



What is the biggest grudge you have against consultants?

Susan Schwartz PhD.

I set up my own consulting firm 8 years ago - largely because, having worked in government and corporates as a trouble-shooter / fixer for the 18 years before that, I thought the ones that were out there were mostly rubbish!

Many people who have responded have hit on the reasons for this:

- the BIG consultancies use 'babies' to do the work - people who do not (typically) have the people skills, knowledge, experience or expertise to actually understand or address the client's problem
- they charge a lot of money at hourly / daily rates to find out what everyone (maybe) in the organisation already knows
- then they write a report, send the bill and leave the most difficult part (implementation) up to the organisation to do
- because of this they build in a need to call them back to do another study to figure out why it didn't work the first time
- too many of them are not independent...they make their money from their clients AND from the commissions they get to recommend / sell technology and solutions that may OR MAY NOT be right for the client's specific circumstances
- most BIG consultants are not consultants at all - they are systems integrators...who really work for systems vendors, not the client

There are however, quite a few firms like mine - who specifically don't do things the way I have described above...

- they use experienced, knowledgeable people
- they quote full fee up front
- they do not accept commissions from anyone
- they actually do think differently to those within...and present alternate solutions to those already thought of
- they address problems holistically, not in parts (because one part will always impact on the next)
- they facilitate the most difficult part - implementation and they put part of the fee at risk in doing this
- they work for the client only...

So, clearly I think there is a place for consultants...just not those that abuse people's trust and investment...



Daniel Gonzalez Garcia

Expertise in purchasing and producing in an international multi-plant environment

1. As manager: The first approach is done by an expert consultant. The job is done by beginners. So that you get a beginner's solution at an expert's cost.

2. As employee: Supposing the provided solution is a good one, the implementation is on the company's side. The company empowers someone -not as well paid as a consultant- to get the implementation done, but every implementation has its problems -especially those involving changing people's minds. Everything which is not working fine will be considered as bad performance of the empowered guy, everything working OK will be considered as a consultant's success.

Once these points have been clarified: there are very good consultants, but there are too many people pretending to be one of them.

John Wurl

When I first entered the industry a consultant was someone many of us aspired to become. A consultant was typically an expert, had a little snow on the roof and besides knowing your business was able to make very positive and long lasting recommendations. People listened to them.

Then something happened, everyone became a consultant. Well sort of; we all know it was a contingent work force, or contractors, whom called themselves consultants without the expertise.

All in all, I have neither a grudge against consultants nor contractors. What I have experienced is that the jokes come in when there is question as to what these individuals are actually in the workplace for. If you are a kid out of school, chances are you are not a consultant, you are a contractor. Then there are the consultants, contractors who seem to live at a company - forever? Additionally, when employees are relieved of exciting projects, growth potential, and even their jobs at the expense (or non-expense) of contractors or consultants, where the benefit resides at the contracting firms and executive management - it is really easy to see where the jokes can come from.





Kain Victor

I have tried two times to have an external consultant as my nearest boss.
I will never again work in a job where my nearest boss is an external consultant.

George F Franks III

Having used consultants working for Fortune 500 companies and then later being a consultant, I have mixed feelings about how to respond to this.

A boss of mine once compared consultants to prostitutes.

I think a better comparison is to them as "hit men (people)".

Consultants should be brought in for their:

- Independence
- Expertise
- Variability (of cost to need)

sometimes consultants are brought in to document and communicate to senior management the obvious. That is probably not the best use of any company or organization's time, money or resources.

Susan Singer

The best answer I ever heard to this question was a joke:

A city-born-and-raised man is sent on a job assignment in Montana - on the way to the job site, he passes a ranch. Everywhere he looked, there were sheep and sheep and sheep.

Upon seeing the rancher, he pulled over, got the man's attention and told him he'd never seen such a sight. He asked, "If I can tell you how many animals you have here, could I take one home as a souvenir of my trip to Montana?". The rancher was amused and agreed.

City Boy pulled out his hand-held GPS, triangulated on the ranch, did some fancy algorithm work and came up with the EXACT number of sheep on the ranch. Having won the bet, he promptly picked up the nearest animal and shoved it in his car.

The rancher said, "Not so fast, there - fair's fair: if I guess what you do for a living, can I



have my animal back?" The city guy agreed.

"You're a Management Consultant," proclaimed the rancher, without a second's hesitation.

"That's amazing! How'd you know? I never gave you a clue!"

"Easy: you dropped in from nowhere uninvited, made me pay you for information I already knew and you've proven you don't know a THING about my business, because that animal you stuffed in your car is my DOG!"

Dawn Boyer

I think the worst fear of business owners and managers is knowing there is a need for a specific knowledge, action, or process for which they are unaware or don't have enough experience, but also knowing they have to hire an expert to come in, create a working process or accomplish a short-term job, and not knowing if the 'consultant' they are hiring really knows his/her stuff, and can complete the job to the best result - especially for the money the consultant will charge.

Once a consultant comes in - assuming they really are an expert in their subject matter - completes the job in prescribed time and at 100% deliverable, many folks will look at what they may feel was 'far too easy, and we could have done it ourselves' then begrudge the consultant the money they are owed.

Yes you do have many folks who are now out of work that decide to become a consultant. Where many may fail is they don't distinguish themselves with a message about their uniqueness. Company's/Managers need to also understand that the cost for the consultant to come in frees their time for more vital and direct ROI profit-related activity to their own tasks. Consultants can come in, perform the job, make recommendations or guide a program, and/or get it established so internal (and cheaper) staff can take over.

Many consultants come in with a great deal of confidence they can get a job done, and some folks interpret that as cockiness, egotism, or snobbishness. A good consultant still gets the job done 100%. What should be understood is when a consultant is hired, it's not their personality a company is paying for, and it is the consultant's ability to get a job done, regardless of their personality. All the staff with which the consultant may be interacting should understand that the consultant should be provided with whatever they need, but they are not there to be a friend, chat-meisters, or a personal consultant, and a professional consultant will decline extended personal level conversations and devote the time to be invoiced directly to the task at hand.



Hamish Taylor

I don't hold any grudges, where I can sympathize with clients is when poor consultants give cause for complaint and do nothing about it.

All it takes is one rotten apple to give consultants a collective bad name - I personally do not understand why companies appoint consultants based on the obvious intelligence and experience of the lead consultant / senior partner who leads the pitch and then allows the inexperienced "wet-behind-the-ears" juniors to run the job - at best they find the obvious, fail to uncover the underlying behaviors and derive pre-packaged solutions based on pre-packaged frameworks.

Greg D. Glassman

#1 I agree with Vikas Sharma. To hear a "consultant" say/admit they do not know the answer and/or solution would be amazing. I have only met a select few, and they have spun off to create their own companies.

#2 is they hide behind their documents. This means their focus is not on the client's needs, which includes increasing revenue or decreasing costs, but on their own career, or own consultancy company's bottom-line goals. Often they spend enormous amounts of time digitally writing documents at their selected cube at a client location, without even asking questions to the client, providing some level of "consultation" of their so called expertise.

Case in point, the last nasty project I acquired from a global consultancy PM (Starts with A) included a written confession from the PM that they did not challenge the client on detailing Use Cases in Requirements gathering sessions, which added to the unraveling of a very nasty project with 80%+ software development defect ratio. Requirements are key, which is what they promoted on paper but did not show in action.

Anthony Sutcliffe

Previously, I had an open attitude to consultants - I'm quite happy to admit that I don't know everything and am willing to listen to other points of view. However, in the past few years I have had to work with many consultants; from experience I now would certainly think twice before using any unless I had had the opportunity to really check their abilities, knowledge and most definitely their references.

Most of the consultants that I have had to work with during the past 2 years were simply dreadful - limited communication skills, poor organizational abilities, and I have to say a rather unsatisfactory work ethic as well as a tendency for inaccurate work. I found that in



many cases, they are extremely economical with the truth!

We've also experienced unrealistic goal setting, poor budget and resource management, and a very blinkered attitude to the project. I know that they are not being paid what we pay to their company, but quite honestly, they have not been worth even close to the money that we pay.

As Daniel said, you agree to an expert, but actually often get a newcomer - but are expected to pay the experts rate. One particular individual that we have had as project manager has been asked a number of questions - in each case he said that he would get back to us. I subsequently found him posting the questions on the Internet, before coming back to us with the answer that he had been given! (And in several cases, the answer was wrong)

Ramesh Kumar

They may not know anything. They will talk to 4-5 people. Compile information. And project as if it is their knowledge and charge a bomb. I have not seen any consultant who knew more than us!

I have seen a consultant, who told us to (and even convinced the boss) that only way forward is to sell the products through social networking sites like Facebook etc. He even had some applications developed and show cased us. While I agree that attempting to sell on Facebook can be tried as an experiment, we cannot depend on that alone. I even created few applications to gauge the Facebook audience. My application was used by 225 people, but none paid to get the full report! I withdrew that application. This consultant after one year withdrew these applications and now says brick-and-mortar approach is a safer bet!!!

Consultants are very useful in one situation. If your ideas are not taken seriously by the company, you bring in a consultant, and he suggests the same (what you failed to convince) in a different way and it will be accepted without any opposition.

The biggest grudge is that they will suggest and don't take any responsibility.

Keith Hoyle

The thing is about Consultants that they always know the answer to the question - that is why you use them.

The reason for the bad press is that they tell you what you already know, but again that is why you bring them in. If you use a Consultant you can tell the Board that you have brought someone in and this is what they found.



I have been a Consultant and you would be amazed that everyone does your job for you; all you have to do is write the report and ask for silly money. Bosses know the answers they just need someone else to put it in writing.

Let me ask you a question. Do you know what is wrong in your Company?
(So why the Consultant?)

Rich Magnuson

Accountability. Some consultants may not care about the long-term, unlike the vested employees who have to live with decisions for years.

Susan Schwartz PhD.

They come in with a bunch of whiz kids, take up valuable office space, send everyone scurrying with demands, and then charge a huge price tag for solutions that seem to consist of promiscuous change and layoffs.

And they're snooty while on the premises. Yes, I know it's an overgeneralization.

Jennifer Carlisle, PMP, MBA

I've used consultants and have some of these same grudges.....and most of them apply to large consultancies.

I'd like to answer from an independent consultant's point of view, though, and tell you about my frustrations with clients.

I cannot make change happen by myself - change is a process and it requires input, cooperation, and dedication from those that will be most impacted by the change. I can facilitate change, but company staff must be on board to ensure effective change management.

I was hired for my expertise. If a client chooses not to listen to my recommendations, that is their prerogative. However, they should not expect me to make "their way" more successful than their prior efforts - that is why they hired a consultant in the first place.

I cannot make political difficulties disappear. Yes, I can use diplomacy and my role as an



outside observer to lessen the impact of political issues. However, I cannot be effective when I'm being used as a tool to force someone to do something they ultimately don't want to do.

I can only proceed as quickly as organizational resource availability allows me to. If other priorities dictate that these resources work on other tasks, my project will not progress and you will be disappointed. I will keep you abreast of the situation and may recommend that the project be postponed until resources are available. Do not hold me accountable for your priorities.

Gary Nuttall MBCS CITP

To start with I'd like to defend some consultants - generally the independents who have only themselves to blame if they flounder. Now onto the grudge list!:

- Consultants who are 25 (or under) and have titles like "Management Consultant" - despite never having done any real management themselves
- Consultancies who bring in their stars for the pre-sales workup and then put junior consultants on the contract once it gets underway
- Consultants who claim expertise which transpires is based on a training course they've attended and not real world experience
- Consultancies who use your own organisation to train up their novice staff, whilst charging you for the headcount
- Consultants with egos larger than their abilities
- Consultants who treat their customers (and the customer's staff) as subservient
- Consultants who won't admit that they don't know the answer
- Consultants who know only one answer and can't give alternatives (with the associated risks/benefits)

Creina Walker

I have no grudges and I work for several delivery based consultants. I have read the answers and yes there is good and bad in all occupations. The question is if it is believed consultants do not know or understand as much as the employees, Why haven't the employees delivered what is required and why did the employer feel the need to hire the external consultant. Is it always a grudge against consultants or the ability to walk away and lay blame elsewhere without responsibility?





Vit Mateju

Being a consultant myself, I generally agree with the above answers, yet there are real benefit deliverers in the crowd. How to find them?

1. The consultant should be a specialist in a certain field. Never trust to consultant who claims. 'I can help with everything'.
(I know I can cut costs & increase quality to my clients in specific fields only)
2. Pay according to delivered results (no benefit-no pay).
3. Payment have to be a portion of the benefit, Not that the all expenses of 'having' a consultant and processes of applying the innovations would cost you more than received benefit.
4. Dealing with consultant should be a fun, not a trouble! Seek his recommendation 1st.

Hany Yacoub

I don't believe there should be grudges held in the work place.

In a professional environment and in the true form of a supply versus demand free market consultants are paid to either exceed the current organisations level of expertise in their defined field or in order to fill an urgent gap in the organisation growth life cycle.

What I have experienced in my career is that the term "consultant" is used loosely by people who sometimes lack the initiative in having a specialty.

As a consultant you cannot be an expert in every field but you must be an expert in a specific field and have the ability to value-add wherever the need arises especially in the organisations that are hiring you as a consultant.

If a consultant is not value adding and contentiously providing solutions and improvements in the terms of return for the dollar then at least in my opinion are not consultants at all.





JW Nugent

Consultants are packaged like brand name products. The origins of the consultancy are most often derived from "Named" individuals with a specific history of expertise and a specific success rate. Each later evolution or generation (this being the turnover rate for professionals) will offer less experience and specific expertise. Though the expertise can be hired often individuals with lower experience levels are chosen for reasons of cost. With a cadre of middling senior experience levels junior level individuals just out of university will be hired as fill in personnel. The strategy is that using a boiler plate report structure and mid level supervision a product can be delivered. The fallacy is that in reality the expertise supporting the report does not and cannot exist with this modern consultancy structure. Expertise comes through comprehensive experience. The consultant is hired on name reputation. However, the name behind the reputation is not used or no longer exists. The package is empty comprehensive experience. It is nonexistent at the junior level.

Dimitri Popov

1. Lack of responsibility for the final result. It's not them; it's the team in the end of the day.
2. Unclear cost of the project. Extra hours may follow because they never know how long it will take.
3. Lack of inheritance. You pay them to learn your business (unproductive charges) and then they just disappear.

Stephen Coates

I have often worked with consultants and for many years worked as one. My primary beef with consultants are those that can't or won't acknowledge the difference between consulting (selling time and expertise, only) and distributing a product or service.

On many projects, I've been engaged to consult on the selection of infrastructure and/or services. I understand and document the business requirements and usually manage a request for tender (RFT) process. I get paid by the client, only. However, I am aware of "consultants" including some big name management firms who purport to consult on a product or service category but who implement the one they always implement, whether or not it is the most appropriate product or service for that client.

But half the blame lies with the client. Many years ago, one consultant told me he'd only



once been asked about which brand of PABX had RFTs he'd issued. He listed them - several had won - but not matching brand with project. If more clients did their homework, consulting services would be a lot better.

Brentt Bugler

I am a management consultant myself and have worked for a number of consultancies around the world. There are a number of things that consultancies incorporate into the way they do business that would really rub me up the wrong way if I were a client. Too many consultancies are pre-occupied with selling and marketing their services rather than actually delivering those services.

Before a project is sold, many consultancies present their prospective client with their firm's so-called "typical" consultant. The prospective client gets to meet this consultant and is usually impressed by his/her expertise, experience, manner, etc. Once the project is awarded, the "typical" consultant is not part of the team—instead his/her position is filled by someone with fewer qualifications, lesser skills and minimal experience. Often the consultant actually assigned to the project is new to the consulting firm and gets paid a much lower salary than does the "typical" consultant, although the switch does not affect the amount for which the client will be billed.

What would irk me the most as a client, however, is having to pay consultancies for delivering a project when a significant portion of the time and effort I am paying for is for their marketing and sales.

Soon after the start of a project, consultants start looking what to sell the client next. (Selling more work is an important factor in determining the consultant's bonus.) The result is that the consultant neglects the current project—he/she is too focused on identifying future opportunities that exist in the client's company, and developing samplers, case studies and project overviews which can be used to interest other clients.

Reduced concentration on project delivery can lead to a performance issue. In an attempt to preempt possible client unhappiness, too much effort goes into raising the client's perceived value of completed work through presentations, reports, etc., rather than using that time to further enhance project output within the scope of the project.

