



# Management Design Associates, LLC.

## *Savvy Business Owner's Guide to Using Consultants*

### 1. What's hindering you from hiring consultants?

Smart business owners know they can't afford every skill set in their organization. So well selected consultants can have a major impact if managed properly. Here are some tips for selecting a "good fit" consultant.

#### **a. Consultants want to charge you to learn about your business.**

Good consultants don't know every market or type of business, but they do know how to learn about your business quickly and not charge you to do it!

#### **b. Well defined scope of service**

The scope defines the project, it opens the door to establishing your budget and your timeline. Often times business owners or stakeholders start projects without a well-defined scope of services and the project goes completely sideways. Party's start assuming that another party will provide key information or deliver certain milestones that weren't laid out in the scope.

It is good practice to have a definitive scope statement in place and to have each party in the project agree to the statement. This sets the groundwork for a successful project. Once you have a definitive scope statement you can begin to detail the project plan for each party.

#### **c. Well defined deliverable**

A well-defined scope lays the groundwork and well-defined deliverables establish the framework. Having well-defined deliverables helps give each party a "peace-of-mind" because they know what's expected of them. It also allows business owners or stakeholders to understand what they're getting to show progress during the project and what they're getting at the end of the project.

It is good practice to have well-defined deliverables for each major task or milestone to show your progress and give your business owners a "peace-of-mind". Whether it's a demonstration of the software that's been developed, structure plans that lay out what the site will look like or research reports showing what insight you've gained for new market entry.

#### **d. Well defined, realistic schedule and regular status reports**

Don't settle for schedules that you know can't be kept. Set a realistic schedule and expect weekly status reports.

#### **e. Cookie Cutter Solutions**

Unless you're buying a cell phone, don't expect that your solution should be the same as another company's solution.

#### **f. Post-completion support**

We've heard from our clients about their past experiences with consultants and a lack of post-completion support is a contributing factor to a project being viewed unsuccessful. Often times after a project is deemed complete you have new challenges that arise or need assistance implementing



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certain parts of the project. Simply put just because a project reached its final milestone, doesn't mean it's over.

It is good practice for business owners to detail post-completion support in a project's scope of services and what they should look like.

### **g. Implementable solutions**

Implementable solutions. They're the butter to the bread. If business owners don't have implementable solutions laid out by the consultants, how do they know where to take things next? It's the job of the consultant to aid you in the execution of the project so you can focus on the core of your business.

It is good practice to lay out implementable solutions for post-project completion. Whether it's a detailed marketing strategy program or a step by step guide of implementing the new software. It's what delivers the real value of a project.

### **h. Warning signs**

#### **i. They don't talk about their process.**

If you're thinking about "getting-in-bed" with a consultant who says all the right things, looks nice on paper but can't tell you about their process of how they deliver value to your organization, it's a safe bet deciding to turn around and run. Much like the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, drop your cloak AND RUN!

#### **ii. They aren't open to a conversation or discussion about the details or results of a project.**

If you have a consultant or third party who is involved in a project and won't have a simple conversation about project details or deliverables, it is time to start questioning whether or not they really want to be involved as a partner.

#### **iii. They're unresponsive and abrasive.**

If you have a consultant or third party who won't respond to emails in a timely manner or is abrasive by saying things like "Everything you need is in this document right here. We've have companies make some pretty cool things with our code.", it is time to put a stop to the project and question if they're really involved as a partner.



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### **i. Pitfalls**

#### **i. No continuation of the relationship**

One possible pitfall of consulting is not continuing the relationship with the consultant as you would an employee. Sometimes when consultants finish a project and get paid their final invoice they lose their interest in continuing a relationship.

#### **ii. No implementable solutions**

Like we mentioned above having implementable solutions is the “butter to your bread”. If you don’t define these in the beginning of the project, it is likely to be a large pitfall for your consulting experience and sadly it is one that many business owners fall into.

### **j. Initial consultation**

It is not unreasonable to expect a consultant to meet with you and talk about your needs at no cost to you.

There are very good consultants to meet your needs. If you follow the recommendations we have laid out, you will greatly increase the odds of a successful engagement.

### **k. If you have a need**

If you have a need or a project that you either don’t have the time or the staff to complete, feel free to reach out to us for an initial consultation. Visit us at our website:

<http://www.managementdesignassociates.com/contact> to sign up for a free initial consultation.

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