

## Top 5 Tips when engaging Management Consultants

Engaging an external Management Consultants can bring significant benefits to individuals, management and the business overall, however it comes also with risks, the main one being Return on Investment (ROI). Management Consultants come in all sorts of flavours and sizes , so it's important that you are clear on your selection criteria and process. Here are some tips.

### **Be clear on why external help is needed – compelling reason**

There are many reasons why you might want external help , but there are also scenarios where it's inappropriate to seek external management consultants support. Some valid reasons are:-

1. The expertise and experience does not exist internally but is needed for a short period or periodically once off or until the expertise and experience is built up or acquired on a permanent basis. **(Advisory)**
2. A problem or opportunity would benefit from independent, objective expertise to facilitate our internal action plan and create momentum in the business/organisation. **(Facilitation &/or Benchmarking)**
3. There is a short to medium term capacity issue, where we need capability (Competence & capacity), this could be an interim executive or subject matter expert who takes on operational responsibilities. **(Operational)**
4. From time to time we need to have access to a range of skills for **(Advisory, Independence, Facilitation, Benchmarking or Capacity)** reasons.

### **Secure consensus from key stakeholders on the requirement and plan - Documented Specification**

In order to ensure a successful ROI and outcome from engaging management consultants , it's important that key stakeholders in the business understand and support the engagement and other stakeholders are aware of the engagement and the benefits of the engagement.

1. Clear problem/opportunity statement **(Statement)**
2. Definition of deliverables/outcomes, approach and milestones **(Assignment Brief)**
3. Organisation &/or person specification **(Chemistry-Fit)**
4. Roles & Responsibilities of other stakeholders in the assignment **(Alignment)**
5. Ensure someone internally owns the success of the engagement **(Sponsor)**

### **Secure the right person(s) & Organisation – Selection process**

The efficiency and effectiveness of management consultants are maximised when there is a strong fit between the two parties as regards matching the solution to the problem/opportunity. It's just as important as hiring a new employee or manager. This is a selection process and even if there is a previous relationship and experience , it's always important to ensure the best decision is made. Here are some guides:-

1. Produce a formal or informal Invitation to Tender and related selection process **(Create options)**
2. Agree the key selection criteria and create a ratings and weightings matrix with key stakeholder input (those involved in the selection process) **(Clear criteria)**

3. Ensure you physically meet the nominated management consultants (**Personal Chemistry**)
4. Do not hide anything from candidates and avoid creating a bias if there is an objective , independent opinion required (**Start on open and honest agenda**)
5. Confirm the candidates approach, plan, references and experience related to the engagement (**Credentials verified**)

### **Implement engagement/assignment with flexibility - Execution**

This is about having good project management with flexibility that enables you to really avail of the external expertise and advice you are engaging. Both parties will and should be learning therefore the ability to adapt is critical especially once the management consultants have completed a familiarisation process.

1. Put in place an effective contract and schedule (**Framework for goals and outcomes**)
2. Allow for management consultant to produce a statement of work stakeholders can approve (**Informed Plan & Strategy**)
3. Often change is required at an individual, group, unit or overall business as a result of engaging management consultants (**Recognise change management strategy & Plan**)
4. Regular progress and KPI review (**Hold all stakeholders accountable for their deliverables**)
5. Confirm interim and full completion with facts and with stakeholders (**Completion**)

### **Continuity - Impact**

Frequently momentum and focus are lost when the formal engagement with the management consultants ends , everyone goes back to the day job or reverts to the previous norm. So as part of the justification and the plan for ROI on investment with external management consultants the commitment must be made to institutionalising any improvements and changes , and to optimising the measured outcomes over the medium to long term.

1. The project remains live and teams/sponsors held accountable for the outcomes until achieved and/or exceeded and it's a way of life (**Project Completion**)
2. Ensure stakeholders are recognised formally & informally during appraisals and reviews (**Recognition**)
3. Formal project ROI Review reported to stakeholders (**Project Review**)
4. Post engagement audit and report to board by management consultants (**Momentum**)