
Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

By Mary Case and Will Phillips¹

The nonprofit world has seen its share of downsizing and outsourcing in recent years. Many of these displaced workers chose not to return to someone else's employ. The American Association of Museums 2003 annual report documented the scope of these phenomena: of individual members, five thousand sixteen are museum staff; two thousand one hundred seventy-two are independent professionals. Approaching half! These independent professionals fill all sorts of temporary staff roles. This technical leaflet provides a framework for independents to build a better consulting practice, whether you intend to create a post-retirement practice to keep a hand in, a mid-career shift of substance, or to develop work responsibly while looking for another full-time job.

For eighteen years, I, Mary Case, enjoyed a steadily increasing salary, with benefits, in the nonprofit world. The jobs included a set of admirable colleagues, alliance to mission, the efficiencies of routine and structure, challenging work, and readily supplied equipment and office space. Actually, I found myself having achieved well beyond my own imagination and highest expectations. The obvious question—what's next?—lived in my head for months.

I am a typical American type. I'm drawn to the next new thing, the next challenge. I love to work. I had skills, reputation, courage, curiosity and drive, but I was struggling with what to do next. My internal dialogue finally came to clarity in three points:

- Nonprofits, especially museums, were in my blood.
- Teaching and learning were central to my happiness.
- Fulltime employment meant I could work at the top of my form too infrequently. My time as an employee was often taken with duties I was competent to do, but that didn't hold much interest, let alone creativity or passion.

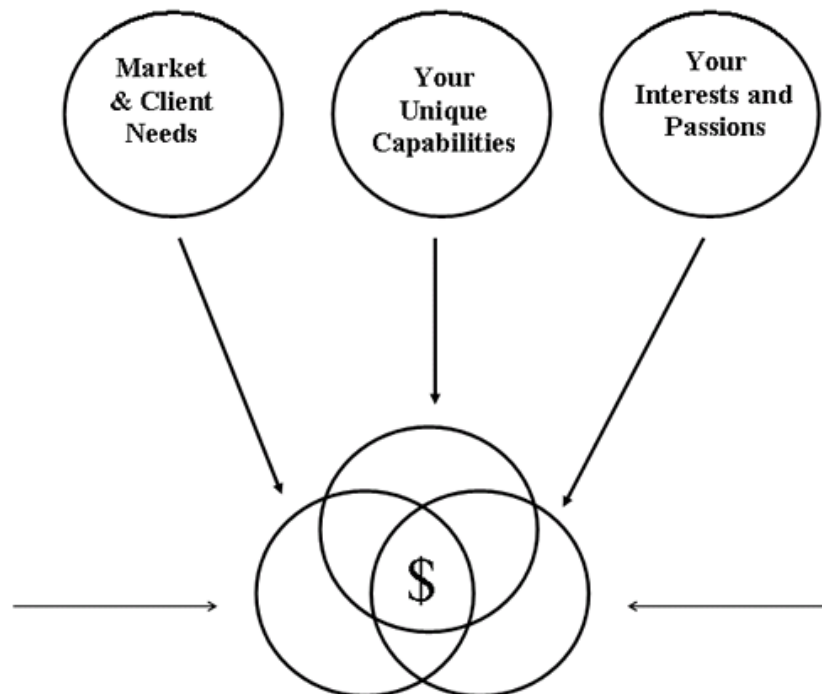
¹ *This article was published as a technical leaflet by the American Association of State and Local History in 2004. It owes its form and content to the "Successful Consulting" workshop Will Phillips has presented annually for the last six years at the American Association of Museums annual meeting and to four decades of consulting to business, government, and nonprofits. It also owes a great deal to Betsy Bowers, Anne Stark, David Parke, Frank Ancharski, Rena Zurofsky, Art Wolf, and Mona Hennessey who read an early draft and provided relevant insight, cogent suggestions, and encouragement.*

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Lesson One: If You Don't Know What to Do, Hook Up with Someone Who Might

During this time I was working with Will Phillips, eventually my partner, presenting a workshop called "Project Success Through Problem Solving." Watching him work opened the possibility of composing a similar life for myself. We remember the genesis of our consulting community, Qm2 differently: Will thinks it was my idea; I think it was his. Qm2 began as Quality Management for Quality Museums and it evolved into Qm2: Quality Management to A Higher Power.

Lesson Two: Moving from Employee to Consultant



Employees fill jobs, consultants fill needs.

Market Clients and Needs

Market misinformation leads the causes of new business failure, so plan on undertaking a rigorous search for the truth about your potential market and your own skills. Confidence that they need you requires data to help you define your market:

- Explore www.guidestar.com. This site provides information on nonprofits nationwide through their 1099 tax statements. This helps you identify potential nonprofit clients in your geographic region or in your disciplinary specialty.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

- Develop an applied research project that relates to your consulting interest. I decided that conducting staff and board retreats was something I could do. So I called up fifty museum directors in the Washington, DC area and asked them four questions about their use of retreats. I wrote a brief report and shared it with anyone who took the time to speak with me (www.qm2.org/mbriefs/48.html). This, of course, got my name in front of close to fifty museum directors, twice. It reminded them in a subtle way that I was looking for work and managing their retreats was something I could do.
- Have a face-to-face discussion with two dozen people who could potentially hire you. Develop a short list of questions that will help you explore the issues that your potential clients face. Knowing these issues will lead you to refine the services you offer.

I like lunch for this discussion, but you might prefer to meet people in their offices, or over coffee or drinks. Start with people who know and love you, to build courage and interview skills, but branch out to those who don't know you. This activity—the informational interview—is one that consultants do constantly so get good at it.

- Understand how people use consultants, what they pay for services, the pros and cons, and what might be offered that currently isn't. For example, if a consultant developed a policy manual, would the client want assistance in the implementation? If a consultant designed an exhibition, would research assistance also be desired? If a consultant studied the visitor experience, could they also train volunteers to implement the recommendations of the study?

To define your potential market you need to know:

- How big?
- Who and how many will likely hire you? What evidence do you have?
- What annual budget range do organizations need to have the capacity to hire you?
- Where are they? What is your desired geographic range?
- What is the mission area of your desired clients? Cultural organizations? Will you work for any nonprofit? Will you also work for businesses?
- What do your potential clients need?
- What opportunities and threats face the client?
- What are they now paying for consultants?
- What other consultants or firms can you team with, to strengthen your services, or to support your own learning.
- How will you test your data?

Your Unique Capabilities

To build a successful consulting practice you need proficiency and the ability to take pleasure in technical competence, human interaction, problem solving, thinking on your

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

feet, refer-ability, and letting go of old ideas. Some combination of these qualities coupled with your experience and skills constitute your own unique capabilities.

Technical Competence

As a consultant, you need the highest level of technical expertise within your consulting area: planning, case management, research, or education. Your computer technology needs to be fast and efficient. Plan on buying a new computer every few years. If you travel, plan on dropping your laptop, spilling coffee in the keyboard, and leaving behind your power cords, cell phone, and kit bag at least once a year. Get an insurance rider that will cover the Murphy's Law episodes, which inevitably effect your precious equipment. You'll be working without the support of an IT department in your organization. Where will you turn for help when technical difficulties impede productivity?

How comprehensive are your technical skills?

- Computer.
- Telephone and teleconferencing capabilities.
- Skill within your discipline: case management, collections management, design, research, fund raising, conservation, training, education, etc.

How do you judge and demonstrate your level of technical competence?

- Have you kept up-to-date with technical advances, theory and professional practice?
- Do you subscribe to trade magazines?
- Have you published in your field?
- Have you received awards or recognition in your field?
- Are you a member or an officer of your professional association?
- Have you been active in standards development or peer review activities?
- Do you have the right degrees and professional credentials?

Exercise:

Record your areas of technical competence. Describe how these benefit a potential client.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Human Interaction

Technical skills alone suffice for hermits. People occupy the workplace. Technical virtuosity becomes value when it connects with people, when you train others or transfer skills, and when you build commitment to act among staff, volunteers, and board.

Learning and Leadership Style

Understanding your working style contributes to understanding how you might cope with the consulting life. Even if you've had a battery of tests earlier in your career, it pays during a transition to re-examine your natural style of human interaction, which we think of as your learning or leadership style. According to Dr. Ichak Adizes' pioneering research beginning in the 1970s, four management functions exist in every organization and in every life. Consider the following to help understand your own strengths and how you may want to work with client organizations:

To **produce results (P)** the organization requires and to satisfy needs. This role focuses on what you as the consultant and the organization you serve do to effectively fulfill those needs.

Examples: to research, teach, or develop the customer experience.

Requires: knowledge of what needs to be done, persistence and drive to deliver.

To **administer (A)**, establish and maintain systems that produce results focusing on how to do things efficiently.

Examples: systems to coordinate schedules, implement policies, follow up with donors, control costs, hire staff, recruit board, manage collections, and analyze financial data.

Requires: knowledge of the systems and plan, attention to detail, and the willingness to take corrective action.

To **entrepreneur change (E)** is to adapt to new opportunities and threats, to focus on becoming and remain effective (P) and efficient (A).

Examples: to perceive trends, see new ways to do things and new things to do.

Requires: creativity, courage, and willingness to take risks.

To **integrate (I)** is to connect people to their work (P), to systems (A), to change (E), and to each other (I); to move the organization from mechanistic to organic thinking and operating; to synergistically interconnect internal stakeholders and building energy from diversity.

Examples: to develop new people, build teams, derive consensus and shared vision

Requires: sensitivity to people, moods, climate, culture group processes and a positive view of human nature as fundamentally rational, creative, cooperative, and energetic.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

To gauge your own learning and leadership style in some detail, refer to Qm2's management style assessment at: www.qm2.org/mbriefs/86.html. This will help you to understand better what you bring to the table when you present yourself to potential clients.

Problem Solving

The core of the vast majority of consulting practice is problem solving. In her groundbreaking work about language, culture, and meaning, in particular the differences between men and woman, Deborah Tannen asserts that men more naturally fall into a problem-solving mode when confronted with a problem. Women, when confronted with the same problem, may respond quite differently. Often, when a woman presents a problem, she wants first to have someone listen. A good consultant develops skills to determine when to listen and receive information, and a vast repertoire of questions that encourage dialogue, and she develops the skill to know when to move from information gathering to problem solving.

Here we have the critical consulting intersection: human interaction, problem solving, and thinking on your feet.

Exercise:

Note five times in your career when you've been successful at solving problems. Record your role. Was it as a producer, administrator, entrepreneur, or integrator?

	<i>PAEI Style</i>
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____

Refer-Ability

Virtually all independent consulting comes because someone, pleased with the results of your work, has referred you and rarely via ads, directories, or fancy brochures. Unless you've got extra money to spend, build your refer-ability. Understand the following about yourself and increase your percentages.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

- I show up on time _____ percent of the time.
- I deliver value _____ percent of the time.
- I deliver value on time _____ percent of the time.
- I do what I say _____ percent of the time.
- I finish what I start _____ percent of the time.
- I say please and thank you _____ percent of the time.

Field knowledge represents only part of your experience. Consultants get hired when someone wants to work with you. Refer-ability makes the difference.

Letting Go

It seems odd, to me, to include “letting go” among the skills that consultants need. Here’s what I mean. You’ll spend a week working on a proposal and learn that the client used the proposal as a plan for in-house work instead. Fume for an hour or two and then let it go. You’re sure, after conversations with your client, that a new piece of business will start on the first of the month. It won’t, and if you spend time worrying about it, you won’t be able to concentrate on the work you do have. Let it go.

You will make a mistake—guaranteed! You may foolishly gossip about a client (forgetting for a moment that you no longer work inside the nonprofit world, which operates on gossip and innuendo) and it gets back to the client. Grovel, apologize, and let it go. You send an early draft version of a report when you meant to send the final. You miss a meeting or double book yourself. Someone you perceived as a valued colleague won’t return your phone call. You are sure you are the person for a job; in the bag you think. Wrong. Let it go.

Once or twice (you won’t let it happen more) you’ll realize that the client really wants you to confirm his opinion and isn’t interested in new information or alternative viewpoints. Unless you agree with him, you can’t do your work with integrity. Do what you can and get out. Let it go.

Time is the precious thing. Don’t use it to worry about mistakes, perceived slights, or your own shortcomings. Don’t spend energy on something you can’t do anything about.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

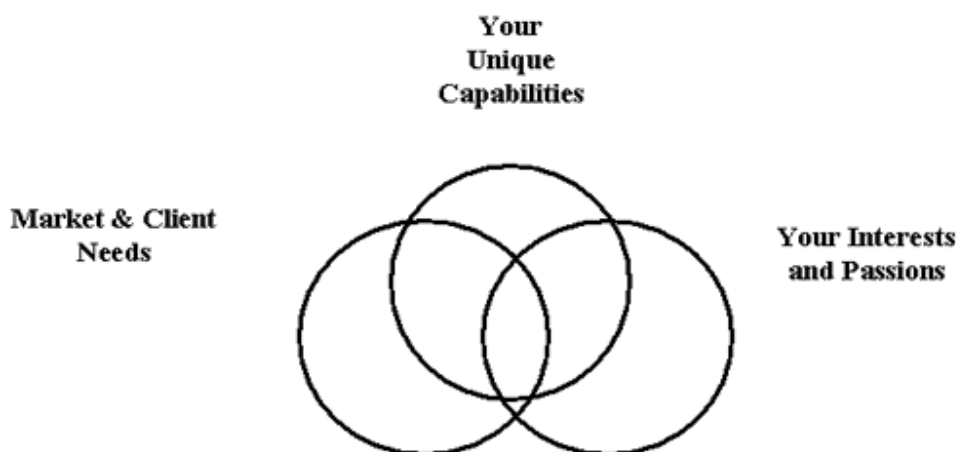
Exercise:

What unique combination of learning and leadership style, technical competence, problem solving skill, refer-ability, field experience and qualifications do you have?

Your Interests and Passions

Here's the fine point. If you are starting in consulting, or trying to improve a practice, why not build something you care about? What interests you? Where do your passions lie? Your passion, coupled with your unique abilities and client needs could provide a living. I, for example, am passionate about reading (learning), the health and well being of my family, including my dogs; connecting people, museums, art, American history, and the nonprofit sector in the American democracy. No one will pay me to play with my dogs, but they might support my energy applied to the nonprofit sector or to connecting people.

The trick is to connect my skills and passions with client needs. If you work toward creating that connection—the sweet spot of all work—you are on your way toward creating a rigorous vision for your independent work.



Now, put all this together. Make a move toward consulting by answering the questions below. Remember lesson one. Enlist your friends, family, even potential clients, to help form and test your ideas.

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The final element in an effective vision, or picture, of your business is connecting your passionate capabilities and your market's needs with an economic driver. For example, my passionate capability for facilitating planning retreats overlaps with market needs. People will pay me to do what I love!

What spells success for you now? It will be different at different stages of your life. Success for me now equals work that leaves a legacy and benefits others by helping them achieve their goals through learning and teaching. What does success mean for you now?

Developing A Rigorous Vision

The power of your **vision** comes from discovery, not creation. It comes from within and, perhaps surprisingly, it is not strategic. Realizing your vision comes from the authenticity, discipline, and commitment with which you pursue your work. Examples of vision include:

- A world where no one goes to bed hungry.
- A community where children ask for more art, and get it.
- A nonprofit arena where board and staff understand and respect one another.
- A museum that has focus enough to balance collections care, scholarship, educational programs, and the visitor experience.

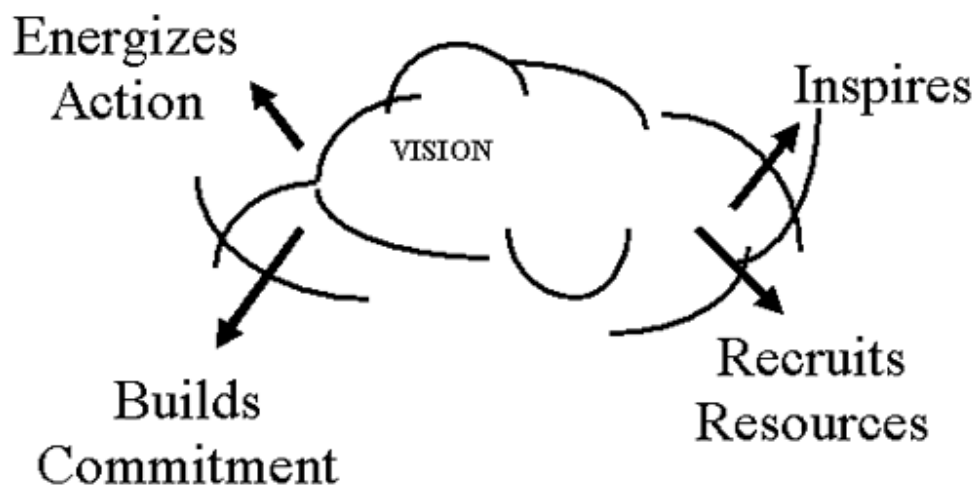
What is your vision?

What is your mission?

Creating your mission requires focus, strategy, and understanding your competitive distinctiveness. Put another way, what will you offer to your clients, how will you achieve the work, and what makes you special, or distinct, from your competition? Focus, strategy, and competitive distinctiveness are fundamental to business; to any new product.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

- Describe your professional mission (i.e., supporting men and women as they recover from drug addiction; creating community as a museum educator; preserving the built environment as a historic architect). You must go beyond the basic job description or title, to mine your mission.
- Identify core values with enduring qualities: not what I should be, but who I am. Ask your friends and family to verify.
- What is your BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal)? A BHAG is energizing, worthwhile, significant, your stretch goal. If money were no object and I couldn't fail, I would: _____
- Finally, put it all together into a well-articulated paragraph, painting a verbal picture of your consultant practice far into the future. When you are highly successful, how will you be working, with whom, and why? Who are you serving? What needs are you addressing? What capacities are you using? What overall purpose are you pursuing? What results have you achieved? How does it feel?



Exercise:

Record your potential clients using your vision and mission as filters. Undisciplined distinction between acceptable and desirable clients undermines the improvement of your business, because once you get underway, you may find yourself too busy with acceptable clients to develop desirable ones.

- Who are your desirable clients?
- Who are acceptable clients?
- Who are your unacceptable clients?

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Lesson Three: Developing a Business Plan and Understanding the Numbers

Business planning, in the sense we use the term here, will prove easier than you think, even if you don't regularly deal with numbers. Don't complicate it. If you've gotten far enough to be mostly satisfied with your vision, values, mission, BHAG, and potential client base you are more than halfway there. The financial picture will become simplicity itself. Below are several forms and formula to use as rules of thumb to test your business model and calculate how much consulting you'll need to make a go of it. Once you fill them in, you will know how many days you need to sell and what to charge.

You will need to massage your numbers, play with the formulas and assumptions until you believe what you have on paper, until the formulas and assumptions hang together. Eventually, a sustainable business plan will emerge.

In order to maintain your buying power in a home-based business, you need to bill at least twice your last salary. In other words, if you were making \$50,000 you'll need to bill \$100,000. We outline below some basic financial realities of independent work. Consider one plausible outline for a consulting week:

- One day with a client;
- One day for travel to and from client;
- One day for preparation, including calls with client, assembling materials, packing, travel arrangements, etc.;
- One day for follow up, including report preparation, filing, unpacking, invoicing, collecting, and other administrative duties;
- Half-day research and development, reading professional journals and keeping up with Web sites, attending association meetings, and personal training.
- Half-day of marketing and sales, including writing articles and proposals, marketing, and sales calls

This equals a workweek, only one day (twenty percent) paid by the client. What do you need to charge if you only bill fifty days a year?

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Exercise:

How does the outline above meet your consulting reality?

Time

- _____ With client.
- _____ Travel to and from client.
- _____ Preparation, including calls with client, assembling materials, packing, and travel arrangements.
- _____ Follow up, report preparation, filing, unpacking, invoicing, collecting, and other administrative duties.
- _____ Research and development, reading professional journals and keeping up with Web sites, attending association meetings, and personal training.
- _____ Marketing and sales, including writing articles and proposals, marketing, and sales calls.

What percent of your time does the client pay for? How many paid days do you need to sell each year? You can't answer this question unless you know how much you want to earn!

Of course, variables in these calculations include time and money. How many days will you work? Working six days a week means having more days to earn. Charging more has an inverse effect on days required to meet your income goals.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

A Budget for Independent Consulting

Gross annual income \$ _____

EXPENSES:

*Travel _____

*Materials preparation _____

*Materials reproduction _____

Communication:

Phone _____

Internet Access _____

Website _____

*Express mail _____

*Postage _____

*possibly reimbursable by clients

Office:

Site _____

Utilities _____

Furnishings _____

Office Supplies _____

Copier _____

Fax machine _____

Printer _____

Computer Hardware _____

Computer Software _____

Computer Training _____

Professional Development: _____

Computer Repair and Help Services _____

Marketing: Brochures _____

Marketing: Business Cards _____

Marketing: Stationery _____

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Professional Development:

Memberships	_____
Subscriptions	_____
Fees	_____
Automobile	_____
Social Security Tax	_____
Federal Tax	_____
State Tax	_____
Local Business Tax/License	_____
Self Employment Tax	_____
Retirement	_____
Medical Insurance	_____
Life Insurance	_____
Disability Insurance (everybody recommends this. No one I know can afford it)	_____
Office Insurance	_____
Liability Insurance	_____
Total Expenses	_____

You live on what's left over!

Formula for consulting with desired clients:

- D = number of days per client per year
- N = number of clients per year _____
- R = Your daily rate \$

D x N x R = Your Gross Income \$ _____

Vision + Mission + Values + BHAG + D x N x R - Expenses = Income

My Formula: Billable days per month: _____

Daily rate: _____

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Confirm your daily rate by learning what potential clients already pay for the services you will offer. You do this by:

- Understanding the salary levels of people who do your kind of work.
- Understanding what consultants charge for the kind of work you want to do.
- Including questions of cost and budget in informational interviews.

Talking about cost might feel uncomfortable. Good consultants sometimes have to ask impertinent questions. Sometimes you have to be an insulant. Use your search for fee information as practice for asking difficult questions of your clients. Nonprofits work in the sunshine, so they will accommodate your questions about money.

What other consultants tell you may be misleading. Everyone who has been doing this for more than a minute has an idealized number in their head, a day or hourly rate, the amount for a full-blown strategic plan, the cost per image or per catalogue record, etc. They charge more or less than that ideal number, depending on how much work they currently have lined up, how interesting the project, how desirable the client.

Finally, one more useful exercise. You will probably have income from a variety of sources. That income will come in different size packets. It is useful to know how many clients (jobs) you ideally need in order to achieve your income goal.

For an income of \$100,000 annually, your client income spread might look like this:

1 client @	\$35,000	\$35,000
2 clients @	\$15,000	\$30,000
4 clients @	\$ 5,000	\$20,000
5 clients @	\$ 2,000	\$10,000
5 clients @	\$ 1,000	\$ 5,000
	Total:	\$100,000

What does your client income spread look like? What will you charge for which services?

Lesson Four: Understanding Your Legal Responsibilities and Tax Issues

You need to decide on the legal structure of your business and, at least at first, you will probably want help with your taxes. Legally, you can operate a sole proprietorship, a “C” corporation, an “S” corporation, or a limited liability company. You might even want to set up a nonprofit corporation. Starting a sole proprietorship is the easiest entry point.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Learning about the distinctions of business structure may strike fear into your entrepreneurial soul. Just do it.

It will take about twenty hours to learn enough to put some of your questions and concerns to rest and to create an intelligent agenda for meetings with an accountant, a lawyer, and a business planner, if you decide you need them. I got an accountant first, took a class at a woman’s business center two years into my practice called “Managing Your Own Business,” and so far I’ve stayed clear of the lawyers.

Lesson Five: Consulting Skills

Most consultants have strong technical skills and strong bias toward approach and solution. Too often consultants deliver their own perceptions of a solution, failing to sufficiently understand the situation and, ultimately, to meet client needs. To begin a consulting job, or even to propose one without conducting a diagnosis, constitutes malpractice. The client often fails at diagnostics. If they had it right, they probably wouldn’t be calling you. For example, the director suggests better teamwork as the solution to implementation issues the organization faces. Or they may say that communication needs improvement. Both may be true, but the solution to the problem may be structural, either in the hierarchical sense of the word or in an architectural sense. The organizational structure may contribute to the lack of teamwork or poor communication. The physical housing of staff and volunteers might be the problem. Instruction in teamwork or in how to communicate across organizational boundaries may serve to raise staff expectations only to have them dashed soon after.

You can begin to analyze your consulting relationships according to the issues noted in the graph below. Where do you want your practice to reside?

Consulting Relationship

Client Passive	Consultant and Client Interdependent	Consultant Passive
Consultant Decides	Consultant and Client Interdependent	Client Decides
Little open disagreement	Disagreement leads to learning and innovation	Little open disagreement
Client evaluates later	Ongoing mutual evaluation	Client may not share evaluation
No skill transfer	Skill transfer	No skill transfer
Organization’s Commitment low	Commitment High	Consultant’s commitment low

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Do you have solutions to deliver or do you solve problems?

What is the difference? How do others see your balance?

Conflict Style

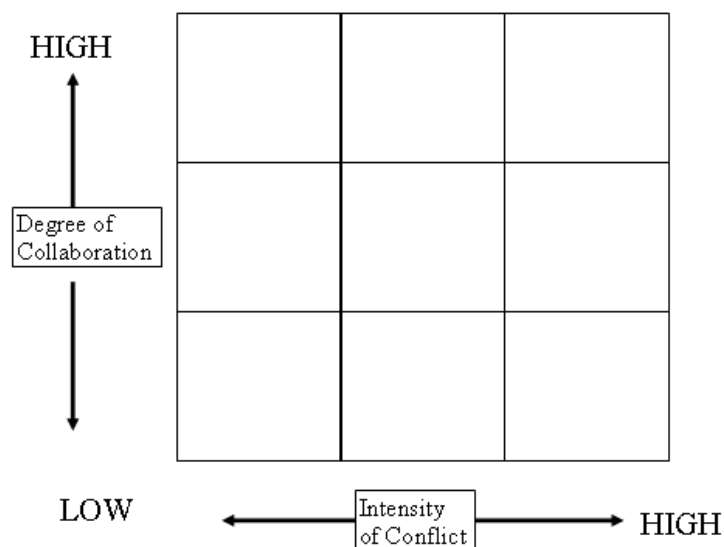
Many nonprofit employees, volunteers, and board members learn to operate within a hierarchy and acquiesce to it. They go along to get along. Bringing fresh ideas to the client constitutes one important consulting role—new ways of looking at situations, new ways to respond. This includes helping the client to see how they cause their own problems. You must be prepared to go against the tide and not flow with it.

You will also find that the client will:

- Require changes in the work.
- Inadequately think through all aspects and specifications of the work.
- Hire you to confirm his point of view.
- Tend to blame you for the shortfalls.

You must be insightful enough to notice these potential traps and brave enough to confront them. In short, the more comfort you take in nurturing productive conflict the more success you can predict.

Conflict Style



Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

Lesson Six: Proposals and Contracting

Improving the relationship between consultant and client underpins the contracting process. On the surface you describe the conditions of your engagement and the results you will deliver.

After a short conversation with a prospective client, a consultant will often hear, “send me a proposal.” Avoid this. The client may be uncomfortable sharing his concerns. The request for proposal substitutes for honesty. You probably don’t have enough information or enough commitment from the client. Their “send me a proposal,” is often a brush off and does nothing to improve your relationship. Dig deeper. Attempt to build mutual expectations. Be prepared to ask probing questions including:

- What has been your experience with consultants in the past?
- What concerns do you have about my skills? Qualifications? Style?
- Will you consider other consultants? Who? Why?

You might arrange another face-to-face meeting to outline the project, who will do what, and discuss a timetable, and budget. You can ask, “What is your budget?” It has been my experience that people will tell you.

You may also be asked to respond to formal Request for Proposals (RFPs). Personally, Qm2 consultants avoid this like the plague. Governments and other bureaucracies create RFPs to ensure accountability when using public money. This isn’t, per se, a bad thing, but it does nothing to build relationships. Often you can’t even talk to the person you will be working for. Frequently, RFPs also do a poor job of describing the conditions of engagement and the results you will deliver.

When I first started consulting, I didn’t have much else to do, so I did respond to RFPs. I could always tell that the client needed something different than he was asking for (after all I am an expert), so I responded to the RFP by offering what I knew the client needed, not what he asked for. Wrong. You never win RFPs that way. Moreover, independent consultants rarely win in the proposal writing process. Larger companies gear up with boilerplates to write proposals and almost always win the work.

Building an authentic relationship with your client leads to a contract. By the time you put something to paper, it codifies what you have already decided. Most of the time, after agreeing with the client that I am the candidate for the work, I record my understanding of our agreement.

This understanding may be a response to an RFP. It may be a letter of understanding, a contract, or an informal agreement, even an e-mail. This understanding codifies the scope of the project, who will perform it, assumptions that may alter the timing or scope,

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

deliverables, timing, fees, billing and payment schedule, cost estimates, and how revisions and alterations will be handled.

For me, this usually takes place in an e-mail; a formal contract isn't involved. If the scope of the work changes (and it frequently does), the relationship I've built allows me to dialogue with the client and agree on the change. It comes down to listening, integrity, and the courage to ask for honest feedback. We guarantee the work, so the client does not pay unless completely satisfied.

Exercise:

When you begin to build a relationship with your client, the issues may be tangled together and unclear. The contracting process gets the issues fully aired and on the table for everyone to see.

Issues to consider:

- Expected and unrealistic outcomes.
- Time frames.
- Resources (yours and theirs).
- Logistics and project administration.
- Responsibility: who will take it and for what?
- Intermediate measures of progress.
- Side effects, intended and not.
- Climate and organizational culture, including the qualities of openness, honesty, risk, and anxiety levels.
- Fees and expenses.
- Do you like one another?
- It is an iterative process. How will you stay current?

Objectives at the first meeting (in priority order):

1. A firm agreement including what, who, when, logistics, fees, and responsibilities.
2. A tentative agreement, with a follow up plan to confirm specifics.
3. A clear scope of unresolved specifics.
4. Understanding bad timing. The door remains open for a return and potential future contract.
5. Identifying the wrong match and low future potential. Do you know why?

Experienced consultants report that the first and subsequent meetings should:

- Empathically reflect strong feelings.
- Respect the client view and needs.
- Share your relevant experience.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

- Discuss failure and success.
- Explore the fit between the client need and your capabilities.
- Clarify the return on the client investment of time, risk, and money.

Successful consultants confirm the following risks with each new contact:

- Promising too much.
- Promising too soon.
- Failing to act on your uneasiness and doubts.
- Accepting the contact's diagnosis or definition of the problem.
- The contact may be window shopping.
- The contact may have no authority to act.
- The bidding, or RFP, process has been conducted for form only. The consultant is chosen before the RFP is released, but the release is done to accommodate the regulations.

In the end, you need the following:

- Commitment from the person with authority.
- Personal involvement with the person in authority.
- Commitment from a skilled internal coordinator.
- Clear budget and objectives.
- Mutual respect between the client and the consultant.
- Opportunity to diagnosis and commitment to evaluation.

Lesson Seven: Marketing and Sales

Early in my career, I noticed that creating a new marketing program was something recently hired museum directors often did with little ensuing results. A lot of money would be spent on a new logo, a new look; branding it came to be called. I missed the payoff.

When I started consulting, I spent lots of time and money creating a brochure with matching stationary and business cards. I also, from time-to-time, printed T-shirts with a Qm2 slogan, ordered cute little give-aways, like calculators etched with www.qm2.org. I've placed ads. None of this helped a client or ever got me work.

Marketing, from the independent consultant's point of view, means putting yourself face-to-face with people who might hire you. It means:

1. Returning to lesson two. It means understanding your skills and passions and matching those to needs of your ideal clients.
2. Establishing yourself as an legitimate authority.

Building a Successful Consulting Practice with Nonprofit Clients

3. Refer-Ability: a simple formula of showing up on time, delivering value, doing what you say you will, finishing what you start, and saying please and thank you.

You can extend your face-to-face meetings by continuing your own learning, by publishing, by developing a Web site, and by presenting at professional meetings.

You will need some basic written material:

- A paragraph describing yourself and your work.
- A one page biography.
- A one page resume.
- A curriculum vita.
- A growing list of clients.

But most of all you need lots of conversations that build lasting relationships. Build these with potential clients and with centers of influence (people who already have good relationships with potential clients, i.e., other consultants). Assertive marketing means leading your conversations toward two questions:

- With potential clients: Where do you need help?
- With current clients: Whom can you refer me to?

Lesson Eight: Consulting Sins

Over many years we've come to see the following as bad business practice, always leading to trouble for the consultant.

1. Delivering a cook book product.
2. Using the client's name or information without permission.
3. Over committing what you can deliver and when.
4. Criticizing a client to others.
5. Doing work the client could or should do.
6. Concealing commissions.
7. Focusing on activities instead of results.
8. Blaming the client for low performance.
9. Pleasing the client, but not doing the job right or not doing the right job.

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Since 1993, as founding director of Qm², Mary has consulted exclusively with boards and senior staff on leadership issues to improve decision making and strategic thinking initiatives.

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Qm²'s founder has 30 years of interdisciplinary, international management experience in what works and what does not work in making people and organizations effective.

Resources: General Consulting

Block, Peter. *Flawless Consulting*. Jossey-Bass, 2000. See particularly chapters on contracting and resistance.

Weis, Alan. *Getting Started in Consulting*. John Wiley & Sons, 2003.

www.ivillage.com.

www.qm2.org.

References: Human Interaction

Buckingham, Marcus and Donald O. Clifton. *Now, Discover your Strengths*. Simon and Schuster, 2001.

Adizes, Ichak., *Corporate Life Cycles: How To Solve The Mismanagement Crises*. Dow Jones Irwin, 1979.

References: Problem Solving

Tannen, Deborah, *Talking from 9 to 5: Women and Men at Work*. Quill, 2001.

Finlayson, Andrew. *Questions that Work: How to Ask Questions That Will Help You Succeed in Any Business Situation*. American Management Association, 2001.

Resources: Creating Vision, Mission, Values, BHAG

Collins and Porras, "Building Your Company's Vision." *Harvard Business Review*, Sept/Oct 1996. HarperBusiness; 1st edition (October 26, 1994) ISBN: 0887306713

Resources: Developing a Business Plan and Understanding the Numbers

www.Google.com, searching "museum salary" provides a range of resources.

www.opm.gov/Federal_Salaries_Wages, for government salary schedules.

Many publications walk you through a more formal business plan. Any one will work. Your own thinking, your search for the truth, your discovery is critical, not the format or the detail of the plan. For a highly rated electronic business plan program see Business

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Plans Pro at www.paloalto.com The U. S. Small Business Administration offers many examples of business plans, www.sba.gov.

Resources: Understanding Your Legal Responsibilities and Tax Issues

The best place to get the legal background is www.nolo.com. The mission of this amazing site is to make the legal system work for everyone—not just lawyers.

Resources: Consulting Skills

Stone, Douglas, Bruce Patton, and Sheila Heen. *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. Viking, 1999.

Collins, Jim. *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don't*. Harper Collins, 2001.

Senge, Peter. *The Fifth Discipline*. Currency, 1994.

Resources: Proposals and Contracting

www.google.com, “consulting contracts” will yield many samples. One we liked is: www.ieeeusa.org/business/ConsultingAgreement.pdf.

Resources: Marketing and Sales

www.qm2.org for examples of consulting philosophy, biographies, resumes, and client list.

Trout, Jack. *Differentiate or Die: Survival in Our Era of Killer Competition*. John Wiley & Sons, 1 edition, 2001.

Levinson, Jay Conrad. *Guerrilla Marketing for Free: Dozens of No-Cost Tactics to Promote Your Business and Energize Your Profits*. Houghton Mifflin Co., 2003.
