

Why Use a Consultant?

- ✓ Consultants offer new ideas, processes and techniques they have gained from their involvement in many companies and industries.
- ✓ Consultants typically complete projects faster and at a lower cost compared to “in house” efforts.
- ✓ Consultants will commit to completion in a specific amount of time and/or by a specific date. This avoids “resource availability” problems that typically cause delayed or incomplete implementation.
- ✓ Consultants are catalysts for change. They avoid “that’s not the way we do it here” conflict.
- ✓ Consultants build teamwork and generate consensus for change. This increases the probability that the changes will become permanent.
- ✓ Extensive experience, skills, and training allow consultants to complete projects quickly with little time wasted on “the learning curve”.
- ✓ Consultants provide impartial analysis and recommendations.

Typical questions. . . with facts you may not have considered.

We already know the problem and the solution. Why add more expense?

If the first statement is true then there must be something keeping you from taking action. Incomplete skills? Not enough information? Too little time? Lack of focus?

If it were easy you would have already done it. The typical problem is that no one has the time or skills to get it done. Consultants have the necessary skills and will commit to a project’s completion in a specific amount of time and/or by a specific date. Extensive experience, skills, and training allow consultants to complete projects quickly with little time wasted on “the learning curve”. Likewise, consultants can stay focused on getting the project done. The net result is that when consultants are involved in a project it typically gets done more quickly and at a lower cost than by using company employees.

Using consultants also lowers the risk of project failure due to poor design or implementation. In-house software implementations often fail because the new software is only used to automate inadequate business processes.

Senior Management won't fund consulting. We can't afford it.

The old phrase "it takes money to make money" applies here. Getting funding is rarely the problem. Owners, shareholders and managers will gladly fund projects that provide a reasonable ROI (Return on Investment). Managers usually want lower cost, higher productivity, greater output and higher operating profit. Any project that positively impacts these factors will earn management's time and consideration. Make a good business case and funds will become available.

Ask a potential consultant how to get funding. He has dealt with this issue many times and may offer you some new ideas.

The phrase "we can't afford it" is a direct indication that a company needs improvement. Whether a company is highly profitable or just break-even; consulting is usually a good investment. Spending resources on consulting is similar to investing in research and development. Every company needs a steady stream of new ideas.

Politics drives decision-making here. How can consultants be effective?

Consultants are outsiders. They provide impartial analysis and recommendations. Consultants' recommendations are taken seriously. Consultants remain politically neutral. A consultant's job is to complete the project scope on time and on budget while delivering consistent and continuing value to the client.

Our people won't change. Many of them are going to retire in a few years. Why bother?

Companies with this culture are at a high risk of catastrophic failure. "Grow or die" is a time-tested business concept. Each retiree's experience, skills and know-how will be lost if they are not documented. Things will change – for the worse.

"Change management" is a learned skill. Consultants are catalysts for change. They know how to make it happen. Likewise, they know how to keep changes in place. It's human nature to prefer to continue to "do it the way we've always done it". Likewise, most people will choose easy and pleasant tasks rather than the most important or urgent tasks. A formal change management strategy is often needed to convince people to willingly change their behavior.

Our people have been “doing their best” for years. What can a consultant tell them that they don’t already know? Our employees know our plant/office/process better than any consultant will ever know.

Most employees are doing the best they know how. The problem is that they don’t know what they don’t know. Simple changes they hadn’t considered are usually available to make their jobs easier and safer.

Most consultants have seen “once in a lifetime” problems many times. Their advice is based on experience gained from many companies and industries. A typical employee has only worked at a few companies or jobs

We are already working long hours. Who’s got time to “baby sit” a consultant?

Getting more done with fewer people is a “standard operating procedure” at most companies. Consultants typically produce significant results with only a minimal loss of company time and productivity. Consultants get the information they need by using available flow-charts, diagrams, manuals, process documents, production/management reports and queries against company databases. They talk with people to learn where they should look for information. Likewise, they use people to confirm that the information they gather is relevant, reliable and valid to the project. Most projects free-up more time than they use – by producing immediate increases in labor productivity and work process effectiveness.

Consultants will only tell us what we already know.

It’s true that consultants often gather data and confirm that the information is correct. More importantly; consultants analyze what the information means and make recommendations based on that analysis. Likewise, it’s prudent to get a second opinion before making an important decision. Avoiding mistakes and limiting risk can be worth a lot more than the cost of a consultant.