CONTENTS

WELCOME TO THIS ISSUE OF THE MANAGEMENT CONSULTING JOURNAL.

Welcome to the February 2025 issue of the Management Consulting Journal.

As well as providing a platform for accomplished researchers, the Journal gives a voice to post-graduate students' research and writing. In the last issue we featured three papers from students at Vrije Universiteit, Netherlands. We are delighted to open this issue with three papers from post graduate students at Audencia Business School, France. These are followed by another student paper, this time from Durham University Business School, UK. Professors and educators who are keen to see their students' work included in the Journal, please contact me directly.

Also in this issue we look at the subjects of governance and ethics in consulting. We learn about the relationship between the computer and the consulting industry. And we conclude with a reflection on life as an international consultant.

Thanks as always to the Journal's editorial board, the UK Institute of Consulting, our commercial sponsor FMR Research and our publisher Sciendo.

Professor Simon Haslam | Founding Editor

Bouwmeester, O. (2023). Lowering Social Desirability Bias: Doing Jokes-Based Interviews. Management Consulting Journal, 6(2), 78-90.

MEANINGFUL CONSULTING

Lucie Noury

ABSTRACT

As part of their MSc in Business Strategy & Consulting at Audencia Business School, students take part in a competitive assignment on the issues surrounding the organization of consulting firms and careers in this field.

This semester, students were invited to consider the theme "meaningful consulting". This is a particularly topical issue in the sector, given the rise of new work and management practices to remain attractive and retain talent, or societal debates surrounding the impact of consulting on client organizations and external stakeholders.

Lucie Noury, head of the course and a consulting specialist, invited students to develop a reflective point of view on trends in the consulting sector. Students were asked to find an interesting and original angle on a given theme, to interview one or more consulting professionals on the subject, and to draw well-founded conclusions for a fresh perspective. The aim is twofold: to help students develop a critical viewpoint on current events in the sector, and to mature their career plans.

Three submissions were chosen for inclusion in the Management Consulting Journal:

- Rita Dakkoune, Elie Barakat & Lily Atteia, for their article entitled "How to: Keep your head up in public and find meaning in your consulting work "

- Noah Malka & Guillaume Rogeau, for their article entitled "Independent Consultant: Myth of Freedom or Reality of Overwork?"

- Marion Grange, Quentin Hoang & Inès Rambaud, for their article entitled "Big Three or NGO? When the quest for meaningful work becomes a dilemma..."

The three tackle the subject from a variety of angles, from the image of consulting and consultants, to the impact of strategy consulting firms or the reality of independent consulting. We hope you enjoy reading them.

How to: Keep Your Head Up in Public and Find Meaning in Your Consulting Work

Rita Dakkoune, Elie Barakat & Lily Atteia

INTRODUCTION

It's Friday night, and for once, you're lucky enough to clock out by 11 p.m., just in time to catch up with your friends at a party. Amid the laughter and music, you strike up a casual conversation with a girl you've just met. The million-dollar question shows up: "What do you do for a living?" A subtle smile settles onto the corner of your lips. After years of dedication at HEC, relentless networking, and giving up your social life—every sacrifice, every sleepless night—all leading to this moment — when you can finally declare, with undeniable pride: I'm a consultant at McKinsey. You stare at each other for a minute, and she suddenly says: So, you're a kind of glorified PowerPoint maker?

In an instant, your entire life feels like it's slipping away. Doubt settles in as you start to question every educational and career choice you've made. Is consulting meaningless or is there more beneath the surface?

MEANINGLESS CONSULTING

Consultants are very likely to encounter those types of critics. Whether on social media, series or books, they face critics like few other professionals: Overpricing, endless working hours, short-term careers, meaningless job... The critics are endless. But as an outsider of the industry, you might ask yourself: Why all that hate?

Consulting suffers from an ambivalent image in public opinion. Many see it as a field where external experts impose their solutions without truly understanding the realities of the businesses they serve. Consultants are often seen as detached figures, paid exorbitant fees for recommendations that appear neither original nor tailored to clients' needs. As one junior associate at the BCG group points out, "Some clients will end up putting the 200-slide deck you made in

a closet" highlighting the frustration consultants feel when their hard work seems underutilized.

This perceived disconnect between consultants and the day-to-day realities of organizations fuels skepticism towards the profession. This skepticism doesn't just affect public opinion — it also influences how consultants view their own careers, often treating the profession as a steppingstone rather than a destination.

A TRANSITORY JOB

Consulting is increasingly being discredited in the public eye, mainly because of its status as a transitional career. As the junior consultant at the BCG notes, "Consulting is more often viewed as a temporary phase to sharpen your skills before transitioning to senior roles in large corporations or launching your own venture."

For many junior consultants, the job is merely a CV-builder, with little intention of staying long-term. In fact, a staggering 25% of consultants leave their positions after just two years, highlighting the profession's high turnover rate. This high turnover is partly driven by the rigid, pyramid-like structure of consulting firms. "For every dozen analysts, you might need only one project manager, and for every project manager, maybe half a partner," the consultant explains. "Not every analyst can become a manager." As a result, firms like the BCG adopt an "up or out" policy, pushing those who don't climb the ranks to seek opportunities elsewhere. This constant turnover has led many to wonder if the demanding hours are truly worth it, reinforcing the perception of consulting as a short-term career rather than a long-term commitment.

However, while these challenges paint a picture of an industry in flux, they have also become catalysts for significant transformation. Consulting firms are not only acknowledging the high turnover and shifting perceptions but are actively redefining their roles to adapt to new societal demands and retain talent.

REDEFINING PURPOSE IN CONSULTING

A new dynamic is emerging, driven by growing environmental awareness. As some firms are mired in scandals—such as the fallout from Enron or McKinsey's controversies involving Emmanuel Macron—others, like the BCG, are carving out a different path, focusing on sustainability and social impact. These firms are engaging in decarbonization initiatives and collaborating with NGOs and international organizations on critical issues such as public health. The BCG junior consultant explained, "We're seeing a significant rise in decarbonization projects, and strategy consulting gives us the vision needed to tackle these challenges." The increased focus on ESG issues attracts new talents eager to work on meaningful projects. "These themes are becoming more and more present," added the consultant," And they resonate with the new generation entering the field."

Consulting firms are also increasingly focusing on work-life balance, with policies like the "push back" system allowing consultants to block off certain evenings for personal time. Our interviewee remarked, "I see the BCG evolving, with a growing culture that accepts when someone says they're not available tonight—it's becoming more accepted, and that's nice." These initiatives help reduce burnout, making consulting more manageable and appealing to talent.

Reflecting on that Friday night encounter, it's clear that perceptions don't always match reality. Consulting, like any profession, has its challenges. But as the industry evolves, it offers opportunities to contribute to significant, positive change. Keeping your head up means recognizing the meaningful impact you can have—and understanding that while misconceptions persist, your work speaks for itself.

Independent Consultant: Myth of Freedom or Reality of Overwork?

Noah Malka & Guillaume Rogeau

INTRODUCTION

In the consulting world, the image of independence often evokes freedom and autonomy. This perception attracts many professionals seeking to escape the constraints of traditional employment. However, behind this enticing facade lies a far more nuanced reality. Julie, a finance consultant, shares her experience, shedding light on aspects often overshadowed by the glamorous discourse surrounding the profession. Her story, poised between the myth of freedom and the reality of overwork, invites us to question the promises of independence that so many aspiring consultants see as the goal.

THE DREAM OF FREEDOM: THE ALLURING FACADE OF THE INDEPENDENT CONSULTING PROFESSION

The first idea that comes to mind when thinking of an independent consultant is that of complete freedom. At a time when the desire for professional freedom is growing, becoming a consultant seems to offer the ideal answer to employees' frustrations. Yet, although her experience is not universal, Julie, who first experienced the stability of major banks, describes her transition to consulting with a slightly bitter smile: "Freedom is a lure in this profession. It's promised to us, but the reality is quite different."

The idea of being able to choose one's assignments, and refuse those that don't suit, is one of the main arguments in favor of independence. But the reality is quite different. "Most of the time, you accept what comes your way, especially if you have no other opportunity. Turning down an assignment can mean months without income, and it's a constant pressure."

THE FLIP SIDE OF FREEDOM: A CRUSHING MENTAL BURDEN

The flip side of this apparent freedom is a constant mental burden. Unlike salaried employees, consultants do not have the stability of a permanent contract. Each mission is a separate battle, each contract renewal a stressful ordeal impacting their balance. Julie shares this feeling of precariousness: "Every three months, I have to renew my contract. Nothing is guaranteed, and it only takes the company deciding to end it for me to be left with nothing." This uncertainty pushes them to work harder, faster, and sacrifice their life balance to stay competitive in a fiercely competitive market. "When you're a consultant, you can't afford to make mistakes. If you make a mistake, you're easily replaceable. And that's exhausting."

This insecurity can vary from consultant to consultant though, and some still prefer this uncertainty over the comfort of traditional employment, viewing it as an opportunity to take on varied challenges or build stable partnerships with clients to mitigate the stress.

UNREALISTIC CORPORATE EXPECTATIONS

Another crucial aspect of a consultant's life is the often ambiguous role they play within companies. In theory, a consultant is an external expert, called in to solve a specific issue. In practice, however, some companies use consultants as temporary staff to avoid hiring permanent employees. Julie highlights this reality: "Companies prefer to pay more for a consultant because it's easier to let them go."

This is not the norm for all consultants, of course. Some have the luxury to choose assignments where their expertise is fully recognized and respected. While Julie speaks to the pressures and insecurities of her status, other consultants—especially those more selective or specialized—find assignments where they are not merely "adjustable assets" but valuable resources for their expertise.

AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE: THE CONSULTANT FACING A CHANGING JOB MARKET

The consulting sector is constantly evolving, shaped by economic crises and shifting corporate policies. This uncertainty weighs particularly heavily on consultants, who are often the first affected by budget cuts. Julie sums up this situation by describing the strategy at Natixis, which attempted to relocate some of its activities: "They repatriated the teams in a rush to France and hired consultants to manage the issues."

Yet flexibility can also work in favor of consultants. In times of crisis, new missions may emerge, and some consultants are able to turn these situations into opportunities to diversify their skills and broaden their expertise by adapting to new market demands.

## THE REAL COST OF CONSULTING: A TWO-SPEED BUSINESS

The consulting world is also marked by significant disparities. On one side, consultants from major international firms like McKinsey or EY work on strategic missions and enjoy relatively stable working conditions and high remuneration. On the other, independent consultants or those employed by smaller firms handle more operational, often more stressful missions where the pressure to prove oneself is constant. Julie describes this dichotomy: "In big consulting firms, it's a different world. We freelancers are often hired for short assignments, bordering on temporary work." Consultants who, like Julie, work on very operational assignments are more prone to be easily replaced and with less strategic resources to negotiate her contracts.

This duality does not apply to all independent consultants; however, those who work on more strategic projects or have differentiating expertise can more easily manage to combine diverse missions with long-term projects that stabilize their work, enabling them to find a balance between mission choice and autonomy, taking advantage of the flexibility of their status.

CONCLUSION: INDEPENDENT CONSULTANTS, BETWEEN DREAM AND DISILLUSIONMENT

Consulting independence is often far more complex than the idyllic image it conveys. While the promises of freedom and autonomy are enticing, they also mask a reality of precariousness, pressure, and uncertainty. Julie encapsulates this ambivalence by stating, "We're sold freedom, but what we really experience is precariousness." However, each consultant's journey remains unique.

Ultimately, the status of an independent consultant oscillates between a dream of emancipation and disillusionment in the face of market challenges. This path, although arduous, can offer fulfillment to those who know how to leverage its possibilities while accepting the constraints inherent to this autonomy.
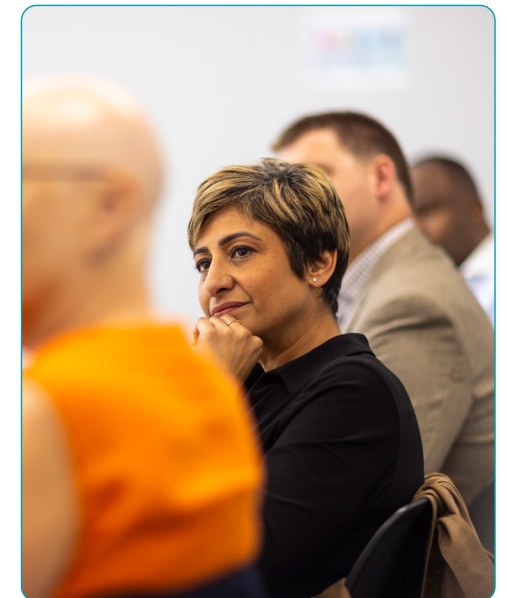
MEANINGFUL CONSULTING (CONTINUED)

One of the "Big Three" or an NGO? When the Quest for Meaningful Work Becomes a Dilemma…

Marion Grange, Quentin Hoang & Inès Rambaud

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever dreamt of a fulfilling career? Of contributing to the greater good? This question must certainly have flashed upon your mind when deciding upon your professional future. This is exactly Amélie's situation. Two choices lie before her: after a gap year, she could return to the top-tier consulting firm she started her career at, a privileged path chosen when graduating from elite schools. Or she could continue working for the French NGO she joined a year ago, which supports innovative programs aimed at helping children escape poverty. Amélie is motivated by public interest. In a society where 70% of people seek purpose at work, the importance given to the meaning of your activity tends to grow significantly when applying to a job, and all the more in consulting. In this respect, the word "meaningful" has gradually emerged over the past few years as a major new criterion when measuring one's happiness at work.[1] However, to what extent can we talk about meaningful consulting? Where are you more bound to find it? In a major firm with large-scale challenging missions or in an NGO, allegedly more focused on common good? Let us explore these questions by following Amélie's path.

SEARCHING FOR IMPACT AT THE ORGANISATIONAL LEVEL

Impact, in its simplest form, is about meeting a specific need, which others might not have addressed, or at least not as well. Therefore, at the consultancy level, meaningfulness can be measured by its impact on its stakeholders and more broadly on society.

The "Big Three" are known for their international stature, their extensive resources, and formidable network which empowers their consultants to tackle a wide range of projects. Even though projects often draw on experts, teams might never see the concrete result of their work and therefore feel distant from the reality of the field. In contrast, some NGOs also work on strategic subjects but operate on a more focused scope (e.g. poverty). This allows deeper expertise and a clearer sense of purpose for consultants. While funding constraints can limit the project scope, Amélie notes that her new work feels "more tangible" than her previous consulting experiences, illustrating how operational, hands-on tasks offer a sense of meaningfulness, independently of their strategic nature.

Thus, actionable projects enhance a sense of usefulness, as consultants engage directly with stakeholders and implement solutions that have a tangible impact. Admittedly, process expertise - knowing how to structure and manage projects - is valuable in consulting, but ultimately content expertise can drive a more lasting impact.

FROM INTERCHANGEABLE TO IRREPLACEABLE: INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTION DEFINES MEANING

When it comes to finding meaning in consulting, Amélie's career journey from a renowned consultancy to an NGO provides a striking perspective on how the individual's role shapes impact. In her previous consulting firm, she sometimes felt lost in the crowd, working on prestigious projects but struggling to see her unique role in the bigger picture, acknowledging that strategic consulting can feel disconnected from personal impact when you're not leveraging unique expertise.

But in her current role in a non-profit organisation, Amélie's project management skills are no longer interchangeable. This shift from being a cog in a well-oiled machine to becoming an essential player reveals how differentiation and a sense of irreplaceable value can make work far more meaningful.

The meaningfulness of consulting becomes more pronounced on an individual level: when you bring skills that are not only valued but uniquely positioned to address a specific need. This sense of differentiation elevates personal fulfilment and deepens the consultant's value. It transforms consulting from a box-ticking exercise into a role where the consultant makes a lasting, positive impact on colleagues, organisations, and society as a whole.

A GOOD STORYTELLING IS ALL IT TAKES

You choose a company just like it chooses you. When a perfect match is made between employee and firm, it creates the potential for meaningful work. People who find their work meaningful are 75% more committed to their organisation.[2] Thus, is there a magic formula to engage workers?

One wish of a consultant seeking meaningfulness is to have impact, individually or collectively. The goal for the firm is then to offer the consultants a story to believe in, providing them with inspiration where they can tap into, so that they can achieve this vision. Indeed, meaningful consulting also resides in the way employees feel inspired by the firm, its values, the working environment, and the managers. If you do not believe in the story being told, magic fades away. Conversely, a thrilling, enchanting perception of the company, based on a solid incarnation of leadership and mainspring, is more likely to sustain the spell.

Amélie currently faces this question: what is the most convincing plot? When she was a consultant in one of the "Big Three", she was working with problem-solving talents and experts in various sectors, giving her all the keys to learn precious skills. However, she sometimes went astray as to the purpose of some missions: "you work hard on a project for months and you don't really know whether your insights will be taken into account."

In the NGO, she may feel more impactful, but sometimes her work seems like a drop in the ocean, raising doubts in her mind regarding the organisation's vision and storytelling.

In both cases, she may not be sensitive enough to the companies' leadership which might engage her fully. Amélie is not gullible. Does she tire off the stories both organisations convey? Maybe. She may also hesitate on which firm may help her write her own scenario, and where she could have her mind in the right place. Meaningful consulting is co-created.

Eventually, meaningful consulting seems to be the work of some craftsmanship between the company and the employee. This work therefore depends on the extent to which the consultant espouses and is appealed to the identity of the company. 44% of the jobs that were listed as being meaningful by one participant were listed by at least one other participant as lacking meaning.[3] Amélie's hesitation between two very different types of organisations may rely on her seeking for the right trade-off which could bring her the most fulfilment in her professional career, in default of finding the absolute meaningfulness in both companies. Meaningful consulting is, just like taste, "an aesthetic and subjective judgement"[4]. Every consultant has their own vision of meaningfulness to build and adopt. As for Amélie, she still has a few months ahead to decide on which company more abides by her perception of meaningful work.
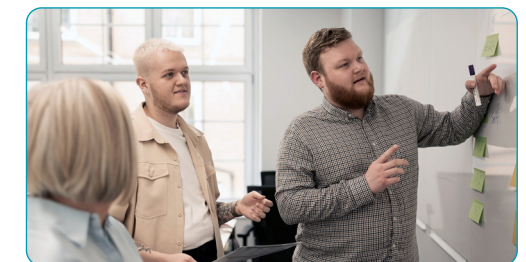
[1] Help your employees find purpose or let them leave, McKinsey & Company, 2021
[2] Making work meaningful from the C-suite to the frontline, McKinsey & Company, 2021
[3] What is meaningful work, Anyways?, Daniel Goleman, Korn Ferry
[4] Critique de la faculté de juger, Kant

Raising Client Confidence in Consulting Work

Stephanie Hall-Stead

ABSTRACT

The following discussion will consider practices and processes that a client should adopt in order to raise their confidence in the value of consulting work they commission. The discussion will focus on key criteria to facilitate success, whilst recognising that these alone will not result in valuable consulting outputs. A defined client scope will first be considered before moving on to collaboration and resources, trust, consultant expertise and governance framework before concluding how these factors contribute to the delivery of a valuable consultancy project outcome.

INTRODUCTION

The following discussion will consider practices and processes that a client should adopt in order to raise their confidence in the value of consulting work they commission. The discussion will focus on key criteria to facilitate success, whilst recognising that these alone will not result in valuable consulting outputs. A defined client scope will first be considered before moving on to collaboration and resources, trust, consultant expertise and governance framework before concluding how these factors contribute to the delivery of a valuable consultancy project outcome.

DEFINED SCOPE

A clearly defined scope is crucial to the positive success of a consulting project as it provides a blueprint for the consultants' work and, written well, establishes clear expectations which can help ensure that a consultant offers a proposal of services which meet the client's needs.

Kubr suggests that it is not enough for the client to recognise that a consultancy service is required, they should "define the problem as he or she sees it, as precisely as possible" (2002, p.63).

Burtonshaw-Gunn and Salameh summarise the three reasons that a consultancy service may be required as;

- Expertise and specialist skills which are not available within the organisation
- Objective appraisal from an outsider
- Additional temporary assistance to address workload

(2010, p.7)

Poufelt and Payne suggest that "more focused effort should be made by clients in defining the basis for an assignment" (1994, p.435). Rockwood discusses that Schein's models of helping can help clients and consultants understand if the help is required through understanding the content of the organizational problem (Expert and Doctor-Patient) or how the problems are to be solved (Process consultation) (1993, p.636). When the client takes the time to consider which helping model they need, this helps create a robust scope which is free of ambiguity. This can therefore allow the client and consultant to align on objectives, deliverables, ways of working, programme for delivery, and budget. Rockwood supports this stating that it is "important for the helper to understand what assumptions he or she brings to the helping process, because if these assumptions are erroneous, the helping process will be undermined" (1993, p.636).

Schein's process consultation theory emphasises active involvement in defining the scope and desired outcomes along with the co-creation of the project to directly address their needs. In this approach, the client is a key participant in defining the project's structure and goals, resulting in a shared understanding between client and consultant and alignment with organisational vision and priorities. This can help ensure valuable outcomes which meet the clients' expectations. Similarly, Haslam suggests that Newton's dimensions of a consulting engagement (client issue, consulting approach and scope of intervention) can help shape expectations of value along with defining clear project boundaries (2017, p.10).

Block suggests that the process of defining scope should begin with a contracting meeting in which the client identifies specific goals and outcomes and agrees on how they will work with the consultant (2023, p.71), aligning with Schein's theory, that this should not be a task assigned to the consultant but instead a collaborative exercise. McLachlin suggests that this "helps the client by forcing some clear thinking about promises and expectations and it helps the consultant to lower unrealistically high expectations so that service quality is positive" (1999, p.397). The involvement of other client representatives could be valuable in building commitment to achieving the project outcomes.

Culminating this thinking into a scope document can enhance communication as it forces the client to clarify objectives, outcomes, and non-negotiable elements. This should outline core requirements, assumptions, constraints - such as budget or available data - and specific methodologies they wish the consultant to use. This allows client-consultant dialogue to ensure desired outcomes can be achieved as well as the level of client participation required, with Poufelt and Payne finding that an awareness of expectations, roles, and potential contributions during each step in the consultancy project is necessary for success (1988, p.434).

Effectively defining the scope can provide further benefits to both the client and consultant; a full understanding of the scope enables a clear budget costing for undertaking the project along with a realistic timeframe for delivery to be identified. This in turn can help control scope creep or help the consultant identify potential opportunities for providing added value to the client.

COLLABORATION AND RESOURCES

Lambrechts et al. suggest that in the context of process consulting, "change is seen as a result of joint consultant-client analysing, diagnosing, and remediating" (2009, p.45). In this context, the client needs to be willing to commit time and resources to working with the consultant to reach this conclusion, as the organisation-specific knowledge needs to be shared and disseminated with the consultant to achieve organisation-specific results. This is likely to include allocating junior staff members to address and deliver upon data requests in a timescale that meets that of the project, in addition to the principal client allocating sufficient time to the project. Williams states that a "collaborative role involves providing advice, access and resources" (1987, p.11). Bronnenmayer et al. concur stating that "the client's input is essential to accomplish an appropriate solution for the respective problem" (2016, p.714).

TRUST

Schein's work on process consultation identified that the helping relationship is characterized by reciprocity and trust (2009, p.11). Ben-Gal and Tzafir concur stating that "out of all influencing factors, the success of the consulting interaction is dependent upon the highest levels of trust" (2011, p.667). This is particularly so in Schein's Expert model whereby the client gives the consultant "power...[becoming]...dependent on what the consultant comes up with" (Lalonde and Adler, 2015, p.181). McLachlin's findings are that central to trust is the consultant's integrity in having a genuine desire to put the client's needs first (1999, p.395), and likewise, Gen-Gal and Tzafir found that this would then be reciprocated with the greater the trust, the greater the client commitment to change (2011, p.673).

Bronnenmayer et al. disagree, however, with their study finding that trust is not realistic in client-consultant relationships. They concluded this due to prejudices that consultants are "overly self-confident and overpaid...establishing that trust between consultants and client is simply hard to implement" (2016, p.726). Respondents also indicated that the short-term nature of the projects provided insufficient time in which

to build trust (2016,p.726). Block, however, suggests that you can begin to build trust through airing possible areas of mistrust (2023, p.27) and this may be enough to display sufficient levels of trust for the consultant to be considered for award of the project.

Brand image, ethics, and values are increasingly recognised as contributory factors in building trust rather than simply being cultivated through the interpersonal relationships between client and consultant. This is particularly important in an increasingly digital age where practices are represented on multiple social and professional platforms. The client should also be conscious of their brand and ethics, consultants are more conscious of who they partner with to avoid risks of negative publicity from working with clients with contentious practices or ethical stand points. Trust therefore needs to be considered both ways.

CONSULTANT EXPERTISE

Bronnenmayer et al. state that it "stands to reason" (2016, p.725) that consultant expertise will provide client confidence in delivery. Indeed, Ford suggests a principal reason for project failure is the client failing to undertake an appropriate screening process in selection (1974, p.8). A key consideration of the client should therefore be how they establish the level of expertise and whether it is appropriate to their needs prior to appointment.

Basic principles of selection could include requesting case studies, references, and demonstrating evidence of a previous track record in comparative projects. Ford states that the client should ensure that they check references and "verify the consultant's claims to success" (1974, p.8). Structured interviews may also help identify the relevant experience of the consultant while simultaneously checking for a compatibility in personalities; the client should consider the likelihood of their teams cooperating and providing the relevant assistance, or if the consultant might 'rub them the wrong way'. Applebaum and Steed state that "the consultants

must be competent" (2005, p.77), and whilst there is little regulation and control within consultancy, reassurances could be gained by the client seeking consultants who have professional affiliations such as being an ICMI Certified Management Consultant (CMC) as this will indicate that they have basic competencies.

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

A client governance framework helps provide a structure for design making, accountability, and ensuring that outputs are being reviewed against the initial consulting project objectives. Zwikael and Hueman suggest a benefits management process which helps provide mechanisms for control and ensure alignment and opportunity measured against organisational strategic objectives (2023, p.3). Badewi found that organisations with a combined project and benefits management framework "are able to achieve significantly higher levels of success" (2016, p.775). Developing clearer governance procedures and establishing more consistent processes surrounding external consulting engagements were also found to be key to consultancy project success by Applebaum and Steed (2005, p.91).

A structured framework which provides "the templates and tools for decision-making, supply the apparatus for making effective decisions" (Badewi, 2022, p.133). This can help the client appropriately identify and manage risks and also possible changes. A framework can help prevent scope creep or ensure that there is an appropriate structure and methodology for reviewing and approving amendments to scope which are likely to have subsequent impacts on time and budget.

This governance procedure can therefore help both the client monitor and review the performance of the consultant, but also help give the consultant opportunities for client interaction on progress to help shape the progress of the project. Too and Weaver, warn however, that the "art of good governance is striking the right balance between restrictive processes...and

the freedom to support effective growth and innovation" (2014,p.1391).

CONCLUSION

Whilst many would expect the responsibilities of a successful consultancy project to fall upon the consultant, this discussion has identified that success "depends primarily on what safeguards the client takes initially" (Ford, 1974, p.11). The paper identifies a clearly defined scope as the foundation for success and client confidence, aiding in problem identification, clarifying the needed assistance, along with determining measurable objectives and a programme for delivery. This helps manage both client and consultant expectations.

Running alongside this, collaboration and trust were found to be influential factors in ensuring success; the consultant cannot deliver their project effectively without client input and data, and this is more likely to be shared with the consultant if the client trusts them. Expertise was identified as crucial for client confidence, and several ways of establishing expertise were identified.

The paper finally outlines the necessity for a clear governance framework to help monitor progress in line with objectives and provide templates and control measures for potential changes to scope and budget.

Combined, these factors should help ensure that a valuable service is received which meets client expectations. However, Applebaum and Steed stress that the client must have "the organisational leverage to act on the consultant's recommendations" (2005, p.75) for the true value of the consulting project to be realised.

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Rethinking the Governance of External Consultancy in the Public Sector

Andrew Sturdy, Ian Kirkpatrick, & Gianluca Veronesi

ABSTRACT

Management consultancy in the public sector faces persistent criticism regarding efficiency, ethics, and effectiveness. This study examines governance challenges, such as co-production complexities, secrecy under "commercial confidentiality," and sales-driven incentives, which undermine accountability and service quality.

Emerging trends in transparency and socially responsible practices offer pathways for reform. Key recommendations include stricter procurement rules, continuous monitoring of consultancy use, project evaluation transparency, and aligning consultant incentives with ethical goals. Strengthened governance and external oversight are essential to ensure consultancy delivers genuine public value.

INTRODUCTION

Management consultancy use in the public sector has long provoked controversy, with questions over efficiency, effectiveness and ethics. These continue to be raised globally, with occasional scandals with firms such as McKinsey in the USA, PwC in Australia, and Bain & Co. in the UK.

This all suggests that approaches to managing the use of consultancy have not been effective. In fact, there are few checks and balances on consultancy which is surprising given how much is spent on it (over £3 billion in the UK public sector in 2023-4). One periodic policy response, currently planned by the UK government, is to cut the use of external consultants and do more work internally through an empowered and enlarged civil service. This 'insourcing' mostly makes sense, but there will always be some need for external expertise. So, what can be done by both clients and consultancies to help make it effective?

Our research, published recently in a special issue on consultancy in the journal Public Money and Management, reviewed different ways to strengthen the governance of external consultancy. We focused on what is different and what can be learned from developments or challenges elsewhere. In particular, our proposals build on emerging trends in some private sector organisations around greater transparency and more 'socially responsible' practices and values as well as returning to some classic issues around expert advice such as the role of incentives and of other outsiders to keep an eye on things.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

1. Traditional forms of governance need to be strengthened or radicalised to be effective (e.g. make permanent National Audit Office monitoring of consultancy spending; procurement rules to limit repeat business and; independent licensing of consultants).

2. Reform pay and promotion systems to discourage 'over-selling' by consultancies and conservativeness among both clients and consultants so each party can challenge the other more easily - speak 'truth to power'.

3. Open consulting - use social/open-access media and regulation to share evaluations of projects/firms; provide declarations of conflicts of interests and; share outputs/ knowledge.

4. Strengthen the role and range of third-party scrutiny of consultants and clients, using increased transparency from open consulting (e.g. 'meta' consultants or public service users as activists; journalists; NGOs; trade unions).

5. Leverage genuine, not superficial, moves towards socially responsible governance (e.g. 'BCorps') and values in consulting and generate client demand for such approaches.

KEY FINDINGS

From our review, we found that some core characteristics of consultancy mean that established forms of governance (e.g. procurement rules and professionalisation of consultants) are bypassed, resisted and/or ineffective. For example, consultancy is usually co-produced and hard to evaluate precisely; clients are often conservative/secretive; and consultants are mostly rewarded to sell regardless of what is needed or right.

These are familiar issues, meaning that, not only does current governance need to be strengthened, but new approaches are required. In particular, little has been done to address incentives in consultancy. While staff may often be paid and promoted on diverse 'balanced' criteria, in practice selling is 'sovereign'. This means that clients (indirectly, the public) are often exploited or, at best, not challenged. Further, clients often do not want to be challenged or placed under scrutiny. Both parties then, share an interest in secrecy under the guise of 'commercial confidentiality'.

More optimistically, some current developments suggest improvement is possible. For instance, there are moves in the private sector, including consulting and its Gen Z recruits, to adopt values beyond simply profit, towards diverse stakeholders and greater transparency. These echo some traditional professional values and can be leveraged to develop new types of firms and consultants who can be progressive, if clients allow.

Where such moves are absent or adopted for image only, external scrutiny and scandal has helped keep the pressure on reform. This too can be enhanced by the use of technology to help make the market more transparent and allow for ease of sharing knowledge. Indeed, changes in rewards, values, structures and openness cannot guarantee effective governance. Third-party scrutiny will always have an important role to play.

Traditional governance is not working, but our research identifies new opportunities to build on, as well as some ongoing challenges - see Table overleaf.

RETHINKING THE GOVERNANCE OF EXTERNAL CONSULTANCY IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR (CONTINUED)

Traditional Governance	Problems	New Potential	New/Continuing Challenges
Control through the market – only good suppliers survive?	Quality is unclear to buyers, hidden by 'commercial confidentiality' claims; market concentration limits choice.	Previous scandals have created pressure for future declaration of interests; technology helps openness in evaluation and with a role for 3rd parties.	Work often coproduced so blame unclear; reputational threats; questions around intellectual property (IP)
Procurement – clear client objectives and 'fair' competition	Inflexible, cost-focused, and resisted/bypassed by both parties.	Strengthen rules to contain repeat business from same supplier; make national audits permanent, not occasional; wider focus than value for money (e.g. social values).	Tendency to favour trusted/personal relationships despite outward compliance with procurement rules risks opportunism.
Corporate governance of firms (e.g. Non-Executive Directors)	Poorly resourced compared to incentives/culture to over-sell.	Greater attention to firm structures from media or regulators; increased legitimacy for 'purpose-led' approaches.	Insufficient political will; focus on ethical image not values; pay and promotion remain based on income generation.
Professionalisation of consulting – occupational and through firms	Low client demand and lacks 'teeth'; little prospect of 'speaking truth to power'	Potential for social responsibility to emerge as a less-commercial alternative if aligned with rewards.	Conservative clients & ambiguous service quality means still a need for strong third-party scrutiny.

CONCLUSION

Consultancies need to reform pay/promotion away from revenue and towards social responsibility and openness. Clients must also be more open to change and scrutiny, and focus on knowledge transfer and sharing. Policymakers and regulators should not rely on self-governance, but strengthen existing approaches and support openness and external scrutiny.

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BE GUIDED BY YOUR MORAL COMPASS

Be Guided By Your Moral Compass

Alan Blackman

ABSTRACT

Recent events in Australia exposed by a parliamentary inquiry have laid bare the high reputational costs of professional malfeasance for management consultants. Loss of career, future business, and professional status has devastated the accounting, auditing, legal, and management consulting components of at least one of the Big Four firms. This paper discusses the importance of consultants developing a moral compass and adhering to well-founded codes of ethics. It also highlights the importance of creating a corporate culture and codifying ethical standards to protect clients and the profession.

INTRODUCTION

In 2019, journalist and thought leader Aron Maira raised the question: "... in the race to generate wealth for their partners, are management consulting firms in danger of losing sight of their original purpose—to be trusted advisors to CEOs?"(Maira, 2019). The question was put in the context of reports of conflicts of interest by McKinsey consultants who were alleged to have been advising firms on their business strategies while simultaneously profiting from taking a stake in the outcome of that advice. More recently, PwC was forced by the Australian Government to front a parliamentary enquiry into "management and assurance of integrity by consulting services" (Australia, 2024) that was set up to investigate breaches of confidential government information by the firm. The enquiry was expanded to embroil the so-called 'Big Four'. While the Parliamentary Committee has issued a report, the Government is yet to announce its response.

As professionals, we are responsible for upholding the standing of our profession; this commitment should guide our every action (Blackman, 2024). After all, we are judged not just by what we do but also by the conduct of our character. The recent events in consulting in Australia (Australia, 2024) have highlighted the profound costs to individuals, practices, and the profession of failing this test of character. Ethical breaches often involve either sharing confidential information across clients or result from consultants deriving an undisclosed benefit from the confidential information gained during an assignment. However, they stem from a business culture focused not on what is best for clients but on achieving the biggest gain for the consultants involved. The outcomes for a consultancy found to be in breach can be severe.

The penalties are fourfold. First, they affect individual consultants, potentially ending their careers and resulting in criminal charges and lawsuits. Second, they affect the client, whose trust and business have been compromised. Third, they damage the reputation of the consultant's company and might lead to financial ruin. But perhaps most importantly, they damage the profession's standing as a whole, leading to a loss of public confidence in consultants in general.

Our ethical framework is not just a set of rules but a guiding force behind our conduct. Ethics, a system of moral principles founded on personal values, guides us on how to live a good life and influences our rights and responsibilities, language, and decisions about good and evil. As a value-based system, it is, by its nature, enduring (Rockeach, 1973). It defines what is good for individuals and society. Our ethics define us and carry significant weight in guiding our choices. They are the compass that should always point us towards the right path, especially in the face of difficult choices. Upholding these ethics empowers us to make the right decisions in our professional journey, instilling in us a sense of confidence and capability.

As a management consultant, you are part of a profession that upholds recognised ethical norms. You carry the significant responsibility of upholding these norms, which is not just a duty but a privilege. Your actions not only reflect on you as an individual but also on the entire profession. In addition, an agreed code of conduct should be observed to guide each consultant's moral and professional conduct during an assignment. This code of conduct includes professional behaviour, sustainability, social responsibility, conflict of interest, and integrity. Upholding these norms and codes of conduct is an obligation that allows us to contribute positively to our profession and society, and it is an honour to be part of this esteemed profession.

Many professional organisations, such as those representing management consultants, lawyers, architects, and engineers, have developed codes of ethics that guide members in practice. For example, in management consulting, ethics is defined as "the voluntary assumption of an obligation to exercise judgment and self-discipline above and beyond legal requirements"(Blackman, 2024, p. 60). However, the norms in the code demand more than respecting the law. After all, actions deemed to be legal might not always be considered entirely ethical, and as we all know, the law can sometimes be an ass.

In many situations, though, it is only sometimes possible to refer to the letter of the code or a formal declaration of norms by an employer to know genuine professional and ethical behaviour. Therefore, management consultants must be guided by their ethics and conduct based on their background, development, beliefs, and perception of what is proper or improper and beneficial or not to the community, the client and other stakeholders. It is incumbent on those in professional practice to hone their ethical barometer through training, research and diligence.

ETHICAL THEORIES

Several moral theories have evolved over the centuries and are relevant to applying ethics in management consulting. While no one is universally superior to others, it is startling how they agree when applied to common ethical problems. As a result, they are well worth studying by any professional.

There are two primary schools in moral philosophy: consequentialism and deontology. In consequential ethics, all actions aim to achieve the greatest happiness for the most significant number of people. Subscribers to the consequential school of thought, for example, Aristotle and Mills, hold that ethical decisions are based on outcomes. In other words, the consequences of a person's conduct are the ultimate basis for determining right from wrong. On the other hand, in deontology (non-consequential) ethics, those who subscribe to this school, for instance, Kant and Locke, believe that people base their decisions on rational and deeply held values of duty and obligation to others.

Consequentialism may be fraught. For example, if it is in the majority's best interests for one to be killed, then that would be an ethical outcome for the consequentialist, notwithstanding that the dead individual may have been innocent. Unfortunately, it is sometimes challenging to balance the two ethical schools. We have seen that dilemma play out in the recent COVID-19 pandemic. In that case, pressure to protect as many people as possible from disease conflicted with the damage caused to the economy and restrictions on personal liberty. In the context of management consulting, ethical dilemmas could include issues of client confidentiality, conflicts of interest, or the balance between profit and social responsibility.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Management consultants in many countries have established voluntary professional associations to represent their common interests. These associations play a leading role in promoting professional management consulting standards, gaining management's confidence, and promoting the reputation of management consultants in society. Perhaps most importantly, these organisations guide consultants' ethical practices and enforce codes of professional conduct. The codes identify those obligations that protect the public and the client. They also recognise

members' expectations concerning other participants and the profession.

Codes of conduct have been shown to inhibit unethical conduct, although not its reporting (Somers, 2001). It is important to note, though, that the effectiveness of a code of conduct is only as good as the commitment by individuals and firms to abide by it, their awareness of the consequences of non-compliance, and the ability of professional organisations to enforce it. Both PwC and McKinsey had codes of conduct.

A code of conduct may come in different shapes and sizes, and company codes will differ from those developed for a profession. While a company code is likely to focus on narrow elements of importance to a particular organisation and be driven by the owner's values, the code for a profession will necessarily be broad and client-focused. A professional code must cover obligations to act in the interest of the client and the public good, regulatory compliance, protection of the profession's reputation, confidentiality, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and property protection. To be effective, adequate and enforceable penalties must be available for code breaches, and the policy must be enforced. However, unlike other professions, such as accounting and law, and notwithstanding that most management consulting institutes have developed codes of conduct for their memberships, the number of institute members represents only a fraction of the total number of consultants, and the industry has not yet developed a mandatory uniform code.

The following summarises the content of the code in force for members of the Institute of Management Consultants in Australia. The Australian Code, under review at the time of writing, is like codes for other national professional management consulting organisations. In addition, it now forms the basis for a Universal Code of Conduct promoted by CMC-Global and is quoted in the International Standards Organisation's ISO20700:2017. Therefore, the complete Code and its Statements

of Interpretation are integral as a guide for CMCs in Australia.

1. Management consultants must maintain the dignity and prestige of the profession and not damage it in any way.

2. Management consultants must consider their public and professional responsibilities. Therefore, they must act according to the law and may only speak on behalf of the profession with appropriate authorisation.

3. Management consultants must act in their clients' best interests, providing professional services with integrity, objectivity, and independence. Other responsibilities to the client include strictures regarding competency and ensuring clients are fully informed regarding how an assignment will be carried out and for what fee. Conflicts of interest must be declared, and client confidentiality must be maintained.

4. Management consultants are responsible for other members, and they must inform them before critically reviewing their work. In addition, a consultant must report another member's unbecoming professional conduct.

5. Members are also expected to be conversant with the profession's evolving body of knowledge and keep abreast of developments in any job area where specific expertise is claimed.

6. Anyone working under the leadership or direction of a member must act within the bounds of the Code.

These obligations require that individual practitioners maintain familiarity with the Code.

APPLYING THE CODE IN PRACTICE

A professional management consultant is responsible for several stakeholders. While each project will differ from another, the consultant is obliged to prevent acts or omissions that harm or could cause damage to the public, other consultants, or clients. They must make

themselves aware of those aspects of their work or public activities that could breach professional conduct and plan the steps required to avoid a breach and manage any risk of harm. For example, when leading a team on a project, the member must ensure that everyone under their direction adheres to the Code—Table 1 lists familiar sources of conflict of interest.

ISSUES THAT MAY ARISE DURING THE CONSULTING PROCESS

The Code's "responsibility to the client" section has been created to guard against unethical or unprofessional conduct. From contracting to closure, every step in the consulting process requires a professional consultant to conduct due diligence and be aware of the Code's applicability.

First Contact
When contacting a potential client, the consultant must sincerely present their scope, work plan and costs, level of competence, and experience. The client must also be fully informed in writing of the assignment objectives.

Diagnostic Phase
During diagnosis, present the findings fully and as accurately as possible and make recommendations in your client's best interest (the Code defines the client as "the organisation"). Note that those interests must not conflict with your ethical and societal responsibilities.

Ongoing
Once an assignment has begun, the consultant must concentrate on the client's and the public's needs and, through openness, transparency and ongoing dialogue, avoid abusing client and employee trust. For example, a member must keep confidential any information obtained during an assignment unless permission is given, preferably in writing, to share that knowledge. Confidentiality includes not identifying the client's name or employees who have provided critical intelligence.

BE GUIDED BY YOUR MORAL COMPASS (CONTINUED)

Table 1: Potential sources of a conflict of interest (IMC (Australia), cited byISO, 2017, p. 23)]

Source	Explanation
You have a client or a former client in the same industry	Where you have a current or former client, perhaps in the same industry as the client that you now seek to advise, do you have proprietary information that could impact that advice?
Multiple projects with the same client at a different level or different location	Are there parallel or similar contracts in the same group, past or present?
The client is a former client.	Where a client is also a former client, have you provided previous advice or conducted an earlier analysis that would constrain your direction in the new situation?
Staff members have a relationship.	Do any staff members at your consultancy have family relationships with client staff members, particularly those in management positions?
Internal consulting organisations	Do any staff members at your consultancy have hierarchical relationships with client or recipient staff members, particularly those in management positions?
You, your family, or your staff have a financial interest.	Do you, or any member of your family, or staff members have a financial interest in the client or its management team, including an overdue receivable account, loan, or equity investment?
You or your organisation has an audit relationship with the client.	Where you have a financial audit relationship with the client, are the prospective consulting services allowed by the relevant securities regulator? Note that where a client is also an audit client but not subject to securities regulation, the client's audit committee may choose to restrict the additional services provided by you or your organisation as a matter of policy.
Other	Other business relationships may include situations where you or your staff have a shared interest with a client in a third-party contract (such as a software partnership, leased premises, a subscription to sports tickets, etc.) or where you or your staff members are "captive" on the client's staff, as in the case of "contract" or "interim" management or "internal consultants."

Potential remedies include:

- Seek consent: in certain circumstances, you may be able to manage conflicts through full disclosure of past or current client relationships, seeking the written approval/consent of the affected parties;

- isolate areas of potential conflict of interest: establish confidentiality/non-disclosure agreements concerning new client information, staffing restrictions, separation of service teams and data, differing client reporting points and other approaches;

- termination: you may be unable to manage or mitigate a conflict and will be required to turn down an assignment.

QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN FACED WITH AN ETHICAL DILEMMA

There will be times in your career when you are faced with an ethical dilemma, the answer to which is not apparent to you. When that happens, answering the following questions may provide a helpful guide. (Blackman, 2024, pp. 66-67; ICMCI, 2021):

1. Have I reflected on or consulted with the Code Administrator about whether I am compromising my responsibilities under the Code?

2. Have I considered the issue from a legal perspective?

3. Have I investigated whether my behaviour aligns with a policy or procedure of my IMC or CMC-Global?

4. Could my private interests or relationships be viewed as impairing my objectivity?

5. Could my decision or action be viewed as resulting in personal gain, financial or otherwise?

6. Could my decision or action be viewed as furthering the private interests of someone with

BE GUIDED BY YOUR MORAL COMPASS (CONTINUED)

whom I have a significant personal or business relationship?

7. Could my decisions or actions be perceived as granting or receiving preferential treatment?

8. Have I disclosed all conflicts of interest to my client(s)?

9. Am I proud of my decision or actions?

10. Given that they know the circumstances, would my family be proud of my decision or actions?

If you must answer no to one or more of those questions, reconsider your course of action. If you don't care about the answers, choose another vocation.

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FROM MAINFRAME TO CLOUD AND BEYOND: A SHORT HISTORY OF IT MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

From Mainframe to Cloud and Beyond: A Short History of IT Management Consulting

Marcin Pajdzik

ABSTRACT

Information technology (IT) consulting is a discipline within the broader field of management consulting focused on advising organisations on how best to use technology to meet their objectives. Originating in the mid-20th century as organisations began exploring the potential of computers, the profession emerged in response to the growing need for expertise in adopting new technologies. Over time, IT consulting has evolved in parallel with technological advancements and expanded its scope as new technology, such as the internet or cloud computing, reshaped the business landscape. This paper explores the historical background of IT consulting and subsequently studies the most recent industry reports to recognise the current trends, namely the rise of artificial intelligence, the shift towards remote working, and growing cybersecurity concerns. It concludes that consulting firms that prioritise these areas will not only be better positioned to deliver value, but also enhance the effectiveness of their own services.

INTRODUCTION

When Thomas J. Watson purportedly stated in the early days of modern computer technology that there was only enough market space for five computers in the world, he could not have imagined how pervasive the technology would become (Mische, 2017). In the 1950s, organisations began exploring the benefits of computers, and the rudiments of the IT consulting profession started to form (Galal, Richter and Wendlandt, 2012). Not many years later, as the potential for commercialisation of computers became apparent, IBM initiated a research and development programme to build a flexible computer with broad appeal. This was a watershed moment in the history of computing, leading to the creation of the IBM S/360

mainframe in 1964, which catalysed the adoption of computers across various organisations (IBM, 2024). Those organisations needed help to understand how to use the new technology. This laid the foundation of the modern IT management consulting profession.

This paper traces the historical development of IT consulting, from its early beginnings during the mainframe era to its current state in the cloud era. Key technological advancements are identified through a review of relevant academic literature (e.g., Nolan and Bennigson, 2002; Kipping, 2003; Galal, Richter and Wendlandt, 2012; Mische, 2017), industry reports, and historical data, with a focus on periods where technological shifts significantly influenced IT consulting practices and demand. For instance, IBM's PC sales figures illustrate the democratisation of computing; Internet usage rates highlight its transformative influence on business models; and Gartner's analysis of cloud expenditure underscores the extensive adoption of cloud computing. By cross-referencing these insights with historical accounts, this paper aims to present a reliable narrative linking technological changes to the evolution of IT consulting. Subsequently, it analyses the latest industry reports (Accenture, 2024; CompTIA, 2024; Deloitte, 2024) to identify prevailing contemporary trends and offer insights into the potential future direction of the industry.
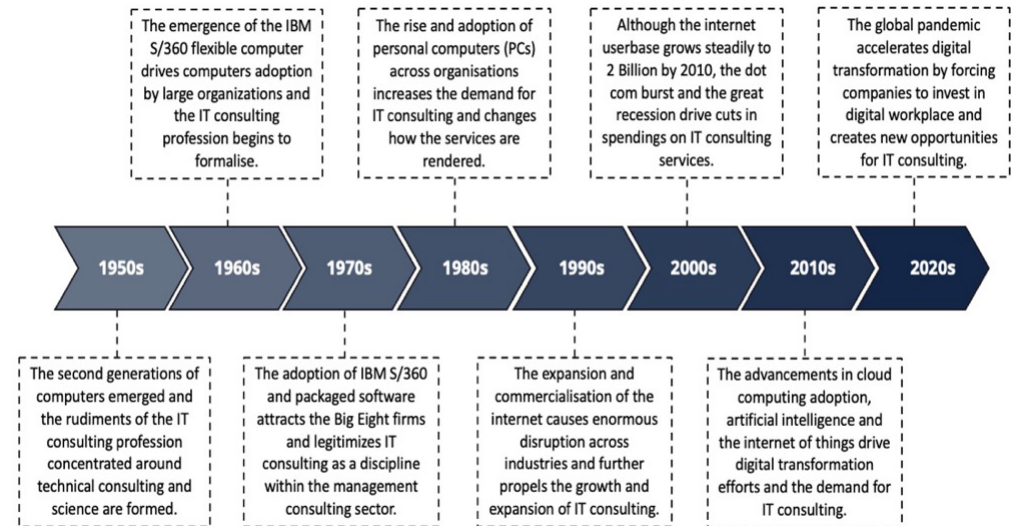

Figure 1: The history of information technology consulting (Collated from Nolan and Bennigson, 2002; Kipping, 2003; Galal, Richter and Wendlandt, 2012; Mische, 2017)

Digital Dawn: The Advancement of Computer Technology

As IBM mainframes advanced throughout the 1960s and began spreading across enterprise business functions, much more demand for specialised consulting services was generated. In the 1970s, almost every large organisation had already acquired some computing capability, and most major electronics businesses offered their own computer products.

Consequently, more powerful, sophisticated, and functional software products were developed and sold commercially. It was at that time when the largest accounting firms, known as the 'Big Eight' (Figure 2), recognised the opportunity and began acquiring IT competencies which legitimised IT consulting as a discipline within the management consulting sector (Mische, 2017).
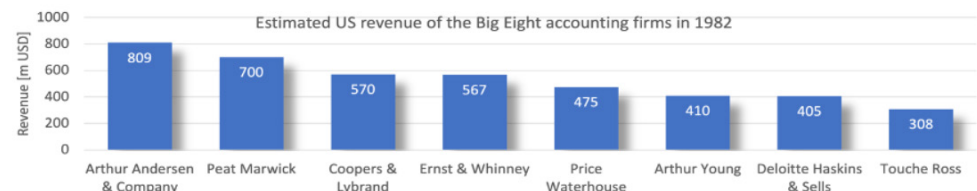

Figure 2: Estimated US revenue of the Big Eight accounting firms in 1982 (The New York Times, 1983)

FROM MAINFRAME TO CLOUD AND BEYOND: A SHORT HISTORY OF IT MANAGEMENT CONSULTING (CONTINUED)

With the rise of microprocessors, IBM entered the personal computer (PC) market with the prediction of selling nearly 250 thousand units over a period of 5 years. In reality, the firm sold over 3 million units during that period, producing more than 250 thousand PCs in a single month in 1984 (Reimer, 2012). Many new companies, including Apple, Microsoft, and Oracle, also entered the market developing hardware and software products that shifted the power of computing from those who were technically trained to the hands of non-technical people. The emergence and widespread adoption of PCs (Figure 3) had a twofold effect on technology consulting. Firstly, corporate spending on IT increased significantly and IT began to be viewed as a strategic asset rather than merely an operational or tactical necessity. This naturally led to a hike in demand for IT consulting services. Secondly, PC software, with its new and powerful capabilities, profoundly transformed the tools consultants used and the way their services were rendered (Bradley, 2011).
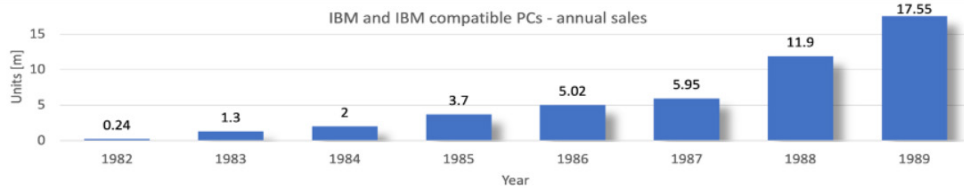

Figure 4: The number of Internet users worldwide (Ritchie et al., 2024)

Figure 3: IBM and IBM compatible PCs — annual sales (Mische, 2017)

From Web Boom to DotCom Bust: The Internet's Rollercoaster Ride

The rise and commercialisation of the Internet in the 1990s caused an enormous disruption across all industry verticals and further accelerated the growth of the IT consulting profession. Large professional services firms (PSFs) profited not only from the mass adoption of standardised customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems but also from e-commerce, and a wide range of new e-business (electronic business) applications. Developing e-business capabilities often required reworking established business models which allowed IT consulting to expand into many new areas and achieve double-digit growth (Nolan and Bennigson, 2002).

The exponential growth of the IT sector ground to a halt and crashed at the start of the 2000s with the "dot com bust", which saw the NASDAQ index fall from $6.7 trillion to $1.6 trillion between March 2000 and October 2002 (Ryan, 2013). Despite the growth of the internet user base, which reached one billion users by 2005 and doubled to two billion by 2010 (Figure 4) (ITU, 2022), the great recession of the second half of the decade forced most organisations to cut their budgets causing the demand for IT consulting services to fall and triggering a contraction within the industry (Mische, 2017). Nevertheless, the decade witnessed the emergence of numerous new technologies, most notably cloud computing, which fuelled digital transformation efforts across industries and revived growth in the IT consulting sector in the following decade (Varghese, 2019).
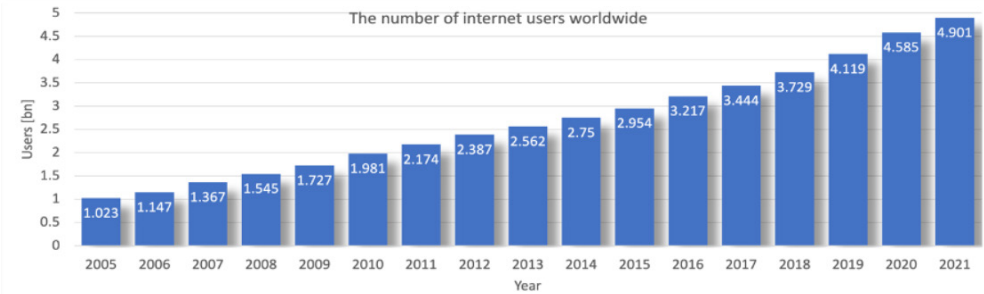
FROM MAINFRAME TO CLOUD AND BEYOND: A SHORT HISTORY OF IT MANAGEMENT CONSULTING (CONTINUED)

Skyward Shift: The Cloud's Journey to Dominance

For business organisations, cloud computing represents a paradigm shift that eliminates the need for acquiring IT equipment or licensed software and provides access to computing as a utility service delivered on demand over the Internet. This kind of outsourcing model not only radically reduces the need for capital expenditure but also, when appropriately managed, has the potential to reduce operational costs through shared resources and economies of scale. Notably, the hyperscale of cloud computing providers offers access to virtually unlimited computing resources that are continuously available, highly resilient and can be provisioned rapidly. As a result, cloud computing drastically lowers IT barriers to innovation and enables rapid service scalability according to current end user demands (Bhowmik, 2017)

These cloud computing benefits, if realised, can lead to a significant business advantage. However organisations adopting cloud computing face risks, limitations, and challenges pertaining to cloud governance, cybersecurity, and broad business change (Golightly et al., 2022). Consequently, businesses seek to engage with PSFs who have the expertise in delivering effective cloud adoption programs. The scale of the challenges organisations face, and the demand for cloud consulting services is evident in the latest Accenture's results. The IT consulting giant reported approximately $32 billion in revenue from cloud computing related engagements in FY2023 which constitutes 23% growth compared to FY2022 (Figure 6) (Accenture, 2023).
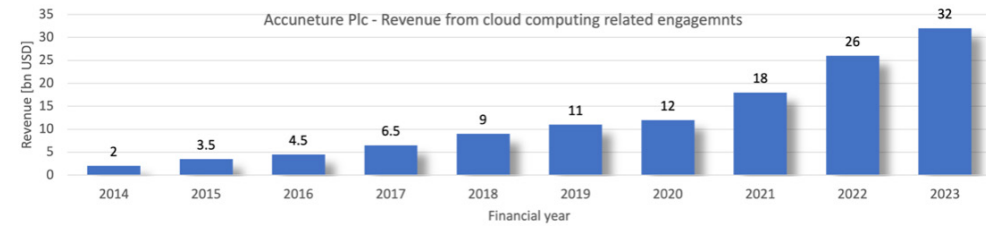

Figure 6: Accenture Plc — revenue from cloud computing related engagements (Accenture, 2023)

The vast growth of cloud computing related IT services is corroborated by Gartner, a technology research and consulting firm, which predicts that by 2028 cloud computing will become essential for executing business strategies (Gartner, 2023b). This is reflected in the global cloud spendings, which is projected to reach nearly $679 billion in 2024 and grow by another 20% in 2025 to $825 billion (Figure 7).

The researchers conclude that IT leaders will need to implement highly efficient cloud operating models to successfully achieve their business objectives. In this light, the demand for cloud-related IT consulting engagements is likely to intensify, driven by the growing complexity of designing and deploying such models effectively.
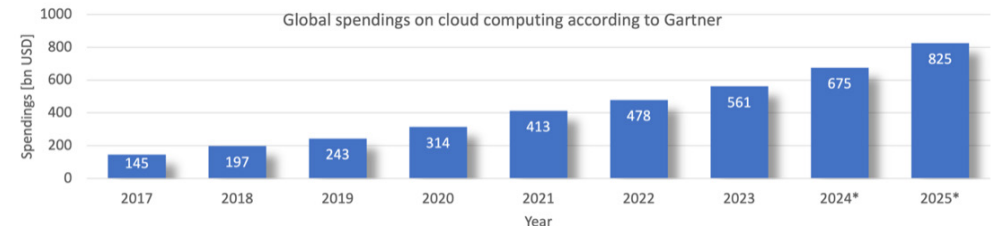

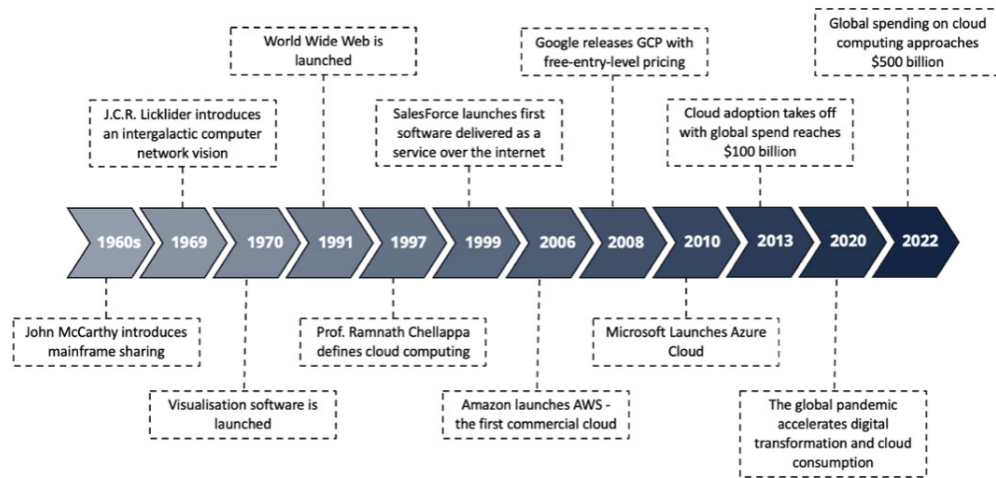**Figure 7:** Global spendings on cloud computing (Gartner, 2024)

Figure 5: The rise of cloud computing (Collated from: gartner.com, aws.amazon.com, azure.microsoft.com, cloud.google.com)

FROM MAINFRAME TO CLOUD AND BEYOND: A SHORT HISTORY OF IT MANAGEMENT CONSULTING (CONTINUED)

The Key Trends Shaping the Future

The analysis of the latest three industry reports (Accenture, 2024; CompTIA, 2024; Deloitte, 2024) reveals that three major trends currently shape the continually evolving IT consulting industry. These reports were chosen for their recent publication dates, reputable sources, and comprehensive coverage of the latest technological developments. The identified trends are artificial intelligence (AI), remote workforce, and cybersecurity. However, it is important to note that all three reports also point at cloud computing as a key area of further growth, as this technology underpins advancements in AI and supports the adoption of remote work environments.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

First and foremost, all three reports concur that artificial intelligence is fundamentally transforming businesses across all sectors. Deloitte highlights generative AI as an enormous growth area, predicting widespread adoption in the coming years, particularly in enterprise software and IT services. Deloitte's analysis indicates that nearly all enterprise software companies are expected to embed

generative AI capabilities into some of their offerings by the end of 2024, with the generative AI market potentially reaching a revenue uplift of $10 billion by the end of the year. CompTIA suggests that although the initial hype surrounding generative AI may wane, its integration into business workflows will continue to drive substantial innovation and efficiency. The report notes that over 70% of organisations are already experimenting with generative AI, and many expect to achieve significant automation and productivity gains, particularly in IT operations and business workflows. Accenture views generative AI as a transformative force poised to fundamentally reshape industries. The report emphasises that businesses must innovate with AI to remain competitive and warns that organisations failing to adopt AI technologies may fall behind, as generative AI is expected to drive economic disruption and reshape entire sectors in the years ahead.

It seems that AI, specifically generative AI, is set to exert a profound impact on the management consulting industry by revolutionising approaches to data analysis, strategy development, and client engagement (Mohan, 2024). The technology is revolutionising interactions with information by

shifting from traditional search methods to AI-driven advisory systems and thus transforming decision-making processes. Consequently, the consulting skillset must also evolve to encompass proficiency in AI-driven tools and thereby ensure that consultants can continue to deliver enough value to their clients. It is therefore unsurprising that there is an increasing demand for individuals with deep expertise in AI to guide organisations in integrating AI-driven solutions. This trend is corroborated by Dr Koutroumpis of the University of Oxford, who reports an over elevenfold increase in the number of AI-related jobs globally between 2015 and 2022 (Koutroumpis, 2023). Based on the industry reports, it can be deduced that this trend is likely to persist in the foreseeable future.

Despite its transformative potential, the development of artificial intelligence, particularly generative AI, faces significant impediments that are likely to impact IT consulting. Ethical concerns, such as bias in AI algorithms, data privacy violations, and a lack of transparency in decision-making processes, may erode trust in these technologies (Akhtar, Kumar and Nayyar, 2024).

From a legal perspective, regulatory uncertainty across jurisdictions may slow AI adoption as organisations navigate inconsistent or overly restrictive legal frameworks (Comunale and Manera, 2024). Furthermore, high costs, data quality issues, and the limited availability of AI expertise create additional barriers to adopting AI solutions (Radhakrishnan and Chattopadhyay, 2020). These challenges could make it difficult for consulting

firms to deliver solutions on time and within budget, potentially undermining their credibility if they fail to meet client expectations.

REMOTE WORKFORCE

Secondly, with 91% of organisations recognising workplace flexibility as a critical advantage in attracting talent, the shift to remote workplace (Figure 8) and the adoption of collaboration technologies has become an important component of digital transformation (Payscale, 2023). The Payscale report highlights that remote work significantly broadens the talent pool by providing access to a global workforce and contributes to cost savings by reducing the need for physical office space and associated overheads. Importantly, it must be noted that despite initial concerns, many organisations report that productivity has not declined, with some observing improvements attributed to better work-life balance and reduced commuting (Anakpo, Nqwayibana and Mishi, 2023).

Deloitte's report highlights that over 62% of surveyed technology executives believe that remote and hybrid work will become a permanent fixture that requires businesses to adapt their workforce strategies and operations. Accenture also emphasises that remote work is not merely a temporary adjustment but a long-term strategy. The report stresses that businesses must invest in tools and strategies to support flexible work environments, with 72% of organisations already integrating advanced collaboration tools to enhance remote work productivity. CompTIA further elaborates on the operational challenges posed by remote workforce,
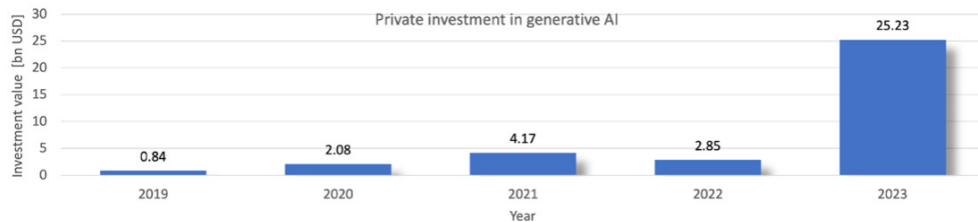
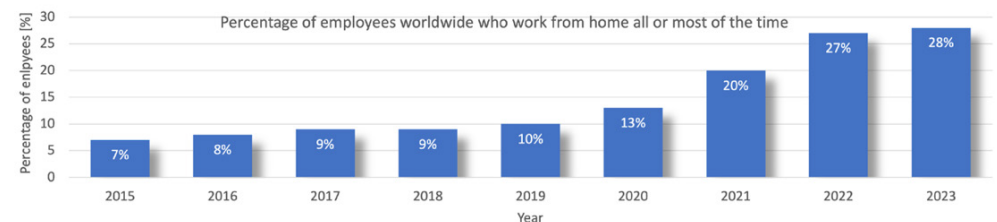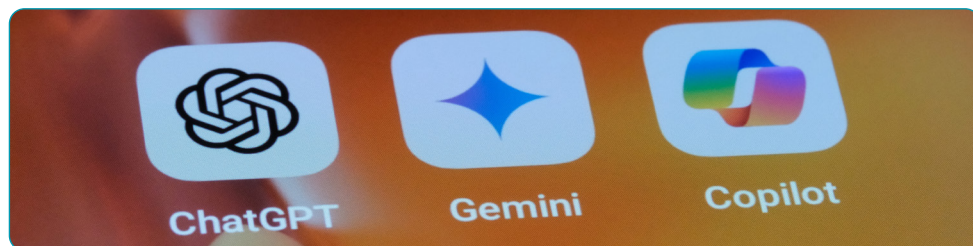Figure 8 : Private investment in generative AI (Stanford University, 2024)

Figure 9 : Percentage of employees worldwide who work from home all or most of the time (Payscale, 2023)

noting that 44% of IT professionals identify increased complexity in managing IT systems that support remote teams as a major concern.

It appears from the reports that there is an increasing emphasis on developing technology that is inherently human-centric and integrates more intuitively into daily life and work. As organisations increasingly integrate AI-driven collaboration tools and spatial computing technologies, remote work environments are expected to become more immersive and offer greater productivity (Accenture 2024). Spatial computing, which includes technologies such as augmented reality, virtual reality, and the metaverse, enables the creation of virtual workspaces that mimic physical office environments. These virtual spaces could allow remote workers to interact with digital objects and collaborate with colleagues as if they were in the same physical location, thereby reducing the sense of isolation often associated with remote work. Human-technology interfaces, such as brain-computer interfaces (BCIs), eye-tracking, and ambient computing, further enhance the remote workplace by enabling more efficient interactions with technology. BCIs, in particular, could allow employees to control devices with their thoughts, considerably improving accessibility, inclusion and productivity.

It is evident that the ongoing transition to a remote workforce, coupled with continuous innovation in remote work technologies, creates a growing need for skilled consultants to advise clients on managing remote teams and effectively utilising virtual collaboration tools. To remain productive and effective, consultants must also adopt these tools. The integration of spatial computing could allow consultants to create immersive simulations or virtual environments that enhance collaboration and better facilitate client engagements regardless of geographical boundaries. Such technologies could also facilitate more effective scenario planning, allowing clients to experience and evaluate potential outcomes in a controlled setting before making critical business decisions. This evolution can enhance the consultant's role as a strategic partner, capable of delivering more impactful solutions.

While remote working technologies hold great potential, their associated challenges could significantly hinder IT consulting by impacting the effectiveness of client engagements and the quality of deliverables. Limited access to reliable digital infrastructure in certain regions remains a critical barrier, creating disparities in the adoption and use of remote work solutions (Matli and Wamba, 2023). Furthermore, the erosion of organisational culture and reduced employee engagement in virtual environments can undermine the effectiveness of remote strategies and cause clients to question their long-term viability (Bilderback and Kilpatrick, 2024). Persistent issues such as burnout and isolation, experienced by both clients and consultants, may further harm productivity and stifle innovation (Trzebiatowski and Henle, 2023). These obstacles could diminish consulting firms' ability to deliver optimal solutions and reduce client confidence in remote working as a sustainable long-term strategy.

CYBER SECURITY

Finally, amidst rapid technological advancements, cybersecurity has emerged as a paramount concern, further exacerbated by the rise of artificial intelligence and remote working. Deloitte identifies cybersecurity as a key focus due to the increasing complexity of IT environments and the integration of AI. The firm predicts global spending on security and risk management to grow by over 10% between 2023 and 2024. CompTIA reinforces this perspective by highlighting the growing demand for advanced cybersecurity skills and governance frameworks, particularly as IT environments become more intricate and remote work becomes increasingly prevalent. Their report indicates that 53% of organisations cite managing cybersecurity in remote work settings as a major challenge, which reflects the pressures on organisations to adapt. Accenture further elaborates on the evolving nature of cyber threats, particularly within AI-driven contexts, and underscores the imperative of embedding security throughout all aspects of digital transformation. The report predicts that by 2025, AI-related investments in cybersecurity will constitute a significant portion of the projected $200 billion global AI spending.
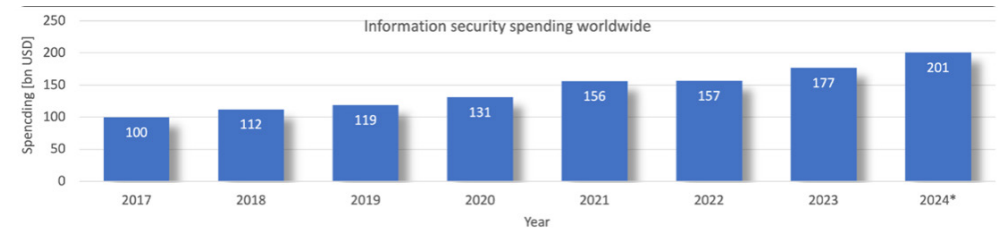

Figure 10 : Information security spending worldwide (Gartner, 2023a)

As digital threats grow increasingly sophisticated, safeguarding sensitive data and ensuring compliance with regulatory frameworks have become more challenging. Researchers from Gartner expect global spending on cybersecurity to double between 2017 and 2024, reaching $200 billion (Figure 10). Meanwhile, according to ISC2, the leading non-profit membership body for cybersecurity professionals, the international cybersecurity workforce expanded to 5.5 million individuals in 2023 (ISC2, 2023). This represents an 8.7% increase from the previous year, equating to the creation of 440 thousand new roles in the field. However, despite this growth, the shortfall in the cybersecurity workforce has reached a record peak, now standing at 4 million professionals. These statistics indicate a growing demand for IT consultants with specialised cybersecurity expertise. Notably, the role of cybersecurity consultants extends well beyond traditional IT security and encompasses comprehensive risk management and strategic shifts in the cybersecurity approach. These numbers clearly indicate that cybersecurity must remain a primary area of focus for IT consulting firms.

It is evident that the rapid pace of technological advancement has intensified existing cybersecurity challenges, particularly with the rise of organised cybercrime, which could significantly hinder IT consulting by undermining confidence in digital solutions (Hyslip, 2020). As cyberattacks become increasingly sophisticated and frequent, clients may hesitate to adopt innovative technologies due to fears of heightened exposure to risks. The complexity of securing interconnected systems could lead clients to question the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of proposed solutions,

undermining consultants' ability to deliver viable strategies (AlDaajeh and Alrabaee, 2024). Moreover, the introduction of stringent new cybersecurity legislation, such as the EU's Cyber Resilience Act and the second Network and Information Security Directive, increases compliance pressures on organisations and consultants alike, potentially creating barriers to the swift implementation of new technologies (Ruohonen, 2024). Additionally, the global shortage of cybersecurity talent may impede consultants' capacity to address evolving threats. If these challenges are not effectively managed, consultancies risk being perceived as unable to provide robust, innovative and secure technological solutions.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of IT management consulting, from the mainframe era to today's dominance of cloud computing, illustrates the industry's adaptability to rapid technological change. As businesses increasingly rely on IT for strategic growth, consultants have become essential in navigating complex business transformation efforts. Today, the cloud offers unprecedented scalability and efficiency, making it a central focus for modern organisations and continuously driving demand for new expertise. Alongside this, the rise of artificial intelligence is not only revolutionising business operations but also transforming the consulting landscape itself, requiring consultants to develop new skills and tools. Moreover, the shift towards remote working has introduced challenges in maintaining productivity through collaborative tools, and hence, further increased the need for specialised consulting

services. Overarching all these developments is the critical importance of cybersecurity, which has become a fundamental concern across every aspect of IT.

While this paper highlights the remarkable adaptability of IT management consulting to technological shifts, it also raises critical questions about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. As cloud computing continues to evolve, how can organisations maximise its potential while managing complexities related to business transformation and governance? In the realm of AI, what frameworks will consultants develop to help businesses harness generative AI responsibly and mitigate its risks? Similarly, as remote working technologies advance, how will consulting firms support organisations and can they create inclusive, efficient, and human-centric virtual workplaces? Finally, with the rise of increasingly sophisticated cyber threats, what innovative strategies will IT consultants adopt to ensure comprehensive security and regulatory compliance in ever more complex digital ecosystems? By addressing these interconnected challenges, the consulting industry will play a pivotal role in helping organisations navigate the technological landscape and achieve future success.

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HOW TO WORK IN INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT FROM A UNESCO CONSULTANT

How To Work In International Consulting: An Experience Report From A UNESCO Consultant

Valéria Nerio

ABSTRACT

The Brazilian public administration provides a plethora of opportunities for international consultants through vacancies in prestigious global institutions such as UNESCO, UN Women, and UNICEF, among others. Therefore, this study seeks to explore the opportunities available to lawyers and law graduates to work as international consultants, drawing on the author's experience at UNESCO. Often, these opportunities remain unexplored due to a general unawareness among professionals. Hence, this article endeavours to share a novel experience and act as a guide for those interested in pursuing a career in international consultancy. To conduct this research, descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the calls for applications published in 2023 by 12 global institutions. This analysis identified the demands and professional qualifications sought for consultancy positions. The findings indicated a notable demand for legal professionals with specializations or experience in international law, human rights, environmental law, public management, and public policies. Furthermore, English emerged as the most commonly required language, with French, Spanish, and Portuguese also being significant. The opportunities often featured flexibility regarding the professionals' location, with many roles allowing for remote or hybrid work arrangements. The study further underscored the critical importance for professionals to develop technical-scientific skills and to view themselves as entrepreneurs to effectively operate within this international context.

INTRODUCTION

Within public administration, a plethora of official opportunities emerge daily through public notices or calls for tenders in public institutions in Brazil and beyond. These opportunities often remain underutilized due to many professionals' lack of awareness. Specifically, in the legal sector, analysis of the myriad opportunities listed on official websites reveals a significant demand for law graduates,

especially to work as consultants for international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)[1], UN Women[2], United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Organization of Ibero-American States (OEI)[3], World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Health Organization (WHO), and the International Court of Justice (ICJ)[4].

There are numerous opportunities for lawyers, as international institutions seek consultants with backgrounds in fields such as public administration, economics, public health, and environmental science. This multidisciplinarity is a reflection of the complexity of the projects undertaken by these organizations, which often involve international cooperation and the resolution of global problems. Therefore, professionals who combine technical knowledge in their areas of expertise with cross-functional skills, such as project management and intercultural communication, are more likely to excel in this market.

Despite focusing on various areas, these institutions often collaborate on joint projects involving economic development, financial stability, international trade, labour rights, environmental policies, education, gender equality, children's rights, and cultural and scientific development. This reflects both the interconnectedness and cooperation within the United Nations system and between its specialized agencies.

In addition to academic qualifications and professional experience, participating in conferences, seminars, and events promoted by global organizations provides not only visibility but also access to opportunities that are often not published in public calls. The author's experience demonstrates that such interactions can offer practical guidance on how to overcome initial barriers.

Against this backdrop, this article offers an account of a lawyer's exploration of this market, seeking to demystify the complexities involved in understanding

the rules of public administration. This practical testimony aims to clarify the challenges and barriers that often intimidate professionals without direct familiarity with the fields of public law, especially in the context of consulting for global institutions.

In this context, marked by the intensification of international trade and the presence of an interconnected global market, the importance of international contracts has been increasingly recognized. For consultants working internationally, these contracts formalize agreements and serve as strategic tools (Martins, 2015). A main strategy involves structuring an international contract that accounts for the specificities of the consultancy service. According to Silva (2018), the contract must detail the scope of service, deadlines, remuneration, payment conditions, and, importantly, include clauses on conflict resolution and applicable legislation. This is particularly critical in an international context, where differing jurisdictions can significantly impact contract performance.

Experience is a critical element in the learning process (Mussi, Flores, & Almeida, 2021). These authors underscore the relevance of experience reports as an academic modality that facilitates the critical analysis of scientific and professional practices. Furthermore, they present a methodological approach for reports that are informative, referenced, engaged in dialogue, and critical. This process emphasizes the significant role of experience reports in constructing scientific knowledge and contributes meaningfully to education and professional practice by promoting the innovative integration of theory and practice.

This article aimed to identify and analyze global opportunities for law professionals interested in working in Brazil and abroad, whether remotely or in a hybrid format, taking into account different levels of language proficiency. The goal was to map the demands of this diverse and globalized professional scenario in 2023. For this, two specific objectives were outlined: (I) to investigate the trends in demand for law professionals to work in international consultancies, either remotely or in a hybrid format, considering the various language proficiencies required by the contracting institutions; and (II)

to analyze the professional profiles outlined by international organizations, identifying the skills and competencies valued within the context of 2023.

The data analysis method adopted in this study was descriptive statistics, utilized to analyze calls for applications in the legal field published by international institutions in 2023. Descriptive statistics facilitated the synthesis and organization of collected data, offering a comprehensive view of the characteristics and patterns of the notices—which is pivotal for understanding the professional demands and requirements specified.

Exposing these experiences, therefore, enhances our understanding of how to navigate the bureaucratic context often associated with public administration and its procedures. Thus, the report serves as a valuable resource for legal professionals, managers, and professionals in the field of public policy, as well as for those aiming to deepen their participation in international consultancy mechanisms.

Given this context, this research was essential in identifying and systematizing[5] the opportunities for law professionals interested in working in international consultancies. The detailed evaluation of international calls for tenders and the mapping of demands and professional profiles by prestigious organizations such as the United Nations provide strategies not only for individual professional development but also for preparing these professionals to meet the challenges of the global market.

METHODS

Experience reports are a critical link between theory and practice in academic and professional contexts (Mussi, Flores & Almeida, 2021). These documents go beyond merely recording events or activities; they aim to contextualize and critically reflect on the interventions undertaken, with an eye toward pedagogical and professional innovation. The authors underscore that a well-structured experience report should include a detailed description and engage in an analysis that challenges and broadens the existing understanding of the subject.

Additionally, the recommended structure for experience reports encompasses informative, grounded, and critical descriptions, which aids in assimilating and applying the lessons learned. This method enhances the quality of technical and scientific knowledge production and bolsters ethics in research and practice, ensuring all analyses are conducted thoroughly considering their theoretical and practical implications (Mussi, Flores & Almeida, 2021).

In pursuit of the research objective, a search was conducted on the official websites of 12 global institutions for public notices or calls for proposals aimed at legal professionals, regardless of their experience in the field. These institutions include UNESCO, UN Women, UNICEF, OEI, ICJ, World Bank, IMF, IDB, WTO, ILO, UNEP, and WHO. The criteria for selecting the data focused on the availability of information in a public and accessible manner on official websites and the diversity of global institutions to facilitate a qualified and specific analysis for each organization.

Employing descriptive statistics, which aims to summarize and describe the main features of a data set without making inferences or predictions about a larger population (Santos, 2018, p. 15), enabled the analysis of the calls for applications published by these international institutions in 2023. Accordingly, information such as the required training, professional experience, language competencies, and other valuable organizational skills was summarized. Organizing the data collected into tables and figures provided a comprehensive overview of the opportunities and professional requirements specified, making it easier for lawyers and law graduates to discern patterns and trends in the international consultancy market. Hence, the identified consultancy opportunities are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: The opportunities for legal professionals in international consultancies (2023)

Public notice number	Name of institution	Academic background required	Addiotional training or education	Professional experience	Professional experience	Project area
001/2023	UNESCO	Law degree	Graduate studies in international law	Legal advice on international projects	Minimum of 3 years	International law
002/2023	UN Women	Law degree	Graduate degree in gender or related areas	Human rights, gender equality	Minimum of 3 years	Gender equality
003/2023	UNICEF	Law degree	Specialization in children's law	Protecting children's rights	Minimum of 4 years	Child protection
004/2023	OEI	Law degree	Graduate in public management	Public administration	Minimum of 3 years	Public management
005/2023	ICJ	Law degree	Graduate studies in international law	International legal advice	Minimum of 5 years	International law
006/2023	ICJ	Law degree	Specialization in public law	International law projects	Minimum of 3 years	International law
007/2023	World Bank	Law degree	Graduate studies in economic law	Legal advice on development projects	Minimum of 5 years	Economic law
008/2023	IMF	Law degree	Specialization in financial law	Macroeconomic policy projects	Minimum of 3 years	Financial law
009/2023	IBD	Law degree	Graduate studies in public law	Public administration	Minimum of 3 years	Public law
010/2023	WTO	Law degree	Specialization in commercial law	International trade	Minimum of 4 years	Commercial law
011/2023	ILO	Law degree	Graduate studies in labor law	Labor rights	Minimum of 3 years	Labor law
012/2023	UNEP	Law degree	Specialization in Enviromental law	Environmental policies	Minimum of 3 years	Environmental law
013/2023	WHO	Law degree	Graduate studies in international law	Legal advice on public health projects	Minimum of 5 years	International law
014/2023	WHO	Law degree	Graduate studies in public law	International law projects	Minimum of 3 years	Public law
015/2023	WHO	Law degree	Graduate studies in environmental law	Environmental policies	Minimum of 4 years	Environmental law
016/2023	World Bank	Law degree	Not required	Not required	None	Economic law
017/2023	IMF	Law degree	Not required	Not required	None	Financial law
018/2023	ILO	Law degree	Not required	Not required	None	Labor law
019/2023	UNEP	Law degree	Not required	Not required	None	Environmental law

Source: Prepared by the author

The relevant analyses reveal a growing interest in and need for professionals capable of operating internationally, whether remotely or in a hybrid form. Among the 19 calls for tenders observed, all offer opportunities to work on projects that transcend borders, suggesting a flexible working environment regarding the location of professionals. This scenario is underscored by the global scope of the organizations involved and the essence of the projects addressed, which encompass areas such as international law, human rights, child protection, environmental law, economic law, public policy, international trade, and labor rights.

ENTREPRENEURSHIP WITH LEGAL KNOWLEDGE

Although many consultants operate in defined roles within international organizations, success in this field often depends on an entrepreneurial mindset. This encompasses the ability to identify gaps in existing projects, propose innovative solutions, and build collaborative networks. For professionals interested in acting as consultants, considering each project as a micro-enterprise might be a strategic approach. This perspective encourages the creation of additional value, which can range from developing new methods to integrating technological tools that enhance processes.

Entrepreneurs, acting either independently or in affiliation with an organization, are renowned for identifying opportunities and embracing risks in creating and implementing innovations. They stand out through an exceptional ability to generate ideas, characterized by traits such as motivation and responsibility in their ventures (Pasquini, p. 115, 2020).

In the legal arena, entrepreneurship opens up avenues for professionals with a background in law, demonstrating that they can venture into areas such as independent consultancy and engage in mediation, arbitration, and international compliance, all while adhering to current legislation.

An initial point of interest is the work available with UNESCO, the ICJ, and the World Bank, organizations that often require expertise in international law for legal advice on development projects, conflict

resolution between nations, and the implementation of global policies. Organizations such as UN Women and UNICEF present opportunities in projects dedicated to human rights and gender equality. Within this framework, specialized professionals have the opportunity to develop consultancies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) aimed at enacting programs focused on protecting human rights, defending minorities, and advancing gender equality in various settings. Particularly for UNICEF projects, there is a demand for professionals who specialize in child law and protection. Here, legal entrepreneurs can establish organizations dedicated to child advocacy, provide consultancy on child protection policies, and offer training on children's rights.

Collaboration with UNEP and UNESCO on environmental initiatives introduces another niche for those interested in ecological concerns. Professionals have the potential to establish consultancies specializing in environmental legislation, advising on corporate sustainability, and developing projects for environmental compliance.

Projects associated with the World Bank and IMF often require comprehensive knowledge of economic and financial law. This environment enables professionals to specialize in economic consultancy, oversee financial policies, and develop infrastructure projects that comply with international economic regulations.

Furthermore, initiatives with the IDB and OEI encourage consultancies specializing in public governance, administrative reform, and public policy development. These efforts support projects demanding in-depth knowledge of public legislation and management.

As highlighted in notices and calls for experts, the WTO is searching for individuals skilled in trade law and international trade. This scenario allows legal entrepreneurs to provide consultancy services in trade negotiations, dispute mediation, and adherence to international standards. Legal entrepreneurship in these domains empowers law graduates to offer traditional legal services and innovate by establishing specialized consultancies, NGOs, and training and capacity-building companies.

Such activities enable them to operate both within Brazil and internationally, rendering services to governments, corporations, and other entities requiring expertise to manage complex projects and develop tailor-made solutions under the requirements of international organizations.

RESULTS

The author's experience in sustainability and global development projects exemplifies how interdisciplinary competencies are valued by international institutions. Given an opportunity to work with UNESCO, the integration of knowledge in international law, public policy management, and sustainability enabled the delivery of solutions aligned with the United Nations' Agenda 2030. This case illustrates that professionals who can adapt their skills to global and multidisciplinary contexts excel in the market.

In the data analysis, it was possible to outline the main professional profiles demanded by international organizations, emphasizing the skills and competencies required. For instance, professionals with a law degree are often asked to fill positions requiring specialization in international law, human rights, gender equality, child protection, environmental law, and public policy. In addition to academic training, there is a significant emphasis on professional experience, generally of at least three to five years, in roles related to legal advice, policy development, management, and international projects.

Therefore, analyzing 19 selected public notices and calls for tender made it possible to identify profiles of professionals with higher education in law, highlighting specific skills and competencies, as illustrated in Figure 1.
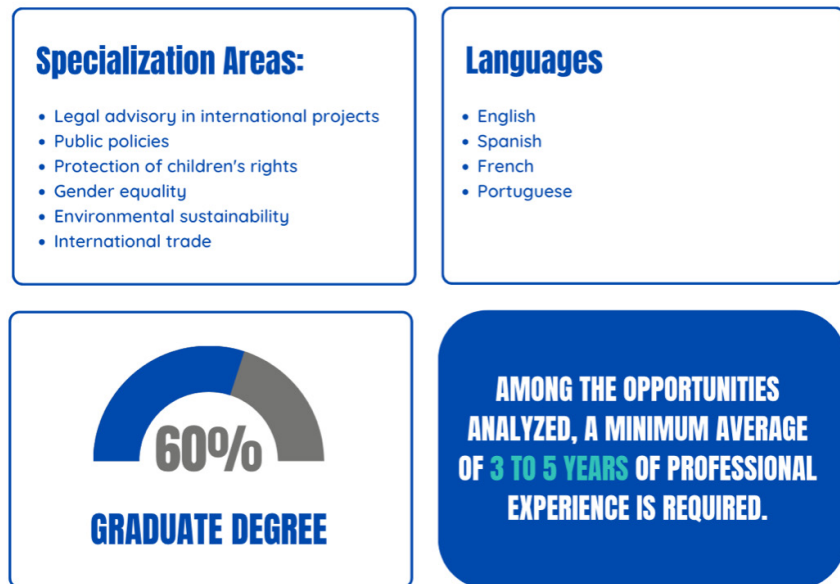

Specialization Areas:
- Legal advisory in international projects
- Public policies
- Protection of children's rights
- Gender equality
- Environmental sustainability
- International trade

Languages
- English
- Spanish
- French
- Portuguese

60%
GRADUATE DEGREE

AMONG THE OPPORTUNITIES ANALYZED, A MINIMUM AVERAGE OF 3 TO 5 YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE IS REQUIRED.

Figure 1: An overview of the opportunities for professionals with a law degree in international organizations (2023) | Source: Prepared by the author

HOW TO WORK IN INTERNATIONAL CONSULTING: AN EXPERIENCE REPORT FROM A UNESCO CONSULTANT (CONTINUED)

An analysis of the opportunities published in 2023 by selected international organizations reveals a growing trend in the demand for professionals with higher education in law without the requirement of being registered with the Brazilian Bar Association (OAB). This trend can be attributed to the international nature of these opportunities, prioritizing academic training, specific professional experience, and language proficiency over national professional registrations. This approach promotes greater inclusion of qualified professionals from different jurisdictions, thereby expanding the pool of candidates able to meet the demands of these organizations.

According to the notices analyzed, all of them require a university degree in law as a minimum. Additionally, 60% (11 out of 19) also require a graduate degree in specialized areas, such as international law, public law, public management, environmental law, and human rights. When it comes to professional experience, this is considered an essential requirement, with the demand varying from 3 to 5 years, depending on the institution's needs. The most valued areas of specialization include advising on international projects, public policy, protecting children's rights, gender equality, environmental sustainability, and international trade. This diversity reflects the broad range of opportunities available.

Regarding language requirements, a significant variation was identified among the calls for tenders, directly affecting the inclusion of professionals with different levels of language proficiency:

1. English: The most frequently required language, present in 90% of the calls for proposals analyzed.

2. French: Required in 32% of calls (6 out of 19), mainly for projects linked to UNESCO, ICJ, and WHO.

3. Spanish: Required in 16% of the calls (3 out of 19), particularly in projects from UN Women, IDB, and ILO.

4. Portuguese: Present in some IDB and UN calls for proposals, reflecting the importance of working in Portuguese-speaking countries.

English stands out as the standard language required, although several calls for proposals also stress the need for proficiency in other languages, such as French, Spanish, and Portuguese. The language requirement varies according to the project's region and the predominant language. For instance, relevant calls from the ICJ and WHO often require fluency in both English and French, while opportunities at the ILO may require knowledge of both Spanish and English, depending on the country of operation.

Project management is a systematic approach to efficiently planning, organizing, controlling, and managing resources to achieve specific results within predefined deadlines and budgets (Silveira et al., 2009). The inclusion of Portuguese in some calls for proposals, particularly from the IDB and UNESCO, underscores the need for professionals capable of working in Portuguese-speaking countries. The language requirements indicate the importance of professionals who can communicate effectively in multiple languages, promoting the inclusion of candidates with varying levels of language proficiency.

Lastly, the findings presented herein can lead one to conclude that these opportunities reflect a trend toward balancing efficient communication with valuing linguistic and cultural diversity among professionals. It should also be noted that professionals' technical and scientific development can lead to opportunities beyond public administration. The possibility of working on projects can broaden the perception of the value of professionals with a law degree. This development unfolds through specialized consultancies and employment with NGOs and international private companies.

A recurring challenge highlighted by analysis and practical experience is the linguistic barrier faced by professionals wishing to operate in an international context. Although English is often the standard language, organizations also value proficiency in other languages, such as French, Spanish, and Portuguese. Therefore, learning a second or third language not only increases employability but also promotes adaptation to diverse cultural contexts, which is essential for working effectively in international teams. The author's experience

demonstrates that investing in language skills is one of the most strategic decisions for those aspiring to act as global consultants.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article investigates the international opportunities available for consultants within global organizations, emphasizing professionals holding law degrees. Through the lens of a legal consultant's experience, it has been possible to identify the dynamics of public administration and to underscore the crucial strategies needed for navigating this market. The analysis of public notices and calls for tender, conducted as part of this study, has revealed a demand for legal professionals who specialize in various fields. Additionally, these positions often require academic training and professional experience ranging from 3 to 5 years, depending on the project's purpose and the institution involved.

Starting a career in international consulting can be daunting, yet each step, from identifying opportunities to submitting applications, contributes to the construction of a solid trajectory. In the case of the author, the first project with UNESCO resulted from a combination of academic qualifications, technical skills, and networking. This initial experience provided not just technical learning but also the necessary confidence to explore other international organizations and expand operations in various areas of expertise.

Furthermore, the study points out that the market has opened up not only to those with law degrees but also to bachelors in other fields, professionals without previous experience, and even those who do not speak foreign languages, with the exception of Portuguese. Legal entrepreneurship is also emerging as a promising avenue for professionals who seek to provide independent advice, exploring specific niches such as compliance, international law, human rights, child protection, environmental law, and public policy.

Therefore, this study significantly contributes to the knowledge base on international consultancy, offering insights into the opportunities available for professionals across various specialties. By systematizing the demands and professional profiles sought by international organizations, this article

delivers essential guidance for preparing lawyers and law graduates aspiring to work internationally. Additionally, it underscores the importance of training, emphasizing the need for technical-scientific knowledge and skills, particularly in languages, in order to excel in this highly competitive field.

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