

'My greatest strength as a consultant is to be ignorant and ask a few questions.'
Peter F. Drucker (1909–2005), US management consultant and author

OVERVIEW

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Day in the life of a management consultant
Ellipsis

BUSINESS SKILLS

Negotiating
Writing: summarising terms and conditions

CASE STUDY

New market opportunities



LISTENING AND DISCUSSION

Operations consulting

A Discuss these questions.

- 1 What sort of services do management consultancies provide?
- 2 Why do you think companies might hire management consultants?
- 3 What are the implied criticisms made about consultants in the comments below?
- 4 If these are the consultants' answers, what questions did the companies originally ask?

Top five things you'll never hear from your consultant

- 1 I don't know enough to speak intelligently about that.
- 2 How about paying us based on the success of the project?
- 3 Implementation? I only care about writing long reports.
- 4 Actually, the only difference is that we charge more than they do.
- 5 Everything looks OK to me. You really don't need me.

B Complete the extract below about consultants using words and phrases in the box.

best practices brief deliverable implementation operational
performance scope specialised expertise tangible techniques and methods

Management consultants can help organisations to improve their¹. They can provide external, objective advice and² which companies do not have in-house. Because consultants work with multiple clients, they are also aware of industry³.

Companies typically hire consultants to help with financial management, human resources services, IT⁴, change management, strategy development and improving⁵ efficiency.

Consultants generally use their own⁶ in order to identify problems, and recommend more effective and efficient ways of working. In the past, a consultancy's main⁷ on a project was generally the report. Nowadays, clients want more⁸ and practical approaches to helping them stay in business. Critical, therefore, to the success of a project is agreeing the objectives and⁹ of the work, together with the benefits to be expected and how they will be measured. Clients need to provide as clear a¹⁰ as possible, which identifies the value that the project will bring.



Peter Sirman

C CD2.41 Listen to the first part of an interview with Peter Sirman, Head of Operations Consulting at the PA Consulting Group, and complete each gap with between two and four words.

Peter Sirman uses the phrase '.....'¹ to explain what *operations* refers to. The first step in the consultation process is to find out what the company² to its customers and to see how well they're actually doing that.

Operations is essentially about³, so it's important to understand what the customers want to ensure that the company is providing a⁴, a product that they like, and that this is happening every time to the right⁵. Therefore, the consultants begin by talking to customers. These are quite detailed conversations about the⁶ that the customers value. This information can be used later to⁷ the company is delivering services and products.

D CD2.42 Listen to the next part of the interview and decide if these statements are true or false. Correct the false ones.

- 1 The technique mentioned is called Value Stream Planning.
- 2 It is used to analyse all processes needed to deliver the goods or services.
- 3 The technique looks at the amount of money spent on each stage of the process.
- 4 It helps to identify where problems arise and any duplication of processes.

E CD2.43 Listen to the third part of the interview and answer these questions.

- 1 What is the second phase of the consultants' work?
- 2 What type of advice might the consultants give a company at this stage?
- 3 What term is used for the time period between the beginning and end of a process?
- 4 What information is used to set targets?
- 5 What is identified in the second step?

F CD2.44 Listen to the final part of the interview and make a note of the three options that Peter Sirman mentions for improved performance.

G CD2.44 Listen to the last part of the interview again. How do Peter and his team try to win support for their recommendations?

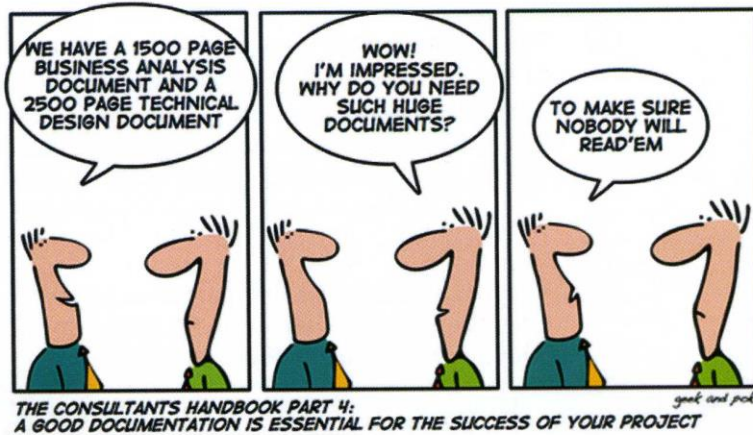
H Discuss these questions.

- 1 Why might the client staff be resistant to some of the ideas presented by operations consultants?
- 2 How can a company overcome this resistance?
- 3 How can consultants go about building trust when advising a company?

Watch the interview on the DVD-ROM.



READING AND LANGUAGE



A Would you make a good management consultant? Do this quick quiz and find out. Then turn to page 150 to check your answers.

- 1 As a successful consultant, you should be familiar with management thinking, mostly so that you can impress people with how well-read you are. So which of these is NOT a management guru?
 - a) C.K. Prahalad b) Henry Mintzberg
 - c) James Dyson d) Tom Peters e) Rosabeth M. Kanter
- 2 Do you like the idea of getting paid for telling others what to do?
- 3 As part of the recruitment process, consultancy firms often give candidates logic puzzles. How would you answer this question: *Why are manhole covers typically round?* Do you enjoy this sort of task?



B Read the extract on the opposite page from a blog about a day in the life of a management consultant, then answer these questions.

- 1 What type of project is the consultant working on?
- 2 Why do you think a client might choose a consultant for this type of project?
- 3 How many formal and informal meetings does the consultant attend?
- 4 What impression does the blog give of the consultant and his attitude to the work?
- 5 What evidence is there to suggest the client is happy with some aspects of the project and less happy with others?
- 6 What setbacks and surprises were there during the day?

C Match the words and expressions in bold in the blog with these definitions and synonyms.

- 1 finishes a job, meeting, etc.
- 2 puts things into bags, etc. ready to finish work at the end of the day
- 3 read, look at or explain something quickly
- 4 decide on an agreement, contract, etc. after a lot of discussion and disagreement
- 5 read or discuss something in order to make sure it is correct
- 6 discussion about a job just done in order to gather information
- 7 follow up with certain people at a later point in time
- 8 spending time finding out what has been happening while you have been away
- 9 a trivial detail
- 10 filled with a large quantity of something
- 11 stop being worried or frightened about something
- 12 didn't include someone or something

- D** The consultant has often omitted certain words from the blog. This is typical of informal language use. Find five examples of this. What types of word have been omitted? Why do you think the writer does this?

➔ Language reference: *ellipsis* page 136

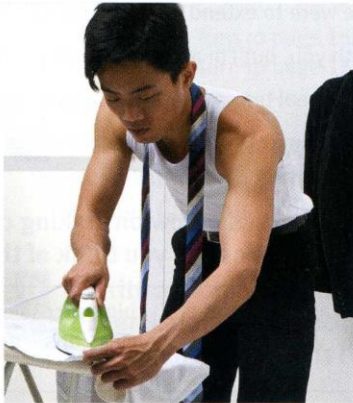
- E** What do you think you would enjoy most/least about this consultant's job? In what ways is it similar to your own daily life?

Day in the life of a management consultant BLOG

Background — I am on a four-member team (manager and three associates). We are on an operations turnaround project with a focus on personnel (read: reward the best employees, train the average ones, and develop systems to remove or improve the underperformers).

7:30 a.m. — Hotel alarm wakes me. I automatically reach for the BlackBerry. The Production team has e-mailed me with PowerPoint slides I sent them the data for last night. **Breathe sigh of relief**, as this means I won't have to spend two hours this morning getting my client presentation slides ready.

7:45 a.m. — BlackBerry buzzes. Manager says he'll be 15 minutes late this morning. The team usually meets in the hotel lobby to share a taxi to the client (client is particularly cost-conscious on this project). I contemplate going back to sleep until I look at my work shirts. All are wrinkled. No extra sleep for me.



8:45 a.m. — Arrive at client headquarters. The CEO's secretary has just confirmed the CEO's attendance at today's monthly progress meeting. I do a quick scan of my e-mails and open the attachment from the Production team. Thankfully most look good — there are the usual typos, missing footnotes and weird alignment issues to fix, but could have been much worse.

10:30 a.m. — I've fixed all the minor issues with my part of the presentation or "the deck". I can now focus on cleaning out my inbox. It's **piled up** with e-mails from ex-teammates asking me questions about work I did on past projects, surveys and questionnaires, random forwards from friends and other analysts.

12 noon — Team meeting starts. The main partner on our team is dialling in from Toronto today.

12:30 p.m. — It's my turn to present. I carefully **run** them **through** the slides—partner has a **small nit** on the source for a particular chart. I realize I **left out** the footnote. Damn!

1 p.m. — Team meeting ends. Partner **wraps up** by mentioning that the senior client had some questions recently about scope being too narrow (i.e. we're not doing enough), and has scheduled a late-afternoon call with the broader team (read: more partners) to **hammer out** this issue. I wonder if this means workload will increase.

1:30 p.m. — We're at lunch, and have invited some of the four-member client team. Through the last eight weeks, we've built strong working relationships with them—and through forced socializing have gotten to know them.

2 p.m. — Client meeting starts.

2:10 p.m. — CEO enters room. She smiles, shakes each of our hands—I briefly wonder if she'll ask me how old I am as she shakes mine. But no—they're too professional for that.

2:45 p.m. — Manager is leading CEO through one of my slides. The CEO points at a graph and says, "Wow, is this really the improvement you've been seeing?" Everyone rotates their heads toward me. My time to shine. I quickly share facts and figures that by now I've memorized. Manager flashes a relieved smile, and the CEO nods in silence.

3 p.m. — Meeting over! CEO seems happy with our findings. Mentions to partner on phone (with whom she's worked several times before) that once again, he found an excellent team. CEO says she looks forward to seeing where we'll be by project end (in four weeks' time). Our team heads back to our room for a post-meeting **debrief**.

4 p.m. — Scope issue discussion call with three partners begins. Manager spends next hour in increasing frustration as partners cannot agree on anything. Two of the partners have to leave for another meeting. Finally, the lead partner tells us that he'll **circle back** with the other two partners to try and reach consensus. We return to our laptops.

5:30 p.m. — Receive large e-mail attachment from client team. It's new employee performance data gathered from this quarter. I **go through** the data—it's a mess. This is going to take hours to clean up.

6:15 p.m. — Manager **packs up** and suggests we pack up early. Tomorrow, we have a busy schedule packed with client interviews. We all jump into a taxi back to the hotel. Manager is **having a catch-up** call with our partner. I plan out my night—which will include the gym, room-service dinner, and several hours spent cleaning and incorporating the new data in time for tomorrow.