

# Guiding Through Uncertain Times – The Role Of An Effective Management Consultant

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Times are tough, and with everyone watching the bottom line, the value and role of external consultancies are quite rightly being brought into question. However, companies who select the right type of **management consultancy** for their business can reap great rewards in both the short and long term.

In today's competitive climate, with businesses trying to find a competitive edge, **consultants** can play a key role, adding great value to organisations by analysing market, organisational, competitor, financial and other data to help identify a competitive advantage.

They can also offer considerable value relative to things like organisational design and introducing benchmarked processes and systems, to create a more robust operation.

However, in addition to the data-gathering and analysis, smart companies are looking at the wider role and value **consultants** can add to an organisation. Truly **independent consultants** who have developed a trusted advisor status may be among the very few who can confront senior executives with some home truths and give them insights into where in their business the real challenges lie. The facilitation skills from an experienced and **credible consultant** are equally important as the ability to engage people, frame discussions, referee disputes and distil them to their essence to evoke positive intent is key for any business to effectively move forward.

**Experienced consultants** also challenge the 'assumptions' which organisations think are true. The fact that **consultants** do not know the conventional wisdom of a company or industry, allows them to ask impertinent questions, to challenge assumptions, and repeatedly ask, questions that would simply never occur to people within the industry?

Another key value some **external consultants** provide is becoming a catalyst for 'adaptive' change. All change has a technical aspect for example in the FMCG industry creating consumer-relevant product mixes, creating the right advertising, getting it to market, managing costs etc. However, if an organisation is doing this process ineffectively, then this may be more of an 'adaptive' issue than a technical issue. In other words the process may

be fine the way it is applied is the real issue. This is where **external consultants** really earn their corn.

Finally, all senior leaders need a confidential sounding board. Senior leaders often can't confess their doubts or uncertainties very readily, as to do so with their board, peers or direct reports, they fear could impact on their overall credibility as a leader. So, having a confidante whose agenda is their own success (this is ultimately how a consultant should be assessed - supporting the legitimate success of their clients), someone with whom they can vent, try out ideas, get a sanity check, can be a huge benefit.

While organisations maybe looking at the cost of their professional support the value of their **consultants** during these times is the key. A **high quality, experienced consultant** can deliver real value in these current times, and give hope to a brighter future.

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