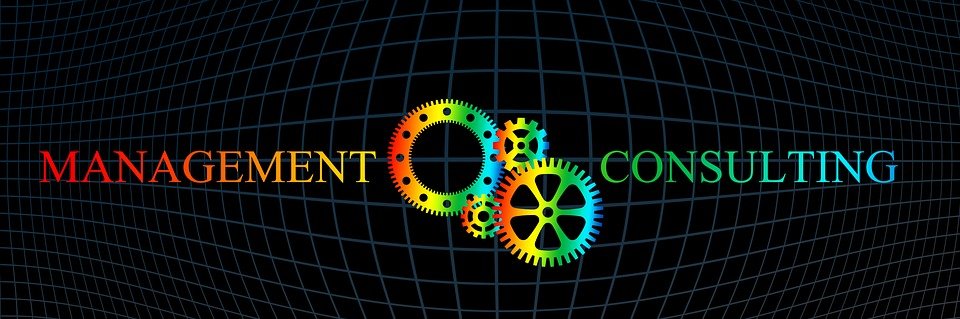
**MANAGEMENT AND CONSULTING**

Name of Student

Institutional Affiliations

Date

**Five Great Stages of a Consulting Engagement Process**



Are you new to the consulting industry? Have you been looking for more information concerning the process of consulting engagement? You don’t need to worry. You have come to the right place at the right time since we have all the answers that you need. Therefore, consulting can be described as a business practice that involves providing advice to clients at a proposed fee with the aim of solving a given problem within a specific area of business (Elwyn et al., 2017). This article examines all the five consulting engagement processes that you should know and why you should know them.

A consulting firm performs the following activities;

* Maintains constant contact with the existing clients to be able to uncover new opportunities
* Conducts email campaigns
* Performs a competitive analysis
* Corporate branding
* Carries out seminars that are attended by the prospects and clients
* Performs advertising
* Outreach on social media
* Creates website content

Here are the five great stages of a consulting engagement process that you should place at your fingertips.

1. **Commence**



This is the first stage of a consulting engagement process. This stage deals with the first contact with the client concerning a particular project. If you are an independent individual, you will be meeting directly with a potential client, and if you happen to work through a recruiter, an interview process will be held. Some of the important events that in this stage include the following;

* Arranging for the first meeting
* Identifying and examining the problem
* An evaluation to determine if you are the right consultant for the job
* Listing down the expectations of the client
* Being specific towards the expectations that you have
* Trying to figure out how to start off

Setting up the first meeting helps both the client and the consulting firm get to know each other and at least have an overview of the nature of the business they have to participate in. Identifying and examining the problem requires consulting support (Weiss & Peters, 2018). Through the continuous process of having the conversation and the improvement efforts, clients can identify the problems and issues they face, and some of them require external support. The consulting firm helps the client to find and solve the underlying problems.

Based on the issues identified, you should be able to evaluate yourself to determine whether you are the most effective and efficient consulting firm to solve the problems identified and presented by the client. After that, you should then list down all the expectations that the client has from you. For example, the client might expect maximum cooperation and effective solutions to their organizational challenges. You, as the consultant, should then be specific to the client of what expectations you want from them. The stage closes when the client and the consulting firm tries to figure out how to start off.

1. **Collect**



This is the second stage that involves the collection and diagnosis of data. The consultants need to identify and come up with their problems. This is a phase whereby you, as the consulting firm, adds more value to the process (Weiss & Peters, 2018). You should be able to know the following things;

* Who is going to be involved in defining the problem
* The type of methods that will be used
* The kind of data that should be collected
* How long the process of data collection will take place.

When it comes to the client, after having identified the problem, the client also begins to collect information about the consulting firm that can help solve the identified problem. At this stage, all the desires of both the client, consulting firm and the consultant align. The focus of the client is shifted towards analyzing the purpose and the problem which was identified. It is at this particular stage that the cooperation between the client and the consultant blooms (Elwyn et al., 2017).

On the other hand, the consultant has to find out about the performance patterns of the organization and also perform an assessment of the requirements and the relevant resources which are related to the transformation of the business that is to be carried out. The collection of data at this stage is a primary activity because it relates to the quality of the prospective solutions. The consultant payment must be cleared to avoid any delays and any kinds of disputes that may arise (Elwyn et al., 2017). If you are running through an agency, then there are high chances that you will be hired by the client.

1. **Consider**



This is the third stage. At this stage, the consultant must consider a number of factors before taking any action. The consultant must decide on how to involve the client in the process of information analysis and evaluation. You need to report all of your findings from stage two to take the mountain of information collected and size it down so that it can be effectively and efficiently managed and understood properly.

The consultant should be prepared to face any form of resistance when providing feedback to the organization. This is because the more a project is a high profile, the more resistance you are likely to face. Therefore, you as the consultant must handle the resistance before making any effective and required decision is made concerning the proceedings (Gunter & Mills, 2017). Other people also call this phase a planning stage since it involves setting the project goals and objectives and, after that selecting the best steps for action. Below are some of the events which have been narrowed down and that take place in this particular stage;

* Finding the solution to the problem
* Critical thinking while determining feasible alternatives
* Choosing from a wide range of techniques

Finding the solution to the problem may involve focusing on one or many alternative solutions, evaluating these alternatives, elaborating a plan to implement the changes, and then presenting the proposals to the client for a decision to be made. The consultant can decide to choose from a variety of techniques in the event that the client takes part in this stage (Weiss & Peters, 2018). The stage requires the consultant to be imaginative and creative and systematically identify and evaluate feasible alternative solutions. The approach can also be used to eliminate the proposals that may result in unnecessary changes and making the best decision on what solution should be adopted. Therefore, the vital aspect in this stage is to come up with effective strategies and tactics that will be used towards implementing the changes, especially when dealing with problems related to human nature and can be anticipated, be overcome, and gain support for a necessary change.

1. **Create**



Here, the consultant creates the most effective and efficient solutions to deliver to the client. The stage provides a test for the relevance and feasibility of the proposals or solutions developed by the consultant in collaboration with the client. The changes that had been proposed earlier on start to turn into reality. Things start to happen either as planned or they happen differently. In this particular stage, some of the problems which had not been identified or foreseen earlier may arise, and also, false errors and assumptions may be uncovered. Also, the resistance to change may be somehow different as compared to other states, such as collecting and considering stages. There may also be the need for the initial design and the action strategy to be corrected. The implementation process may differ based on the plan since it is impossible to foresee every detail of the relationship; therefore, monitoring and managing the implementation process is critical. This may also be why professional consultants choose to be associated with the implementation changes that they have helped identify and plan (Weiss & Peters, 2018). Notably, this is a critical phase where there has been many misunderstandings between the consultant and the client. Many consulting assignments end when a report with action proposals is transmitted before the execution process begins.

On normal occasions, not more than 30%-50% of the consulting assignments involve the execution process. If the client can handle any stage of the change process individually and will take care of all the precautions, then, therefore, there is no reason why the client should keep on using the consultant (Gunter & Mills, 2017). The consultant may opt-out as early as after the data collection stage. However, the decision concerning the assignment termination after the data collection stage or the considering stage often fails to reflect the assessment of the client about his capabilities and how he is determined to execute the proposals without seeking external help from the consultant.

Instead, it mirrors a huge misconception or a fact of consulting according to which consultants do not need to achieve more than getting their reports and proposals being accepted by the clients. At some point, some of the clients may choose it since they do not have a deeper understanding of how an excellent report may fail to guarantee them that a new scheme will actually work out and the foreseen results will come out (Elwyn et al., 2017). On the other hand, other clients may seem to be happy since their main goal was to get a report but not the change.

1. **Counsel and Consult**



This is the last stage where the services have been rendered, or the client has given the solution. Both the client and the consultant play an important role in ensuring the success of each party. The client should review the results and whether the assigned task has been completed as per the expectations, the assignment requires more effort, or any subsequent stage needs to be reviewed. Therefore, this means that the client has to consult again and be counseled by the consultant on what needs to be done based on the reviews of the client.

The client needs to closely monitor the delivered solution continuously, specifically during the issuing of the warranty period that the consultant can be asked to return to make any changes or provide further counseling concerning the delivered solution without any cost to be incurred. Also, the client has to decide whether the consulting engagement process needs to be renewed for another set period or terminate the engagement and move on.

The consultant or the consulting firm must perform a formal review of the deliverables to ensure that the client is satisfied. The formal review must be put in writing for confirmation purposes. If the client has not been satisfied with the services or solution provided, the consultants need to agree with the client on what steps should be taken to fulfill the consulting engagement as per the client’s expectations. The consultant needs to set up a meeting with the client to assess the performance of the consultant even when the process has been extended. The feedback provided by the client is vital since it will be used to improve the general performance on future engagements with other clients.

**Bottom Line**

You need to have a great, deeper, and clear understanding of the consulting engagement process stages since it will make it easier for you to know how you should organize and deliver your organizational assignments, be able to determine who is responsible for what task, identify and evaluate the problems that are hindering your organizational success and find effective and efficient solutions to the recurring problems (Gunter & Mills, 2017). Other than that, the information acquired will help you develop a list of all the tasks that you must complete and start assigning the aspects of the given project. You do not need to miss out on the important information that will help you grow in a better way and become a better person. We are here for you. You only need to learn about the five great stages of a consulting engagement process that will help you solve your problem.

**References**

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