

GETTING THE MOST OF CONSULTING ENGAGEMENTS

Consultant.... Why it's a Four Letter Word

Let's face it, someone utters the word 'consultant' and people grimace. Frustrated teams tend to curse consultants as overpriced, over-valued, and work making. Consultant has become synonymous with templates and slide decks. Too often consultants are seen as delivering a PowerPoint "solution" deck but teams either don't know how or are under-resourced to deliver on the framework that a consultant has laid out.

Another complaint heard often is a consultant with a hyper focus on selling their latest solution or in-the-can approach. Consultants who see a hammer for every nail they have to sell, but don't focus in on the client need, skills, and resources to customize the solution are not providing value. Consultants who don't take the time to really understand your business, your product and your customer are ultimately not valuable. If they need you or your team to complete every template, they don't know enough.

The value comes in how you apply the deep knowledge and analytics skills to our every-day business not how you put your consulting stamp on the situation.

---Senior Director

Fortune 100 Pharma Company

Sometimes it's the hard reality of an honest consultant that causes the grimace. The consultant's job should be honest assessment and to steer you in the right direction to optimize the commercial success. This can mean articulating what isn't working in the organization, highlighting waste and inefficiencies. It can be difficult for people to hear. Their job should be rational identification of problem areas and insightful solutions, not insulting anyone's intelligence or hard work.

Getting the Most Out of Consulting Engagements

A consultant should be someone who provides expert advice professionally. Engaging a consultant provides access to deeper levels of expertise than would be financially feasible to retain in-house on a long-term basis. Organizations can control expenses and risk by purchasing as much service as desired at a given time, sometimes flexing up and down as need or budget dictates.

Here is when hiring a consultant pays off: When an organization is aware of its limitations and has clear goals, but doesn't necessarily know *how* to develop or implement a proper strategy to promote growth, a consultant should be able to offer a sound solution. Organizations should consider consulting services when there is something highly visible that needs to get done that can't get done well with current staffing either because of time, personnel, or expertise constraints. Also, sometimes a fresh set of eyes on a problem, combined with experience in similar situations, can be highly valuable. Consider a consultant in your exact field with past projects they can point to that mirror your situation.

CASE EXAMPLE

Launch readiness represents a perfect case for hiring consultant services. Uncertainty in approval and timing of approval drives under investment and can limit a team's sense of urgency. Teams are often under-resourced for the bolus of activity that has to be done in the 12-24 months pre-launch. Client launch teams are often staffed with individuals who have proven themselves in managing in-line brands, but have not lived through launch readiness. They lack the experience to identify interdependencies and define realistic timelines for development. It can be overwhelming to focus on solidifying key insights, building differentiated brands, managing every nuance of inter-related tactic development all at once. External experts with systematized knowledge of what good looks like and the confidence to direct the teams for optimal efficiency are worth the spend.

It's important not to underestimate the value of relationships and respect in a consulting engagement. If there isn't two-way respect in the relationship the engagement isn't going to work. A client team should feel that the consultant respects their intelligence and time. And conversely, an engagement won't feel worth the money spent on it if the team delivering the solution doesn't garner respect. So how is that respect won? By understanding the business, by providing true insight, delivering quality that doesn't just feel like more work for the team. A temperature should be taken on both sides after the first phase of an engagement. If there isn't a sense of value and respect at that point, make adjustments before it goes too long.

What good looks like:

- ◆ Quick integration with little training time required from client teams
- ◆ Detailed project plans provided without repeated inquiry that include timelines, deliverable format and due date
- ◆ Consultants who integrate so well that the client team forgets they are external
- ◆ Consultants who can flex from strategy to detailed implementation management
- ◆ Ingrained knowledge of pharmaceutical and medical device industry and implications to strategy and implementation

Types of Engagements to Consider

Evaluate if the project has a definitive start/end date and a clear deliverable or if the needs will be best served with flexible FTE (full-time-equivalent) based services. The latter can offer flexibility for the consultant to address multiple needs at once or flexing week-to-week depending on the priority.

FTE consultants can act in short or medium term assignments to fill gaps in internal staffing. Often, teams that are in pre-launch phase do not fill headcount as quickly as activities need to occur. This can happen to mitigate risk or simply because it can be challenging to find the right person to hire in a quick enough time frame. Consultants who have



experience in pharmaceutical launch and bring knowledge from multiple therapeutic areas and company environments can help teams to execute in a timely manner and also to bring best practices for consideration. Among the most useful of these can be examples of risks and mitigation strategies across functional areas.

Consultants engaged for staffing can often be dialed up or down on any given month depending on activity needs or can be moved around the organization as internal hires occur. This gives launch leaders a high level of flexibility while maintaining continuity of brand knowledge and vendor management. This type of engagement can also serve to cover family leave or other temporary staffing gaps with knowledgeable pharmaceutical marketers.

What to Expect/Demand

Consultants are hired for their expertise. To get the most out of engaging consultants, approach it as an intellectual partnership. Demand a high level of assessment and best practice application. Set the stage for debate and evaluation. To get the best outcome, listen to a consultant's evaluation process and recommendation, but ask questions. Ask them to share their thought process and what they learned. A project sponsor will gain the most value from understanding what went into the assessment, what might have been left on the conference room floor (so to say), and not just the packaged answer. A good partner should provide a comprehensive set of services from strategic assessment to project implementation guidance and, in some cases, execution. High quality project management should be a given.

Ensure that project leads understand the intended final audience for a report. If the recommendation is to be presented to internal senior leaders, ensure that the deliverable is built that way. Often, especially in strategic projects, consulting deliverables can be extremely comprehensive. For senior leadership much of this can be left in appendix and speakers notes, with a condensed version for presentation. A highly valued consulting partner recognizes the intended audience level and builds presentations with this in mind. Even when staffed in ongoing FTE roles, consultants will be at the ready to provide project updates or assessments with this in mind.

Selling into the Organization

Increasingly companies are very stringent on consultant hiring. Some companies require all consulting work to be approved at C suite level. It can be difficult to get statements of work (SOWs) thru an approval process in a timely manner if they contain the word 'consultant'. While budgets are tight, extra scrutiny is put to consultant hiring.

Tips to consider:

1. Some consulting engagements can be more appropriately labeled managed services if they are for FTE based staff augmentation.
2. Some projects should be done in phases to determine a best course of action. Define phase 1 at lower price point to pilot the approach.
3. Capitalize on the burning platform of launch readiness or market challenge to the brand to establish need for the project. Money won't be the barrier if the project can't be done with internal resources or expertise and a clear outcome can be articulated.