

PROFESSIONAL CONSULTING: WHAT CONSULTING LOOKS LIKE

by

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## Abstract

This document takes a look into professional consulting with a true professional consultant. Although the format of the paper is primarily APA, the very nature of an internship does not yield itself to true APA formatting. The name of the true consultant has been changed to “Dr. William Consultant” at the request of the consultant. This paper is a compilation of dialogs, experience in leadership consulting and lessons learned with Dr. Consultant during his consulting with a Fortune 500 company in a training and change management consulting contract. Further research has been conducted on literature which pertains to consulting and consulting processes, and is explored further in this paper. Consulting involves analyzing, listening and presenting solutions to decision makers. William Consultant, PhD’s experience as a consultant is conveyed in this paper as a result of multiple interviews and direct involvement in an actual consulting assignment.

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents	ii
List of Figures (if figures used)	iii
Forward	1
What Consultants Do	1
Introduction to A professional consultant	2
Tools of a Consultant	5
Lifestyle of a Consultant	7
Sources of Knowledge	14
Billing as a Consultant	17
Consulting Success Best Practices	20
Consulting is Coaching	24
The Consulting Project	26
Consulting Assignment	27
More Lessons Learned	30
Concluding Thoughts	32

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Primary Goals of Consultants	2
Figure 2: The Five Phases of Any Consulting Project	11
Figure 3: Consulting Steps Leading to Implementation of a Solution	13
Figure 4: The Specific Skills Involved in Consulting Discovery	16
Figure 5: Ten Effective Rules for Coaching	25

The traditional professional titles of “lawyer,” “architect,” or medical doctor; have widely recognized definitions. But when people hear the title “management consultant,” they tend to define it either as (1) an extremely important, impressively bright individual, who deals only with the top management of large companies on critical matters; or (2) simply an unemployed individual who has resorted to selling time for a fee until a real job comes along. Neither description is entirely accurate (Biswas & Twitchell, 1999, p. 6).

### Forward Note

This paper is an accompaniment to a consulting internship practice with an experienced management consultant—William Consultant, PhD, whose name has been changed to “Consultant, Dr. William Consultant, William Consultant, PhD, and Dr. Consultant” to keep his name anonymous, at his request. Although this document is formatted according to standard APA 5<sup>th</sup> edition, its contents are descriptive of both the consulting industry as a result of research and of derived conversations with Dr. Consultant during the period of months of an internship. Summations of occurrences during this internship are also recorded in this paper.

Throughout this written presentation on consulting, the names: Dr. Consultant, William, Consultant, Dr. William and A professional consultant are used interchangeable to refer to William Consultant, PhD. the professional consultant interviewed for this research project and internship. Any other references cited will be noted using standard APA 5<sup>th</sup> edition guidelines.

### What Consultants Do

After reviewing the literature on consulting, a better understanding of what a consultant is and does--is clearly articulated by Sotiris Kitsopoulos (2003) in *Consulting to Management* magazine. Kitsopoulos (2003) shows how management consulting can be traced back at least a couple of millennia. Antecedents of modern day consulting who lived in Europe include: Gaius Maecenas, Thomas Aquinas, Machiavelli, Pere Joseph, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, and Nikolai Hartmann.

Kitsopoulos (2003) answers the question of whom and what consultants are:

We use our specialized knowledge to help clients solve problems. We serve clients with integrity, devotion, and trust. We give independent, impartial, and unbiased advice. We keep these interactions confidential. We accept that our clients keep the overall responsibility, decision-making power, and credit for success-while we stay in the background (p.16).

Similarly, C. Scott Hartz (2002) agrees, “In the consulting industry, our mission is to do just as we’ve done so well in the past-to help industry increase productivity, achieve its business objectives, and delight customers and shareholders--alike (p.11).” This paper will explore how consultants do what they do and ideally to make it happen smoothly. Dr. Consultant’s consulting experience and knowledge are liberally expressed throughout this paper and accompanied with further information gleaned from literature discussing the consulting industry.

Cummings and Worley (2001) describe what consultants like William Consultant, PhD do. They believe that consultants provide resources for change, build a support system for change agents, develop new competencies and skills, reinforce new behaviors and stay the course. The processes of consulting may take a great deal of time and resources depending on the problem they are hired to do. However, the goals of the consultant, no matter what type of consultant they are should remain the same, as shown in Figure 1 below.

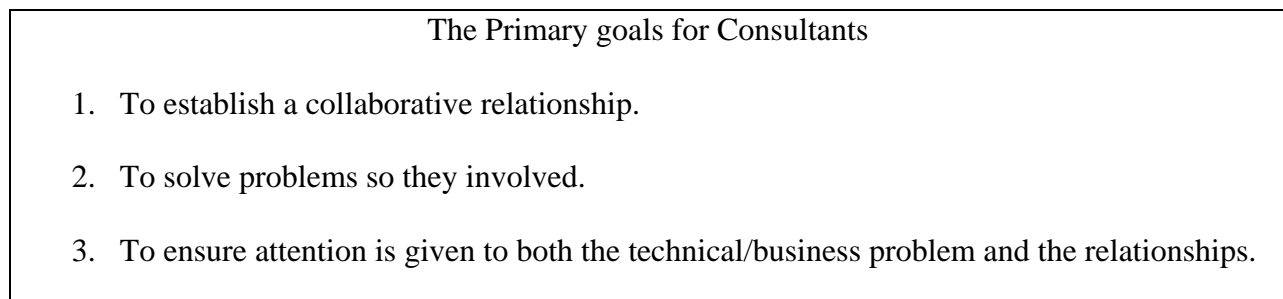


Figure 1. Primary Goals of Consultants (Block, 2000, p. 344).

### Introduction to A professional consultant

Dr. Consultant is a professional consultant who bases his business, as do many professional consultants, from his home office (Biswas & Twitchell, 1999). Dr. Consultant's office is located in, a suburb of Seattle Washington. Dr. Consultant has numerous bookshelves of literature on every related subject to management and leadership conceivable. Consulting for Dr. Consultant is a labor of love. Consultant reports a significant income in the six-figure range from his consulting work, but as a retired military officer—he could easily support his life-style.

To William, consulting is not only his job, but also somewhat of a hobby. Consultant claims that, “Consulting is not work to me because I love what I do. And, it is important to love what you do, or it is not worth doing (Consultant, 2003).” Consultant continues his consulting practice because it provides extra-income that supports the needs of his family.

Dr. Consultant recently finished putting his oldest daughter through Harvard Graduate School and is currently putting his youngest at a local university. Each child receives a substantial “allowance” equal to an average income of a working adult in many areas of the United States. Dr. Consultant's wife also enjoys the rewards of his flourishing practice. Mrs. Consultant spends most of her summers with her family overseas.

Consultant maintains two computers that he uses for his business to prepare presentations and to compile data and research. Consultant's primary computer is a stationary Window's based PC where he stores all his digital records and documentation. His secondary computer is a laptop Window's based PC with all the bells and whistles that contemporary computers offer. Dr. Consultant contends that the laptop computer is the backbone of the consulting practice. A combination of having a good computer setup and being up-to-date with historical and contemporary information is prerequisite to being a good consultant.

Dr. Consultant has been in consulting since the mid-nineties. He was working as the director in a university's graduate program, when a former student of his asked him if he would consider doing some consulting work for a Fortune 500 manufacturing company. Dr. Consultant was enticed by the idea of being a consultant and doing something new, while keeping his primary job as Director. Consultant had a friend who taught in the Leadership development program as adjunct faculty at a well-known university—Assistant Professor “Dave Advisor.” Dave Advisor was a contracting facilitator and consultant who worked for a state agency for many. Advisor was happy to give advice on the fee structure to Dr. Consultant, as well as provide him with other essential knowledge for consulting work.

As a professional consultant, Dr. Consultant draws on his doctoral education from a large-well-known university in Educational Psychology. Dr. Consultant maintains that as a professional consultant, he does far more research and studying than he did during the four years of studying to be a PhD. Consultant uses many online literature retailers as his source for up-to-date information to compile presentations and advice for his clients. Dr. Consultant especially likes using Amazon.com. Consultant not only finds Amazon.com a great source for the newest information, but also uses the company to send gifts of recommended reading materials to his clients with personal notes of thanks, accompanied by tips of free advice.

Another source of research materials that Dr. Consultant uses and maintains is a password protected online library on his website. Most of the online materials that Dr. Consultant stores on his personal library are *Harvard Business Reviews* and *Executive Summary* articles that have information that he often references while he is away from his office.

Dr. Consultant also uses his website to store presentations for his personal use and for clients as an extra benefit of his service. Each of the personalized presentation materials are

password protected with directories that he only shares with intended clients. Consultant uses icons which illustrate the presentation's contents on his website. Dr. William contends that his website suits him and his business just fine, by keeping it simple. Besides study and presentation materials, the only other information that Consultant stores on his website is his impressive resume. His resume is the only document that is not protected by a password. Consultant wants his clients to know who he is and what he can do; however, in order for them to see how they can benefit from his services, they are enticed to make direct contact with him first. For this very reason, Consultant keeps his website simple and semi-mysteriously inviting.

#### Tools of a Consultant

Consultants in today's competitive-technological climate need to be computer savvy. Dr. Consultant maintains that having reliable transportation and easy access to the airport are prerequisites to being a professional consultant. Most of his work is done many miles away from his office. According to Consultant, a consultant must know how to navigate the rich resources of the Internet, while commanding multiple means of communication. Dr. Consultant subscribes to a high-speed internet connection for his office. When he is on the road, Consultant stays in hotels that provide him with a high-speed connection to the internet for his laptop computer.

David Kintler (1998, p.34), suggests having a logo created and having it appear on letterhead, stationery, business cards, matching envelopes, brochures and sales collateral materials. William Consultant uses plain paper and no logo; however, his daughter has developed a logo that is seen on some of his PowerPoint presentations.

Dr. William Consultant uses his cell phone as his primary means of communication. His cell phone is turned off during times of interview and presentations, while leaving his voice mail system available to callers, welcoming them to leave a message with assurance of quick reply.

He maintains a web-accessible fax number to receive and deliver electronic documentation. David Kintler (1998) suggests leasing or purchasing a fax machine and copy machine for consulting communication equipment. Consultant utilizes Kinko's for a great deal of his outgoing faxes. Consultant uses email to deliver messages with attached documentation that may include proposals, diagrams or other forms of consulting documents. He does the bulk of his communication in person through media presentations and interviews. Dr. Consultant's expertise is in leadership and training. This paper will describe and sample a supply collaboration training project that Dr. William Consultant has created and presented in collaboration and partial assistance of the author of this research paper.

Dr. Consultant prefers to use Window's based computers to run the software of his consulting practice. According to Consultant, consultants use Microsoft's entire professional bundle of software or software similar to it. Consultant uses Microsoft Word to compile and edit the bulk of his documents and research. He appears to be an expert at using the many accessories and tools of each of his software programs which include PowerPoint, Excel, Access, Outlook and Adobe Acrobat. Consultant has an impressive file system that stores past documents used in each of his consulting endeavors. He files them according to client, then project name, then document name. Consultant also archives his valuable digital documents and presentations on rewritable CDs.

Dr. Consultant regularly utilizes the services of Kinko's, a printing and production company. At the usual expense of his clients, Consultant creates package bundles of study references and either sends them directly to Kinko's over the Internet or hand delivers them for quick pick-up. Sometimes it is necessary for his documents to be reproduced in volume counts of hundreds, depending on the size of the project he is consulting on and the size of his audience.

Printing costs are billed at the completion of service to his clients. Consultant asks only to be reimbursed for actual printing costs and does not charge anything extra to his clients for printing. Consultant maintains the sales receipt for evidence of expense, but has never been asked by his clients for evidence of expenses.

Many of the printed materials that Consultant uses in accompaniment of his presentations are actual printouts of the PowerPoint presentation. Dr. Consultant uses the “Print Handouts mode” under the File>Print menu. Consultant usually configures the printouts in pages that contain six slides and comment lines. Consultant maintains that as far as handouts are concerned, “It gives clients something to take away from the presentation and use as a reference. They can follow along as I present and take notes next to the respective slide (Consultant, 2003).” According to Consultant, many of his presentations are finalized in the middle of the night by himself on his laptop. In many cases, his daughter who resides and works at Harvard University assists him with editing and compiling presentations. Often, his presentations are finished only hours before they are printed and presented. Consultant contends that, “Consulting is a continual process that requires him to deliver the most recent information in order to give his clients constant added value (Consultant, 2003).” Similarly, Harvard Business School Professor Adam Brandenburger points out that creating value is the essence of business. His game theory: “Added value equals total value created with you in the game minus total value created without you in the game (Biswas & Twitchell, 1999, p.43).”

#### Lifestyle of a Consultant

Maura Rurak and Perri Capell of *National Business Employment Weekly* state that, “Consulting is a highly stimulating profession, allowing intelligent, confident professionals the chance to work with similar bright specialists on cutting edge ideas and technology (Biswas &

Twitchell, 1999, p.27).” Management consultants’ lives can be centered on maintaining four basic steps: problem identification and defining, analysis, synthesis and presentation (Biswas & Twitchell, 1999). A professional consultant does an extraordinary job of centering his life on those steps.

According to Consultant (2003), the lifestyle of a consultant is not for everyone. Dr. William spends approximately six months away from his home, on the road, in the air, and/or in hotels around the world. Much of his time Consultant is living out of hotels. When he travels, Dr. Consultant includes much of his expenses into his fees. His flight expenses and ground mileage fees are also billed. Consultant is a first-rate consultant and often flies first-class and stays first-class in elegant hotels. Many of the hotels that Consultant stays at have a view of water or a golf course.

William Consultant reports that much of his time with his clients is not billed. He often invites his client and spouse out for dinner and/or drinks. During these social occasions, Consultant will learn about whom he is working with and about the needs of the project. William says that there is a subtle balance between work and friendship. He contends that, “A working relationship should be friendly, but it is also important to remember that a client represents a paycheck and professionalism should be maintained at all times (Consultant, 2003).” It is advisable to maintain friendly relationships even after the project is completed in order to obtain future consulting jobs.

Elaine Beich in her book: *The Business of Consulting* (1999), gives some helpful advice on maintaining the relationship with clients after the project is completed. Beich (1999) suggests purchasing and reprinting articles and sending them to clients. Also sending notes and cards is useful for maintaining contact. If ever near the location of a previous client invite the past-client

to breakfast, lunch or dinner. Always welcoming clients to call anytime to help them find resources or materials is a great way of maintaining relationships. Connecting clients and finding new clients for past clients builds long-lasting relationships too. In taking advantage of these few tips on maintaining relationship, there will be greater chances that work will be constant as either referral work or returning work.

William Consultant feels lucky that he has a constant flow of work. Although the work may sound consistent, it is far from being an everyday ritual. The summer months are the busiest for consulting in Consultant's business. Consultant is hardly home during those months. He claims that, "Starting in April, work starts trickling in by pieces. When June comes and throughout the rest of the summer months, I am working almost everyday. My family sees me for sometimes only a day at a time in each of these months (Consultant, 2003)." Although most of Consultant's clients are miles away from his office, he will try to make the effort to come home and spend time with his family, drop laundry off at the cleaners and supply himself with fresh clothing to last during the continuous stint.

During his frequent stops at home, Consultant continues to update his knowledge base with unrelenting study and preparation. He takes care of any necessary paperwork, bill or family obligations, and usually continues work-like activities in his own home. Usually, a family member takes him off to the airport, when flying or he must rent parking space near the airport until his return. The summer months are filled with short one-to-seven day breaks away from his clients, but the working process continues. Amazingly enough, Consultant is a master at time management and manages to take the time to mow the lawn, take care of household maintenance and maintain relationships with friends and family members.

There is no such thing as a “typical day” in the life as a consultant. Consultant contends that, “Every day is different and every job is different. This is what makes consulting so much fun and rewarding to me (Consultant, 2003).” William works his daily schedule around the needs of his clients. His weeks do not necessarily start on Monday at 8AM. Sometimes they start very early in the morning with interviews with the morning workers on the production floor. Sometimes his days are filled with lectures and all-day workshops. Very often, Dr. Consultant schedules to meet with his client, who is usually a manager or executive with the company, for blocks of time that are sometimes as short as half-an-hour or as long as half the day. These blocks of time are spent asking assessment questions in which he builds following questions to design solutions or sends him to other sources of information to get a bigger picture of what the project/challenge entails.

William Consultant uses many variations of management/leadership models in his questioning, analysis, consulting and training (Biswas & Twitchell, 1999, pp.171-200). His background as a university professor teaching leadership and his education in educational psychology give him a solid foundation that instills confidence in his clients and aids in creating productive change in the organizations he works for. According to William, “Consulting is about figuring how things work and teaching people to make the most out of various tools, skills and abilities. Much of what I do is confirming to a client that what they believe is correct. Other times, I have to find ways to gently show them that there may be other truths that may work better (Consultant, 2003).”

Consultant often incorporates humor into his presentation, as he feels that it is a great way of keeping people interested in what he has to say. Very often, Consultant finds it best to use peer-learning methodology in training. He facilitates conversations around the subject

matter and allows participants who are well-versed in the topic to share what they know.

Consultant is a skilled facilitator, as any good consultant should be. Consulting is largely about getting the best information from the people who know how to make something work better to the people who have the power to make the changes (Minto, 1999).

French and Bell (1999) show how consultants like Dr. Consultant can have more influence on facilitating change. French and Bell (1999) recommend that consultants become a desired commodity by being competent and trustworthy professionals, by making the organizational change program itself a commodity and demonstrating how it adds strategic advantage to the organization. They believe that consultants should serve the needs of the multiple people and groups and create win-win solutions. They also believe that consultants should help the managers or sponsors succeed by being experts at process, rather than content and by fulfilling the role as a facilitator (pp.292-294).

Dr. Consultant recommends reading Peter Block's book *Flawless Consulting* (2000), because he believes it to be one of the most thorough and complete guides to consulting. Block (2000) contends that the consulting process is made easier when the consultant asks questions about the client's personal role in causing or maintaining the problem. He also recommends asking what others in the organization are doing in and about the situation. Block (2000) recommends involving the client with planning, collecting and interpreting the data. As this is done, the consultant should identify how the client is managing the consultant and see if there are any similarities in how he or she manages their organization. Also, Block recommends that the consultant condense the data into a limited number of issues and "Use language that is understandable to people outside your area of expertise. Distinguish between the presenting

problem and the underlying problem. Elicit and describe both the technical problem and how it is being managed (p. 187).”

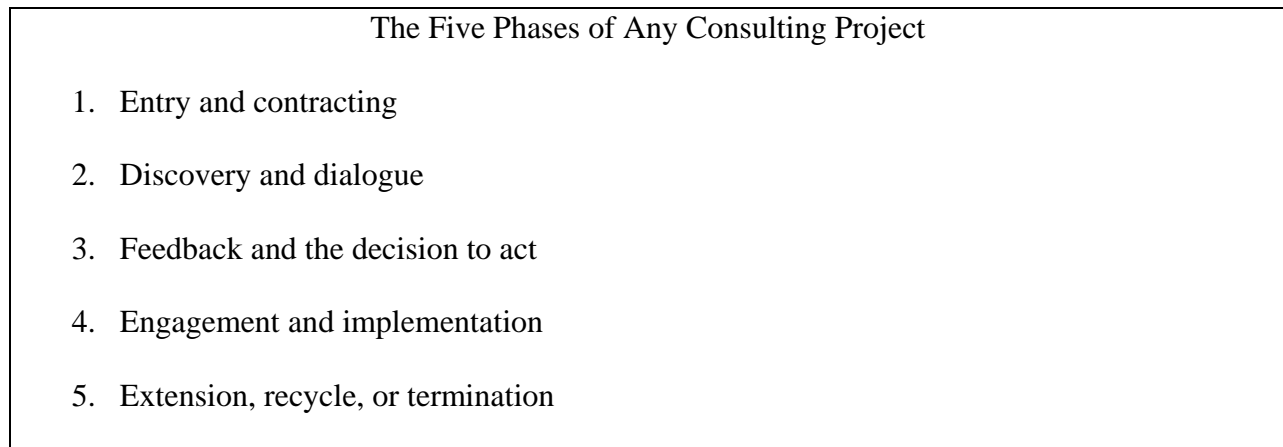


Figure 2. Phases of Consulting Projects (Block, 2000, p. 344).

Formal consulting work is often done through case study analysis. Consultant agrees with Biswas and Twitchell (1999) in using a practiced method in doing case study analysis. There are five primary steps in doing a case study analysis. The first step of case study analysis is listening to the question and repeating. This step is necessary so that consultants do not fall into the trap of misinterpreting the question and then talking for an extended amount of time about a different subject. The second step is asking clarifying questions. Clarifying questions assist the consultant in getting a better picture of what is going on and what needs to be done. The third step is structuring the analysis with a framework. Laying down framework helps the consultant and client with a roadmap of the intended path. There are tools for doing so including Porter’s Five Forces, BCG’s Growth Share Matrix, the four P’s (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) and the three C’s (Company, Competitors, Customers). These tools are primarily used for marketing or business strategy (Biswas & Twitchell, 1999, pp. 143-145).

Biswas and Twitchell's (1999) case step four involves discussing each category of the framework. This step actually involves tackling the case. Discussing the framework includes discussing each step and avoiding making logical jumps. When done properly, adjustment can be made as new information arises. Biswas and Twitchell recommend admitting any mistakes rather than hiding them, then moving forward. "This will show that in addition to having an analytical mind, you have the confidence to admit mistakes, and then drive to succeed (p.150)."

Step five includes summarizing and concluding. The final step involves identifying all critical issues and making a convincing argument. Here, all the conclusions that were derived while working through the framework can be summarized with accompanying recommendations (Twitchell & Biswas, 1999; Martin, Horne, & Chan, 2001).

Peter Block's (2000) data collecting method consists of interviewing, a paper-and-pencil questionnaire, document analysis, direct observation, personal experience--in order to assess how you are being treated, and self discovery. William Consultant (2003) utilizes those steps and also Blocks (2000) final consulting steps that include: data collection, funneling the data into manageable proportions, summarizing the data with a concentrated easy to understand visual format, analyzing data, giving feedback in a report where the all the people involved or can benefit from the report are addressed. Finally, recommendations are given showing how the situation or problem can be controlled by the group who requested the study, so that they can the necessary decisions to implement the plan (Block, 2000, pp.191-193).

Similarly, Richard Dunford (2000) identifies six stages that consulting firms use for processing knowledge management. The six stages include acquisition—collecting, synthesizing and interpreting information from diverse sources from external and internal sources. Indexing is the development of classification schemes. Filtering is screening information for its

importance. Linking is connecting related information. Distribution is getting the information where it needs to be. Application is the final stage, where the intended users and decision-makers apply findings and conclusions.

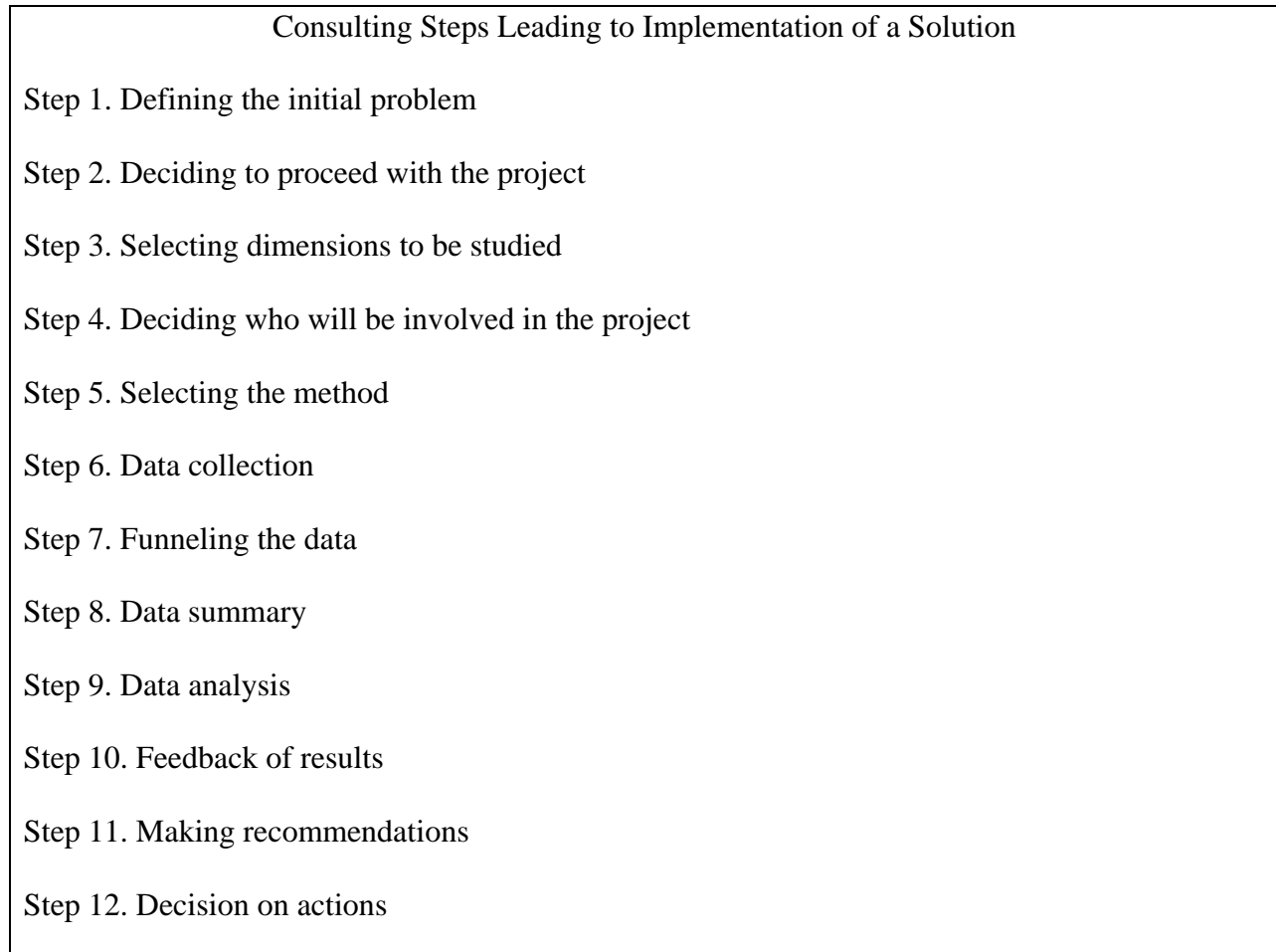


Figure 3. Consulting Steps to Implementation (Block, 2000, p. 345).

### Sources of Knowledge

There are basically six data gathering methods available to OC practitioners: 1. questionnaires, 2. interviews, 3. observations, 4. company document reviews, 5. psychological instruments, and 6 anonymous letter writing. All of these methods have strengths and weaknesses. No single method is always appropriate (Beitler, 2003, pp.55-56).

Consultants in today's business climate are better off if they have a specialization. Good consulting firms don't just take any offer for jobs, but refer clients to consultants that are a better fit for the work (Kasambira, 1999). Dr. Consultant is a management consultant and updates his knowledge and skills on a regular basis. He claims that, "I have done more research as a post-doctoral learner than I did in the entire period of getting my education (Consultant, 2003)." Dr. Consultant is a typical consultant, purchasing dozens of books each year in order to stay on top of the latest research and techniques. His primary source of knowledge comes from his ever-growing library on virtually-every topic that remotely is associated with his consulting practice. He not only studies contemporary literature, but practices being well-versed in methods and theories from classical experts on leadership, management, teams and psychology. Very often, Consultant will take an existing business model and put a spin on it so that it works to the desired need of his client. Consultant contends that, "There is really no new information under the sun. Most of what has been written is an adaptation of something someone else has written. Those that get the credit for it are really just good at packaging it better than others (Consultant, 2003)." Dr. Consultant is good about telling his clients what the foundations of the model he is using comes from and how he makes it work for their organization. This builds upon his reputation and creates a relationship of expertise and trust with his clients.

Dr. Consultant is considered by many to be a guru organizational leadership. He fathered the Organizational Leadership program at Chapman University--a Masters level curriculum that focuses on organizational behavior, leadership theories, teambuilding, ethics, facilitation and much more. Consultant researched and argued with the university on design issues and continues to support the program in many ways. Consultant no longer teaches at a university but contends that he will return to teaching when he decides that consulting no longer has a niche in

his life. One of Consultant's largest clients—a Fortune 500 company, has a company university in the making. Much of the work that he does for the heavy machinery manufacturer will become a part of the corporate training grounds for the company. Other areas that a professional consultant works on are leadership development.

According to Peter Lewis (*Leading Question*, 2001), there are three essentials to developing leadership: knowing the behaviors required; plenty of practice, and good feedback. “These can only be acquired up to a point on a course, and are much better learned at work. People learn much of their behavior through imitating others, consciously or unconsciously. So the best single way to teach leadership is by example (p.51).” Dr. Consultant (2003) contends that the best way to do this in his consulting practice is to use case studies in the form of oral story telling.

Peter Block (2000) gives recommendations on collecting more knowledge of the situation being studied by informally interviewing people of the organization through asking questions that include: Finding out how individuals feel about having a consultant being brought in to help with a problem. Finding out why individuals think the organization needs help from an outside consultant or if it does need help. Likewise, the consultant should find out what kind of questions should be asked of other organizational employees to assess the situation and find out what ideas have been supported by people but have not gotten enough support. Block (2000) recommends that a flawless consultant should ask organizational employees about what they would recommend if they were in the position of external consultant. Finally, questions related to finding out how hopeful individuals are about making progress with the problem and what obstacles may be encountered in having suggestions being accepted (pp. 195-196). The discover process involves certain skills as outlined in Figure 4 below:

### The Specific Skills Involved in Consulting Discovery

1. Distinguish between the presenting problem and the underlying problem.
2. Elicit and describe both the technical/business problem and how the problem is being managed.
3. Ask questions about what others in the organization are doing to cause or maintain the presenting or target problem.
4. Ask questions about what others in the organization are doing to cause or maintain the presenting or target problem.
5. Plan the data collection jointly with the client.
6. Involve the client in interpreting the data collected.
7. Recognize the similarity between how the client manages you and how they manage their own organization.
8. Condense the data into a limited number of issues.
9. Use language that is understandable to people outside your area of expertise.

Figure 4. Consulting Discovery Skills (Block, 2000, pp. 352-353).

The phases of consulting could be broken down into nine areas: gaining entry, agreeing on a working contract, data collection, analysis and diagnosis, feedback to clients, formulating proposals and decisions to act, implementations, evaluating, and follow-up (Shaw, 1997). When fully utilized, these steps will yield a consultant a successful consulting career, as William Consultant has seen for many years.

### Billing as a Consultant

In the consulting world, one of the greatest variations is in pricing. None of the market niches you serve have any set norms. I've walked away from assignments

because I couldn't live with the price the client would pay, and consultants with similar capabilities were glad to get the assignment at the lower price. The price you charge depend on three factors: Your perceived capability to deliver results, the lifestyle you want, and what the market will bear (Kintler, 1998, p.151).

A professional consultant is billed as an expert. Literally, he is known by his clients as the person with all the right answers for organizational challenges. Because he is an expert, he charges high-end prices. A full day, which is four hours or more, is billed at a flat rate of \$1500. Anything less than four hours is billed at \$300 per hour. Clients don't seem to mind paying Dr. Consultant his regular pay schedule--as they consistently convey value in the knowledge he imparts in them. Likewise, naturally--Dr. William does not mind getting paid these top wages, because he gives his clients what they want—organization for their organization.

Elaine Biech (1999) tells readers that, “Training, organization development, or management development consultants typically charge by the day. That day may be six to twelve hours long depending on the task at hand (p.44).” Biech (1999) also states, “Retainers were very popular in the 1960s, and 1970s, but less so today... The advantage to the consultant is a regular income; the drawback is that the consultant must plan around the needs of the client (p.46).” Which ever way a consultant wants to bill, on a retainer, hourly or on a daily basis, should be based on what the market allows. Kintler (1998) advises that, “What your consulting clients will pay for your services depends on four factors: the industry served, the perceived value of your services, competitors' consulting fees, and the position of the decision maker for your services (p.154).” Kintler (1998) also recommends that fees be based on the project rather than hourly or daily, whenever possible. This is recommended because the client will have a clearer understanding what they are getting into.

One thing that may be unique to Dr. Consultant's practice is a usual line in his contracts that promise satisfaction from service or no payment is due. Consultant maintains that no client has ever refused to pay him. He does issue a standard contract to his clients that states the terms of his work, what product and/or service will be yielded and in what period of time it will be delivered and completed. Often, Consultant will email the contract to his client for their approval. The client will then make any necessary changes and/or sign the contract as is. The contract is generally mailed back to Consultant's office or handed back personally. Both Dr. Consultant and his client's representative will sign the contract to make it an official deal.

Very often Consultant will do work pro-bono or as a gift for organizations he would like to do work for on a larger scale or give them a break for the same reasons. Consultant has been known to give presentations developed and/or adapted for colleges around his home. He is a one-man-show. As is the case for many independent consultants, Consultant is the chief presenter, researcher, speaker, expert, teacher, facilitator, graphic designer and public relations department. When he has more than he can handle, he often calls upon an "associate" to help him do research, type a report, develop a presentation or maintain his website. Dr. Consultant has no direct employees, but works with sub-contractors. He makes them be responsible for reporting their taxes to the government. On a personal income level, Consultant does his own taxes, and is an expert at knowing what he can write off and how to report his own income.

Douglas Gray gives some tax recommendations for consultants, like William Consultant, on how to legally minimize paying tax in his book: *Consulting Business* (2002). He contends that consultants need to choose either a cash or accrual method of accounting. They need to choose which type of business will fit their need best in order to maximize their deductible expenses. The primary choices are corporations, proprietorships or partnerships. Consultants

can maximize their deductible expenses by keeping payment stubs, receipts and vouchers to maintain records of any expenses associated with doing business, including entertainment and automobile expenses. Gray (2002) suggests that only a tax accountant can properly advise a consultant on appropriate deductions, but shows how consultants can include office expenses associated with their home if they can prove the office is necessary in conducting business and if the room or area is used 100% of the time exclusively for the business. Deductions are allowed on a square foot percentage or other reasonable basis and disclosed in the consultant's tax return. Other areas for the professional consultant to be aware for possible tax deductions include travel, bad debts, insurance, education and professional development, salaries, equipment and furnishings (Gray, 2002, pp. 99-104).

#### Consulting Success Best Practices

At its most simplistic, managing a consulting engagement is the effective juggling of quality, time, and budget. The client must feel the project was successful and you, the consultant, likewise should feel justifiably proud to attach your name to the finished product. The client wants his problem solved in a timely manner at a reasonable cost (Hendricks, 2002. p. 107).

While, a professional consultant has shared a great deal of insight on what being a consultant looks like. More advice on successful consulting practices is offered by David Kintler (1998). Kintler suggests that there are ten steps that are necessary to succeed in consulting. Persistence is the first step. Persistence includes being committed to the job and using down-time to market services and increase personal skills and knowledge.

The second best practice is to focus on the needs of the client. It is important for the client to recognize that the consultant seems to fully understand their needs, and those personal experiences of the consultant are not introduced unless they pertain to current job-at-hand. Dallas M. Kersey (1999) recommends taking understanding the needs of the client one step further. She

suggests getting an independent assessment of the client's needs. Also, bring in another partner with a different perspective than yours to spend time with the client to make sure the needs were appropriately assessed.

The third best practice that consultants should utilize is developing a unique selling proposition (USP). Kintler (1998) suggest having a two minute pitch that is well-polished, which tells a compelling story. "Being able to crisply articulate your USP directly determines your positioning in the clients mind (p.339)."

The forth best practice of consulting is projecting a professional image. Kintler (1998) advices that everyone is initially judged by how they look and sound. "First impressions, including telephone impressions, can set the stage for developing a relationship or not (p.340)." Kintler (1998) also suggests not being extravagant and that investing in professional looking clothing, logo, and promotional literature is worth it. Likewise, a professional consultant also suggests that "every presentation and proposal look top-notch (Consultant, 2003)."

David Kintler's (1998) fifth best practice for consulting is a recommendation to have financial reserves available. Reasons for this may be to cover living and planned business expenses while expecting to have unexpected occurrences to arise that may need funding. These ideas piggy-back on the idea of maintaining a professional image. Having the money to maintain a professional image is crucial.

The sixth best practice of consulting deals with developing and expanding contacts. Kintler (1998) was fortunate to land his first consulting contract with a company that he had done business for when he worked for someone else. Kintler advices, "Your success beyond the start-up period of your business depends heavily on your ability to establish new contracts

(p.341).” Likewise, A professional consultant got his first consulting job through a former student of his who worked for one his current-largest client—a Fortune 500 company.

Kintler’s (1998) seventh best practice is never miss the opportunity to spread the word. Kintler (1998) suggests getting published by submitting articles to periodicals, publishing a newsletter and accepting invitations to speak at engagements.

The eighth best practice is to focus on results. Kintler (1998) reminds readers, “Results are the driving force behind your clients’ motivations to use your services. Consulting has evolved from being an advice profession to one more focused on producing results for the client (p.341).” Having a structured approach will help maintain a lasting relationship with the client, win further contracts, as well as commanding a higher fee.

Kintler’s (1998) ninth best practice of consulting is to get testimonials. This is done by getting quotes, testimonial letters and referrals from clients. “What someone else says about you is far more important than anything you can say about yourself (p.342).”

The final and tenth best practice of consulting is to provide more value than expected. A professional consultant stresses that, “It is important to always give your client added value. Added value may include putting presentations they viewed on your website for them to reference at a later time. Added value may be sending the client an article or book on a subject of interest (Consultant, 2003).” Kintler (1998) advises that added value may, “...take very little of your time [but] can guarantee a longer-term relationship with that client (p.342).”

Consultants of this century generally need to find ways to increase the bottom line for their clients. Some tips utilized by consultants like William Consultant include: Ensuring sales and procurement processes (actual sales and ordering are in alignment with forecasts. Evaluating operational processes to determine opportunities for savings. This could be done by focusing on

quality inspections of incoming materials and changing purchasing procedures to help minimize costs. The consultant could find ways to create better relationships with suppliers that bring value to the client's company goals. Consultants find ways to increase operating efficiencies and help clients meet the needs of their customers. Consultants help clients determine if costs could be reduced through outsourcing non-core activities. Consultants review accounting processes, bills and books to find better ways to manage company cash flow. Also, consultants evaluate equipment to assess whether it would be more cost-effective to upgrade equipment (Tips, 2001).

On another note, a few tips on how to protect your consulting business were published in *Consulting to Management* magazine, by Harvey Bergholz and Fred Nickoles (2003). These authors recommend:

Periodically report formally on tangible end results accomplished and value received. Document these on paper for handoff to and discussion with the client. Actively generate referrals inside large client organizations to penetrate multiple levels and different groups, and to diversify the services provided. You will never be indispensable—no one is, but you will have many more supporters throughout when the inevitable challenge comes from a new executive—and it always comes.

Don't get chummy with client contacts. Even when such relationships are truly innocent, they won't seem so to others. Beyond reproach is where all your relationships must reside.

Stay organized. When a question arises, we should not have to be sweating and digging for past reports, invoices, and presentations. If you're the type who just fills up the shoe box for the IRS each year and then tries to sort it out on April 14, this will bite you when the client challenge comes.

Focus on the future. If called on to "make your value case," either in a group or one-to-one, be brief about the past—it has already been paid for. Spend more time on defining the near term value to be had by continuing the relationship. The key here is to understand the new exec's priorities and to then describe how your skills and services will facilitate the execution of his or her agenda (p. 13).

Properly protecting your consulting practice is an ongoing process of being persistent in being organized and giving the client what he or she really is looking for, while responding to each of the changing circumstances of the client and workplace.

Dr. William A. Cohen (2001) suggests that part of making it as a consultant also includes creating successful presentations that are professional, enthusiastic, well-organized, practiced and use visual aids. Dressing for success, using proper grammar and spelling and approach used in the presentation will assist in making the consultant look professional. Enthusiasm must generate enthusiasm in the audience. Cohen (2001) alludes to the way General George S. Patton commanded respect and motivation through use of enthusiasm marked by jokes, intimidation and practice in front of a mirror. Utilizing similar techniques, a consultant can generate the same type of enthusiasm as General Patton. Being organized may mean looking for a clear and logical way to present the material using an outline. Practice will help the consultant become more familiar with the material, perhaps even help memorize it, control time and keep it flowing smoothly. Cohen (2001) says that there are six primary options for visual aids: Flip charts, overhead transparencies, slides, handouts, blackboards, and computer presentations. Dr. Consultant uses a combination of all of the above on a regular basis.

Schein (1999) recommends that the following best practices will also contribute to a consultant's success. The first is be helpful, even if it means recommending someone more qualified to help with the problem. The second is remain in touch with current reality and be aware of what is going with systems, the client and the consultant. The third is being aware of what you don't know and writing it down so that you can find the answers out later. The fourth is being aware that everything said and done will influence the client. The fifth best practice is understanding that consultants do not have to live with the problem or solution, but the client

does. The sixth is going with the flow and by identifying the client’s areas of motivation and readiness for change. Seven, look for the right time for intervention. Eight is be optimistic and open for a teachable moment to provide insight and ideas. The ninth best practice for consultants to be aware of is that insight can be gained even from problems and errors. Final insight on success that Schein (1999) shares is that when in doubt, share the problem with the client and see what the client thinks.

### Consulting is Coaching

Coaching is an invaluable tool for developing managers across a wide range of needs. Coaching provides a space for profound personal development; it enables managers to understand how to translate personal insights into improved effectiveness and ultimately organizational development. Coaching can be used to support other organizational or training initiatives (translating learned skills into competencies), or as stand-alone development. It makes managers feel valued and improves retention. The quality of the relationship is crucial to the outcome, providing the container, stimulus and support for the changes that result from coaching (Wales, 2003, p. 283).

A professional consultant conveys the idea of a consultant as being a facilitator and a coach. Consultants do not have the power to make the final decisions for the clients, however, it is a consultant’s job to show the client what he or she thinks is best for the company in dealing with the challenges presented. D. A. Benton (1999), has outlined ten basic rules for being an effective coach as shown in Figure 5 below:

#### Ten Effective Rules for Coaching

1. Cultivate the attitude that you do have something of value to offer someone.  
Do not be apologetic. You can be humble, but not recessive.
2. Be an impeccable example. For credibility’s sake you can’t, “Do as I say, not as I do.”

3. Be other-oriented. You have to shelve your ego.
4. Slow down. It will make you look more self-assured (which breeds confidence in the coachee), and it will give you more time to think of good advice to offer.
5. Constantly raise the bar for yourself. As you get better experience, you'll be able to provide better advice.
6. Do not be intimidated by the coachee. She or he will likely be superior to you in some areas, but you are adequate and that is what you are offering.
7. Hold your ground. Some coaches will try to dismiss what you offer. If you have something of value, do not let them diminish it.
8. Do your job in giving superlative advice, but do not be bothered if the coachee doesn't apply it. Resenting the fact that he or she doesn't implement your thinking is naïve. You teach. The person must want to learn.
9. Own up to your mistakes. If you gave advice that bombed, be willing to help extricate the coachee from any situation you helped get him into.
10. Stay objective. As much as you care for the coachee and her situation, you have to remain impartial. You will offer far better direction and be a much better coach if you can stay objective.

Figure 5. Rules for Effective Coaching (Benton, 1999, pp. 189-190).

Similarly, French and Bell (1999) offer some advice to consultants acting as coaches. They suggest including all relevant people in an intervention to focus on problems or opportunities that have the highest priority in order to build the greatest support. The goal of the intervention should be clear to all members being coached and they should know what they are doing to contribute to the attainment of the goal. The goals should be realistic, challenging and

attainable. The consultant should coach in a fashion that is both experience-based and conceptual in order to make it a permanent part of the client's knowledge base. While doing all of the preceding steps, the consultant should maintain a climate that is open to discussion and alleviates any anxiety or defensiveness. Also, the consultant should allow discussion and any expression of thoughts feelings and beliefs (pp.146-147).

### The Consulting Project

This paper not only discusses the study of consulting processes and lessons learned from a consulting internship, it is also a brief narrative of an actual change management consulting project done for a Fortune 500 company with a professional consultant. The project is briefly described below and the completed final products of the consulting project are submitted in conjunction to this document. While the actual presentation and direct training was conducted by Dr. Consultant at the location of his current client, much of the final product was observed and collaborated with the author of this paper. The content, processes and findings are recorded briefly hereafter.

### *Consulting Assignment*

Dr. Consultant's current client was looking for a way to get their suppliers to use a newly-developed web-based supply collaboration fully trained and transitioned into using it as the primary mode of business. When Dr. Consultant heard about the proposal, he suggested that this was a training issue and who was better to produce training materials and conduct training than an ex-professor and professional consultant. Although the project was heavy on technological know-how, Consultant managed to sell his client on the proposal that he would produce a training curriculum and related materials. He would also be the one to do the primary

training workshops. A fee was discussed and a contract was signed by the client and Dr. Consultant and the work began.

Consultant's first task was to learn how to use the new web-based supply collaboration software. He was given a password and was given time to work with another employee from the firm who was familiar with using it. Together, Consultant and his new associate worked with the program learning what it could do and what kind of mistakes and challenges one could encounter in using it. As a first time user, Consultant was able to diagnose what steps should be taken in order to make learning the new supply collaboration processes smoother.

After learning the basics of the program, Consultant began to study the organization and suppliers in order to become familiar with who he would be dealing with and how to best produce a learning curriculum that would satisfy both client and the client's suppliers. One of the biggest challenges of the project is that suppliers had previously worked primarily over the phone with Consultant's clients and had done so for decades in many cases. The use of this new technology would be a challenge that Consultant had to take part in selling. This made Consultant's consulting project one of change management.

Consultant tackled the change management adapting a model that his client's company was familiar with and liked. The model was derived from that of Jeaneanne LaMarsh and known as "the LaMarsh Model." The final training module was labeled, "The William Consultant Process, as adapted from the LaMarsh Model." The final model was similar to the basic LaMarsh model that the company liked, but made better for this particular application with adaptations by Consultant drawing from his knowledge of change models by experts such as Peter Senge, William Kotter, Kurt Lewin, and Peter Block--to name a few. The final model expressed a general process the challenge of getting people to cross a path that begins at what is

the current way of being to a series of steps of training and acceptance to the final destination of a new way of being. Peter Senge would describe this process as “organizational learning.” Consultant sells the idea to his client using a graphical model with diagrams of arrows and circles.

Another challenge was tackling distance learning for those suppliers who were not able to attend a physical workshop for training. Consultant decided that the best way to accomplish this task was to produce a training manual and an accompanying CD that would be self-explanatory and easy to use, even for computer users of the earliest stages. One challenge that Dr. Consultant encountered was deciding on which software medium to use in order to deliver a product that could be used by the most general user.

This is where my expertise and knowledge comes into the project. Dr. Consultant was made familiar with my knowledge and background in technology (as I became the person to build and update his website) and found he could come to me for answers that assisted him with this project. He asked me for ideas of how he can integrate his training using technology that could be used by people of all levels and of varying levels of technology. His concerns were confirmed by me that many of the suppliers might not have the newest and similar software that he wanted to use in training.

My suggestion to him was to do the presentation using Adobe Acrobat converted files and include a free copy of Adobe Reader with the training package. A primary concern of mine was that his proposal was to create the workshop using his usual PowerPoint presentation for the visual aid. I suggested that a free PowerPoint viewer could be downloaded from Microsoft and it too should be included in the training package on the same CD. During this day of conversations

about the consulting project, Dr. Consultant and I got online and we ordered the Adobe Acrobat software for use in construction of this training package.

After a few more conversations about this project and what it entailed Dr. Consultant asked if I would be able to load the training materials onto his website and put a usual password protection on it. The materials are in the process of being put on his website and obstacles of size and execution are currently being addressed by me.

Dr. Consultant and I met several times during the construction of the training material so that he could teach me what processes had to be considered and how he met the challenges of training associated with these processes. Some of the knowledge that I gained from Dr. Consultant in this training including realizing that this project was truly best suited for Dr. William because he had a strong knowledge of change management and also the knowledge of the operations, processes and culture of his client. His client could have brought in a large outside consulting organization to do the production and training, however, doing so would be foolish, because they would have to take the time to learn the culture, the business and processes of an organization that William Consultant, PhD was already very familiar with. Similarly, Consultant's client and employees were already familiar and comfortable with him, which is very important when it comes to training and interviewing for processes knowledge-building. This project became a win-win situation for both William Consultant, because he was able to get a job that could have been marketed out to an outside technology consulting firm and a win situation to Consultant's client who got to use a familiar consultant willing to learn the technology and build training materials to meet the needs of the organization.

Dr. Consultant met the challenge of change management, partially by making the learning process easy to follow by even the most beginning computer user. He also adapted the

training workshop so that peer participants could help each other become familiar with the processes. These two steps accompanied by sending the participants home with a training tutorial on disk and an easy-to-follow manual for reference made change management easier for the organizations involved. Also, Consultant facilitated arrangements for a support system to be associated with the new system to be available for new users.

### *More Lessons Learned*

I witnessed and learned that consulting is largely about supporting the ideas and philosophies of the client through interviews, literature review, and “shadowing” or learning through observation. Much of the consulting process is done by involving the client in the decision-making processes and in the processes of interviewing and building. Processes supported by familiar and well-known literature substantiate the proposals and build confidence in what is being proposed and taught by the consultant.

Many processes that are considered “well-based” are often eclectically drawn--adapted and used by consultants to accomplish a particular task. I learned that testing, retesting and allowing others to test the final product is always a best consulting practice before printing, burning final copies for distribution or presenting. Accompanied by this thought--packaging is everything in the consulting business. Putting forth a professional image--backed by grammatically-accurate presentations with graphics that clearly and simply illustrate the concepts is important in consulting. Supporting the ideas of the client with literature and authentic language that helps organizational members see the problem, participate in creating change and implementing change is what consulting is all about. Consultants truly need to be well-grounded in knowledge of their field--both past and contemporary.

In this consulting project, processes needed to be identified, worked and reworked, then eventually matched with theory from literature, experience and ideas from those who were knowledgeable in related areas. The final products tackled content that that dealt with change management, supply collaboration, distance learning and website management. The final outcome of this consulting project was a training manual, a tutorial CD, a PowerPoint workshop presentation—meant to be team-and-peer taught, a support center, and a website—to take care of distance learning issues. Consulting is all about process. William Consultant, PhD is truly an expert when it comes to understanding processes and teaching others how to use them for the benefit of their organization.

I appreciate the time that I have been granted learning about consulting from a master of the practice and art of consulting.

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