Thank you for requesting this FREE REPORT prepared by the Society of Professional Consultants, as offered in our Boston Business Journal advertisement. We certainly hope that it helps you choose the right consultant for your business.

How to Ensure Success When You Hire a Consultant

This report focuses on those factors in the client-consultant relationship that contribute most significantly to a rewarding result.

Organizations rely on the expertise and resourcefulness of consultants for myriad reasons. External consultants bring a certain objective viewpoint, shaped by years of insight and experience within or across several industries. Once a firm decides that a consultant is needed, and scope of work has been defined, the project is ready to get underway. Many times, your professional consultant can bring needed objectivity and insight to the establishment of company goals, as well as solutions to existing problems.

As the consultant comes onboard to work with the firm, expectations are high and those who are close to the situation are enthusiastic about the anticipated results. Too many firms fail to fully benefit from the consultant’s expertise, however, because the critical success criteria were not fully acknowledged up front.

This report outlines the factors that will ensure a successful consulting assignment, in the eyes of the hiring organization, and deliver a positive outcome, in terms of project goals.

As you bring consultants in to work with your firm, consider the following

1. **As the consultant’s sponsor, you need to be a super-communicator**, ensuring that all parties involved and affected are aware of the project, have been properly introduced to the consultant, and that a feedback and assessment mechanism is in place. The consultant has as many questions as the employees involved, so all key personnel must be accessible, when their valuable input is needed.

Open and honest communication will ensure that everyone is on the same page regarding the purpose and scope of the project. This will help to eliminate the levels of internal resistance/political issues that often occur when a consultant arrives on the scene. Give the consultant as much leeway as possible to talk to the people involved in the program development/project solution - sales people, clients, administrators, etc.
2. **Clear and measurable goals and objectives must be in place**, with consensus and support from the major stakeholders. Employees need to know why the consultant is onboard, how the success of the project will directly benefit them, and what support the consultant will require throughout the project.

   Ask yourself: what do you want to achieve? What have you tried already? What worked? What didn't? Why do you think these attempts failed or succeeded? Most importantly, share these thoughts, feelings, and experiences with your consultant!

3. **Give the consultant some relevant background on the situation.** What hurts? How has the problem at hand created issues for the company? Give specifics and quantify the problem or opportunity wherever possible – sales lost? Share the symptoms of any problem that relates to the project. Time wasted? Meetings running long? Budgets running over projections? Resources underutilized?

   Could be that there isn’t a problem…but, rather, business is pretty good, and you want to take this opportunity to attain new levels of growth. Great!

4. **Be flexible - objectives may change as the project goes forward.** Give the consultant an idea of what resources s/he may use - administrative support, a budget for materials, research, access to company documents, etc. Be honest about parameters. If you're adamant about not firing your brother-in-law, buying a new computer system, or giving up your favorite advertising agency, don't hide it from your consultant.

5. **Establish criteria ahead of time for judging the effectiveness of the work.** Recognize that you must collaborate with the consultant – and “sell” the project internally to all parties involved. Return calls promptly and make sure you hold up your end of the agreement. The consultant will require certain things from you in order to succeed. Be aware of the self-sabotaging behavior that can kill a project, and be ready for the success you anticipate.

6. **Listen, evaluate, and take action. Focus on implementation.** The best consultant ideas in the world won’t help if you don't use the recommendations. Make implementation assistance part of the contract with the consultant to ensure follow-through on the good ideas that will emerge.

**IMPORTANT:** The client-consultant relationship is unique, in that you must often share intimate, and possibly privileged information with a virtual stranger! Therefore, the most important consideration in choosing your professional consultant is, **trust.** All things being fairly equal… knowledge, experience, references… how do you feel? “If I tell this guy exactly what’s on my mind, will I be able to rest easy that’ll it’ll never leave this room to be shared with anyone else!” If you believe that you have to hold back, be careful what you say, forget it! It won’t work!

   But, if you feel, “I can really let him/her know what the problem is, and who I think is causing it,” and feel comfortable about it, then, a successful, profitable relationship with your professional consultant is pretty well ensured!

   Should you wish to speak obligation-free with a consultant that matches your needs, please visit the Society of Professional Consultants’ Website (www.spconsultants.org) and click, “Find a Consultant.” We wish you much success.