



## The Role of a Consultant by Chanon Collins

A consultant – one who gives professional advice or services. The role of a consultant has had a rather nebulous past – one in which positive and negative connotations have been attached. Granted, there are exceptional consultants and mediocre ones as is with any profession. Your goal as a business owner striving to improve your company is to select a consultant who will serve your needs specifically.

Some consulting firms provide canned, generic business plans which tout numerous ways to improve your business. These plans are such that you could place them in any company and glean a few bits of business advice. These plans are usually quite costly and offer little to no specific assistance for your organization.

Business owners need to know that their consultant has their best interests in mind. As you begin your search for a business consultant, take a moment to establish your selection criteria. Remember that your consultant will be examining every single aspect of your business. Your greatest concern should be trust. Take a moment to examine the professionals in your life that you trust – your health is entrusted to your physician, your legal affairs are entrusted to your attorney, and your business activities are entrusted to your accountant. When trust is the greatest variable in your equation for selecting a consultant for your business, look to those who presently hold your business activities in confidence – your accountant. Accountants serve as excellent business consultants for numerous reasons. The most prevailing attribute rests in the accountants' comprehensive knowledge of your business pursuits. Accountants have the education and experience necessary to examine the financial aspects of your business to ensure its success.

While most accountants function on a purely reactive level, there are those who have sought training and education in serving as business consultants. These accountants have chosen to take a proactive presence in the organizations of their clients. Accountants trained in the avenues of business consulting offer assistance with vision and mission developments, team training, benchmarking, and strategic marketing, in addition to financial planning and advising.

Not all accountants are comfortable serving as business advisors for their clients. It is the traditional stereotype of the accountant wearing a green eyeshade and counting beans that has marked this profession. When seeking a

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business consultant, question your accountant on his/her professional vision and mission – is he or she one who has recognized the proactive ability of an accountant to analyze the activities of a business to ensure success or is this person mainly concerned with compliance?

Do not be afraid to ask the burning questions of your business consultant. You must forge a long-lasting partnership with your consultant. Accounting firms world-wide are developing divisions for business consulting. The accounting firm of Allen Pritchett & Bassett, LLP has created a Management Advisory Service Division geared toward business consulting and valuations. The team members of this division are devoted to empowering their clients to build extraordinary businesses, create a secure future, and improve their quality of life.

It is essential that you select a consultant who will provide you and your organization with sound business advice in a palatable manner. You should always remember that you are in control of the destiny of your business and that your accountant has your best interests at hand, so each bit of advice should be weighed carefully. When accepting advice, keep Samuel Taylor Coleridge's thought in mind – "Advice is like snow; the softer it falls the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind."

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