	I managed
I solved	I planned	I was responsible for
I diagnosed	I recommended	I implemented
I facilitated	I managed change	I was team leader

<i>The project</i>		
was accepted	was implemented	was successful
met deadlines	met design criteria	met budget
was profitable	was replicated	is still in operation

<i>This shows my expertise in</i>		
the product	the process	the market
project management	marketing	getting things done
IT	management	people skills
management theory	engineering	statistics

<i>I was working for</i>		
a big-name company	a specialist engin-	a firm which is very
important	gineering firm	in this region
an exporting company	a FMCG firm	the market leader
a bank	a charity	a consultancy firm

<i>I was</i>		
Team leader	Marketing Manager	Reporting to the MD

IN-JOB SKILLS

If you are thinking of moving from your job into consultancy, ask yourself whether you have the core skills. Yes you have a vast amount of experience and skills gathered from your job. Yes, you know infinitely more about some things than someone who went straight from university into consultancy. Some of the skills and experience are very valuable indeed. Some are useless or even harmful in the new role. And of course, you need some consultancy skills that you do not have yet.

Do you know what mode you are operating at any one time. Are you a carpenter, doing a job for them? Are you a doctor, diagnosing and writing a prescription? Or do you operate in other modes?

Can you see the reality behind the figures, behind the plush offices, behind the glossy reports? With your experience, you should be better than most people at this.

Can you identify the office politics, but remain an independent outsider?

Can you collect the data? You are an outsider to your client's organization, so you have to overcome resistance and secrecy within the organization. You are a competitor to their competitors, so you do may have difficulty in getting industry level data.

Can you get people to tell you things even when they do not really trust you? Can you get them to tell you things that they do not realize they know? This is your main source of information on the politics and micro-politics. It is also the main source of the information for analysis. The figures are used for quantifying this, not as a substitute. You are seen as dangerous and even hostile by the people you interview, but you must still get the information, or you fail as a consultant. (See my training programme on extreme interviewing skills).

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Can you analyse someone else's problems? Ability to apply a high level of analysis to real-life problems. This may require a very different approach to academic theory and research. It certainly requires more than some hands on experience in the past.

Can you cut to the key issues. The clients think that they are paying you a lot. They want results very much faster than they would get them from their own staff. You cannot afford to waste time on trivia. You cannot even waste time on things that are important but not within your terms of reference.

SOME OFF-TASK CONSULTANCY SKILLS

Networking

Working with other consultants

Proposals that sell

Marketing

Selling

Fees

What to charge for

Freelancing

Contracts

Follow-ups and referrals

International consultancy

Running international projects

Team leader

Ethics and integrity

BROAD SKILLS OR NARROW?

Your theoretical training may be broad or narrow.

An MBA for instance gives you a smattering of a wide range of skills.

Some Masters' degrees or first degrees give you a depth knowledge of a single area.

Your skills may be broad or narrow.

You may have applied your engineering or management skills to a range of industries and processes.

You may be an expert in one particular production process.

Your experience may be wide or narrow.

You may have worked in many companies and locations.

All your experience may be in one company and process.

There is a market for both broad experience and for in depth expertise on a narrow subject. It is important to recognize which you are selling. You will have a different range of competitors for each.

TYPES OF CONSULTANCY

Gathering information

Providing information

Diagnosis of problems

Recommending solutions

Implementing solutions

Facilitating

Change management

Organizational management

THERE ARE CONSULTANTS IN

Acoustics
Accounting
Actuarial services
Advertising
Aerial photography
Aeronautical engineering
Agricultural engineering
Agriculture
Air pollution
Animal husbandry
Archeology
Architecture
Audio-visual services
Building management
Business management
Cadastral systems
Cartography
Chemical engineering
Civil engineering
Claims adjustment
Computer hardware installation
Computer software and systems
Conference planning
Construction management
Construction services
Consultancy
Democratic processes
Design
Distribution
Economics
Education
Electronics
Energy conservation
Energy management
Engineering
Environmental engineering
Equipment leasing
Ergonomics

Estate management
Executive search
Exhibition design
Expert witness
Export documentation
Export
Food processing
Food retailing
Forestry
Franchising
Freight, transport, shipping
Fund-raising
Garden design
Geography
Geology
Geophysics
Government
Graphics
Health service administration
Health and safety
Home economics
Horticulture
Hotel management
Human relations
Hygiene
Industrial engineering
Insurance
Interior decoration
Interpersonal communications
Irrigation engineering
IT
Joint ventures
Journalism
Kitchen design
Land use planning
Landscaping
Law
Library design and services
Licensing
Lighting
Lithography
Logistics
Lottery funding applications
Lottery running
Management

Manpower planning
Marine engineering
Market research
Market information systems
Marketing economics
Marketing
Mechanical engineering
Mergers and acquisitions
Mine clearance
Mining engineering
Museum planning and design
National security and defence
National economic policy
New product marketing
Noise Pollution
Nuclear engineering
Occupational health services
Operations research
Opinion polls
Outplacement
Packaging
Patents
Pathology
Peacemaking
Pensions
Personal fitness
Personnel management
Physics
Political campaigning
Post harvest handling
Privatization
Product liability
Production engineering
Project writing
Public analysts
Public relations
Publishing
Quality assurance
Race relations
Recreation planning
Recruitment
Refrigeration
Relocation services
Remuneration
Research and development

Salary and wages
Sales management
Salvage
Security
Shareholder relations
Small business development
Social services
Sociology
Software writing
Soil analysis
Statistical services
Stress management
Taxes
Telecommunications
Television and radio
TQM
Traffic and parking
Training
Transport
Urban renewal
Vehicle leasing
Warehousing
Water pollution
Weight reduction
Xerography
Yachting
Zoology

SUPPORT NETWORKS

Consultants have to work hard to build up their support networks if they are to improve their consultancy skills, and even if they are to stay sane.

1. The individual needs a critical friend to debrief to after a job. What went right? What went wrong? How could I do it differently? Was I tactless or was the client a nutter? This is part of the learning process, and we must be learning all the time to keep up with changing conditions. The critical friend should be someone you have complete confidence in, preferably not a competitor or a superior.
2. Consultancy is highly stressful. The consequences of a blunder could include the loss of fees, the loss of a client, the collapse of a firm or the collapse of an industry. In international consultancy it could be many deaths or even a famine. The consultant feels responsible, even when the problem arises because of errors by the clients and other people.
3. At the same time, it is full of personal conflicts and human relations problems. Technically excellent reports are rejected because of human relations problems. The consultants are given no support in the field, or the client organization goes out of its way to sabotage the job. You need someone you can debrief to. The situation is very similar to a counselor: everybody is unloading their problems onto you; if you cannot unload them onto someone else you will go mad.
4. You are marketing yourself as someone who is calm, competent and never makes mistakes or fails to produce the goods. It is dangerous to debrief to someone who might take this as an admission of incompetence, someone like the people in your consultancy firm, or an international agency that buys a lot of consultancy.
5. Isolation is a problem, especially in international work. You do not have the daily

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contact with people you have worked with for years. You do not make friends at work. You may make friends with other members of the consultancy team, but you may never work with again.

6. Gossip is important. What is it like in Siberia? What fee rate can you expect to get from the World Bank? What techniques are in demand? Are people still buying TQM?

7. Selling networks See *Networks*

THE PROJECT CYCLE AND THE CONSULTANCY CYCLE

THE PROJECT CYCLE

To some extent the type of consultancy you will practice depend on where in the project cycle you come in.

1. Identification
2. Appraisal
3. Design
4. Implementation
5. Monitoring
6. Evaluation
7. Selling

THE CONSULTANCY CYCLE

Everything that must be done from the first stage until you are paid

8. Find prospective customer
9. Research customer
10. Persuade customer that you may have something saleable
11. Research
12. Proposal
13. Negotiate contract
14. Fee rate
15. Preliminary research
16. Start contract

17. Courtesy visits
18. Interviewing
19. Data collection
20. Inception report
21. Analysis
22. Reporting
23. Collect fee
24. Feedback
25. Referring to new contacts
26. Follow up business