

Consultants are utilized in every business sector you can imagine. Why is that? How do companies know who to hire? How do you hire a consultant? Are Consultants worth it and do you really need one?

# Consultants

Why to hire one and how.....



# con·sult·ant

/kənˈsʌltənt/

*Noun*

1. a person who provides expert advice professionally.



Believe it or not, you have been using consultants your entire life. Your parents were your earliest consultants as they provided guidance for all the things you didn't know – but needed to know. Siblings, other family members, teachers, and friends were there for you too, consulting on all sorts of things that you needed to, or wanted to know about. They are likely still some of your most trusted consultants and advisors. You hire consultants all the time! Your plumber, mechanic, doctor, they are all consultants. You pay them to advise you on the options available to solve your problems. They may then offer to carry on the engagement and complete the work, or they may simply refer you to someone who can. You pay them for their experience and expertise needed to fill your need. If you are happy with their work, you likely hire them again and again, as needed.

You are a paid consultant too! That's why your family, friends and business contacts reach out to you about the things that you know, and that they need to know. Your payment may be in the form of love, the return of a favor, a nice scotch, a great meal or a nice gift. But, most often your payment is likely that great feeling you get by being able to help someone solve their problem or gain the knowledge they need.

Consultants in the business world also love the feeling of successfully completing a client's project for them. While some may take good scotch or a meal as payment, most have to be paid with your company's hard-earned money. But wait, companies have employees. Shouldn't they be able to answer all the questions and solve all their problems? After all, they are being paid to do that, right? Well, kind of.... but no. A company's employees are there to do the jobs they were hired to do. However, we all know that a company cannot hire everyone that they might ever need. Way too much overhead. This is where consultants come in.

Consultants exist to serve their clients with on demand expertise. Meaning, they are available only when a company needs their Liam Neeson level; special set of skills. This could be a 1-hour coaching session with the sales person that has trouble closing, a new product development engagement that lasts for months, strategic planning sessions, manufacturing efficiency review, engineering services, project management, dispute resolution, executive coaching, interim management, and even self-defense skills. Whatever it is, consultants are available to fill the gap, solve the problem, provide the service and make sure their client is completely satisfied and realizes the value of hiring them.

So, now that we have cleared up what consultants are and what they do, this guide will help you successfully prepare, evaluate and hire one. We hope you find the information of value.

Thank you!



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With 35 years of industry experience, Wes has a superior ability to quickly and effectively solve client requests by regularly bringing new ideas and approaches to the client for review and consideration. He is dedicated to the success of each client engagement and follows through completely.

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# prep·a·ra·tion

/,prepə' rāSH(ə)n/

*Noun*

1. the action or process of making ready or being made ready for use or consideration.



It is important to be as prepared as possible before you contact a consultant. Consider these 10 things before you make the call.

1. Make sure you need a one. Examine your current staffing skill set and make a calculated decision. What kind of help do you really need? Just because a consultant is expensive doesn't necessarily mean they are more skilled. Always check with your in-house talent first. You might be surprised what kind of solutions your staff can come up with!

2. Know what you want the consultant to do. Be clear about what kind of expertise or assistance you want and need. Different consultants offer different types of expertise and guidance. So, are you looking for an expert to tell you exactly what to do? Another pair of hands to do exactly what you tell them? Or a collaborator to partner with you to explore potential and solutions?

3. Be honest about your willingness to change. Clarify your goals. What are you trying to accomplish? Are you really willing to do the changes necessary? A consultant's work is only useful if you do the work too.

4. Find someone focused on your needs, not theirs. Many consultants get stuck in a certain model or "intervention" and try to make problems fit their preconceived solutions. You want to make sure your consultant custom designs a solution just for you. During your first meeting a good coach/consultant should interview you. They should ask questions about your business, your requirements, and your expected outcomes. They should not spend their first meeting deluging you with stories of past contracts and clients.

5. Ask for and check references. Make sure your consultant is experienced and credentialed.

6. Find somebody you like, trust, and respect, and with whom you have good communication and rapport. Personality and fit are essential. Chances are some issues may require close collaboration with the consultant. All things being equal, it is easier to work with someone you like, or whose personality fits the culture of the organization. Open communication is essential. Make sure you find someone who really listens to you.

7. Choose someone who is willing to tell you the truth. A good coach, consultant, or advisor must be willing to give you their honest opinion about what is going on. If you find your consultant agrees with everything you say and holds the exact same perspective as you, then you haven't hired a consultant. You've just paid someone to agree with you.

8. Don't hire your chief of staff's second cousin once removed. Avoid hiring anyone related to good friends, staff members, etc., unless the referral comes from a trusted outside source that has used the consultant. Look for "real" consultants, professionals who do this for a living and have related experience.

9. Get a contract/proposal in writing. Take the time to spell out goals, deliverables, and processes. Design the alliance. This is about clarifying expectations on both sides. A good consulting relationship is essential for finding and implementing effective solutions that will work for you and your organization.

10. Be prepared to manage the relationship. Consultants need feedback and guidance to do their jobs well. Don't just hire the consultant and ignore the contract. Treat your consultant as a partner. This will result in your consultant being more generous with their experiences, objectivity, and expertise. Pay your consultant as agreed upon. Nothing sours a relationship like bad money mojo.

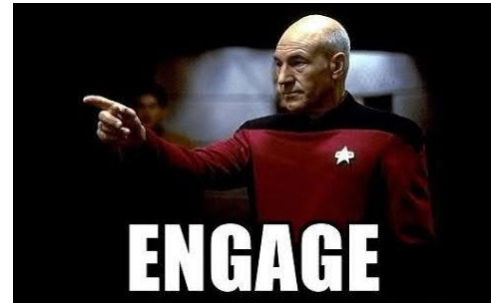
Source: [careerstonegroup.com](http://careerstonegroup.com)

## en·gage

/in'gāj, en'gāj/

*Verb*

3. arrange to employ or hire (someone).  
"he was engaged as a Consultant"



When you have completed your preparation and are ready to move forward with engaging a consultant, make sure you ask them these questions before you close the deal.

1. Are you collaborative? Businesses do not want a consultant who will work in isolation, as there is a danger that they could take the business down a route it shouldn't go. How often will you report on your work, and what will it look like? For example, a monthly report is fairly standard. How will we contact you?

2. Do you have knowledge of our industry? While it is important to have industry knowledge, a broad knowledge of other industries will allow a consultant to bring fresh ideas to the table. Prior to hiring a business consultant, make sure they have experience with your type of business, as well as others.

3. Can you tell me about your process for going about work? It is important that they are able to demonstrate a strategy and process for achieving the results that the business wants. For example, for sales consultants you might ask, "what is your process for improving lead quality and conversions?"

4. What do you think is the biggest change that has happened in (consultant's sphere of knowledge) the last year? For example, you might ask an SEO consultant about Google's recent algorithm changes and how they might affect a website like yours. You might also ask about any recent courses or interesting content the candidate has completed or read recently.

5. Can you guarantee success? This is a trick question, as success is never guaranteed. For example, you might ask, "Can you guarantee that our site will rank No. 1 for a major search term?" This type of question will weed out the salesman from the trustworthy candidate. A follow-up question could be, "How do you determine if you're successful?" Do they aim to increase traffic by X percent in Y months, for example? It's useful to see some sort of metric.

6. What is your payment structure? It's important to know how much and when exactly you will need to pay so that you can factor it into your budget. Many consultants and agencies ask for a percentage up front and then the remainder when the work is completed, or the month paid up front.

7. What happens if we terminate the contract? This is for your own protection. It's important to know what you're getting yourself into, and how to get out if needed. Find out if there are any fees written into the contract and how far ahead you have to give notice. Negotiate these if you feel they are unfair.

8. Why should we hire you over other consultants? You may need a consultant, but is this the one? Do they have something special, such as a key piece of experience or knowledge, that is the best fit for your company?

9. What access do you need to our data? If you are hiring a business consultant, they will often ask for access to financials, policy manuals and other confidential information. It's best to know ahead of time what access is needed so that you can get this to them as quickly as possible in the project.

10. Will you sign a letter of confidentiality? Will you refrain from working with our competitors? Again, this is to protect the business, as you do not want key information being leaked, and you want to stay a step ahead of the competition. A letter of confidentiality or Non-Disclosure agreement is a must.

Source: keap.com

## pro·cras·ti·nate

/prəˈkrastəˌnāt/

*Verb*

delay or postpone action; put off doing something.  
"he won't be available forever, so don't procrastinate"



1. Don't procrastinate. If you have found a consultant that you have good rapport with, that can do the work, that fits your budget and is available, sign the deal. Otherwise, you risk losing the opportunity and will have to start your search over.

*We hope that you find this information to be a useful tool as you operate, grow and improve your business. Taking the step to engage a consultant can be very beneficial for your business, but you must do your part to help ensure success. Research and planning as discussed in this document should be completed. This will help your company determine their needs in detail, as well as open discussion about what your team might be looking for in a consultant. We wish you good luck and success in your efforts!*