

# Tools and skills for performance consulting

[Business](#)



Useful Tools and Techniques for Performance Consulting Many researchers have developed experiments within several organizations that demonstrate the right approach to effective performance consulting. Bell and Jones (2008) reported that " Research and theorizing recognizes that a manager's identification and judgment of a moral problem is a subjective, socially constructed process that can be influenced by principles, theories, and values"(p. 503). Furthermore, research also offers suggestions that serve as a useful guide when engaging in the consulting process.

However, when consulting there are seven critical skills that must be used when consulting, and they are as follows; one must define clear objectives and goals, maintain confidentiality, involve people that will be affected by project, forge a partnership, have clear communication, develop contract, and also have a strategy. The purpose of this research paper is to correlate different ways that prove some technical and critical skills of consulting. This paper also intends to give examples and offer techniques used through research that can help one to consult flawlessly.

There are several different strategies that can be used during the performance consulting process. When engaging in performance consulting the consultant should find out some information about the company prior to meeting with the client. According to Thamain (2004), effective consultants are social architects who foster a climate of active participation by involving people at all organizational levels in the assessment of the existing system, and in the planning and implementation of the desired change.

They also build alliances with support organizations and upper management to assure visibility, priority, resource availability, and overall support for <https://assignbuster.com/tools-and-skills-for-performance-consulting/>

sustaining the organizational improvement beyond its implementation phase"(p. 42). The first section highlights and analyzes the seven critical skills needed to consult. The second section suggests guidelines for the five tools and techniques which can be used to consult flawlessly. Lastly, the final section acknowledges some leadership behaviors that can be used to help organizations meet their needs.

One of the key concepts to consulting is to understand the basic needs of a client. When making initial contact with the client, the purpose of the project must be defined immediately. In addition to that, it is good to make sure that both the consultant and client are clear of what the objective of the project is. From the start be sure to develop a mutual understanding of what the issue is, and if there are any underlying problems that contribute to this. If employees need to be involved, it is best to relate the intervention being used to the companies' goals or mission statement.

Employees show much more interest knowing that their involvement will help for the better of the organization and not just one individual. According to Thamhain (2004), " Organizational members are more likely to engage in a development initiative if they perceive it to be clearly related to the goals of the company. Clear linkages between the intervention and company mission, goals, and objectives create enthusiasm and desire to participate, as well as lowering anxieties and helping to unify the people behind the intervention"(p. 42).

The employees must feel confident about the interventions that are going to be used if not they will be less reluctant to offer insight. The consultant must also inform the client to keep staff informed on the status of the project so

that the client feels they're playing a role in the consulting process. Understanding the basic needs of the client could help the process to get executed in a timely manner. During the consulting process one must expect some resistance at some point, because employees may feel like the consultant hasn't made them feel confident about the outcome of the project.

Another key aspect of consulting is to maintain confidentiality. In addition to that, the client must feel that any information that is revealed in the project will not be leaked out to anyone outside of the organization. This is a useful tool to help to ensure buy in from the client and any employees that might be involved in the project. If client does not feel that the companies' information is secure then the information provided will not be accurate. Confidentiality can be linked to several aspects of the consulting process, in that it can help you to understand what clients value most.

According to Parker (2003) , when you develop a better understanding of what clients value it can increase both client satisfaction and help improve a organization's performance (Parker, 2003). By understanding your client's needs it will help link objectives of the project closely to the goals of the company. Consequently, this will help to gain more support from not only clients, but also the consultant will receive even more support from individuals within the organization. By understanding the client's needs it increases the probability of getting to the root of the problem.

In the end this will help to make implementation and feedback go smoothly. Thamain (2004 ) reported that " Consultant's will have a better chance for smooth implementation and for gaining organizational acceptance of the  
<https://assignbuster.com/tools-and-skills-for-performance-consulting/>

new system if they can show that the newly developed process is consistent with already established values, principles, and practices, rather than a new order to be imposed”(p. 43). In the consulting process it is very important to involve any party who will be affected by the project. By involving all parties who will be affected by project it will help to obtain a better outcome.

Once employees know that there is something in it for them, they feel obligated to offer information. Throughout this process the employer must value their employees' opinion, as well as offer support and recognition. This will help to enhance employee engagement on the regular issues that come up on a daily basis. Thamhain (2004) reported that, “ While expert based consulting has dominated the project management field, it is critical to also engage in more process oriented consulting, ensuring that relevant organizational members are part of the intervention” (p. 3). In addition to that Sussman and Norton (2009) reported that “ to achieve excellence, organizations must seek and implement effective tools and techniques to transform quality from an abstract concept to a shared value embedded in the fabric of everyday part of an organization” (p. 7). It is important to involve anyone who will be affected because they are the best change agents when it comes to assessing the situation, searching for solutions, and evaluating new tools and techniques.

One of a consultant's most useful tools is being capable of forging a partnership with the client. This is useful in that once this is established it helps create a joint effort in executing the issue and discovering what the objective will be. It is very important to learn some background information about your client prior to your first meeting. Lacey, Thompkins, and Egan

(2007) reported that “ Internal practitioners must understand the language and culture in which they operate.

In business organizations this means a working knowledge of key business processes including strategy formulation and implementation within a global context. While Consultants are not hired to be experts in strategy, they must have an understanding of the unique expertise that offers in ensuring the success of strategic initiatives” (p. 2). With that being said, this is one of the key concepts to successful consulting in that it assures the client that you are serious about affecting change within the organization.

In addition to that, clients tend to feel more comfortable when they are confident that you are looking out for their best interest. Furthermore, from beginning to the end of the consulting process both parties must have clear communication, and both the consultant and client should make all phases of the process clear to everyone involved in the project. Having clear communication can help establish what direction the project will go in and will also build up the client’s confidence of having a successful outcome.

By establishing this you will better understand what the clients expectations are, and you will already have an idea of what it will take to get there. According to Thamhain (2004), team members will be more likely with implementing new management processes, tools, and techniques to cooperate with necessary organizational requirements, if management clearly articulates the criticality to business performance and the benefits to the organization and it’s members (Thamhain 2004).

Communication helps both the client and the consultant feel more comfortable and it also leaves room to receive honest feedback from all parties involved in the process. According to Mellor and Dewhurst (2009), when you establish a line of sight, an effective internal communication function helps make sure the strategy is clearly defined and supports people translating the business strategy into action (Mellor and Dewhurst, 2009).

Furthermore, effective communication helps everyone be accountable for the objectives or any measures that they come across, and whatever gets measured usually gets done. Several companies have discovered that when consulting the contract is one of the most important things of the process. It helps to protect both the client and the consultant. This serves as the agreement where the consultant and client define each other's roles in executing the project. Norton Jr. and Sussman (2009), reported that “contracts, agreements in principle, and letters of understanding are examples of documents designed to transform implicit assumptions into explicit behaviors; however, each prescribes expectations or behaviors at the individual level rather than the team level” (p. 9). When consulting another critical skill is having a strategy set up in a way that both the consultant and the client understand how to move forward. Communication is key because it helps everyone involved in the process understand what is expected of them by opening clear barriers of communication.

According to Sussman and Norton (2009), when one is communicating a strategy an effective team uses tactics that enable managers and employees to discuss, engage and internalize the strategy so that they can bring it to life, understand what it means and translate it into everyday actions and

behaviors (Sussman and Norton, 2009). Therefore, consultants must understand that using strategies and brainstorming is one of the key concepts of the consulting process, and if this is not established from the beginning the entire project will be a disaster.

It is also important to establish rapport with the client in that it will help to build a stronger collaborative working relationship throughout the process. Owen, Goldwasser, Choate, and Blitz (2008) reported that “ by translating the business strategy into operational goals, and by creating structures and processes to enable collaboration across all segments of the organization, innovation leaders can motivate and enable new behavior” (p. 40). Furthermore, research often suggests several types of critical steps that are involved in consulting, however, it is solely up to the consultant to assess the situation before he or she enters it.

In addition to that, researchers also identify the right approach to performance consulting as well as different techniques that have proven to be successful. Critical steps to consulting also can serve as a useful guide to making the process much smoother to both the client and the consultant. Research has been done and it has proven that when entering the consulting process, it is key to find out information about the organization prior to meeting with them. As stated earlier in the paper organizational members are more likely to engage in a development initiative if they perceive it to be clearly related to the goals of the company.

Thamhain (2004) reported that " it is crucial, however, that these team initiatives be integrated with the overall business process and supported by management" (p. 44). Therefore, any of the tools listed above must be

<https://assignbuster.com/tools-and-skills-for-performance-consulting/>



supplemented into the continuously changing of business processes. In addition to that these tools must be updated and tested on an ongoing basis. In the consulting process a tool can be considered as a model, checklist, or a series of steps that can help guide both the client and the consultant through the process.

Furthermore, successful consulting requires consultants to use tools and techniques that are useful in executing the process. Thamhain reported that (2004) “ successful implementation of new project management tools and processes often requires modifications of organizational structures, policies, and practices” (p. 44). In addition to that it is very important to have support of management when coming up with team initiatives. However, to gain the benefits of a new project management’s tool or technique it is also important that everyone involved perceive this as a win-win situation.

Some ways to ensure this is to carefully plan with all parties involved during all of the consulting phases. Consultants should also be open for suggestions, and hold open discussions which encourage all parties to be more proactive in the future. Therefore five tools and techniques that can aid to consult flawlessly are alignment, commitment, contracting, and authenticity, and empathy. According to Owen, Goldwasseer, Choate, and Blitz (2008), to avoid the pitfalls of collaborative innovation, our research and experience show the best building blocks of consulting are: alignment, boundaries and commitment, which they call the ABC’s.

Alignment entails synchronizing the strategic vision and innovation goals with the implementation of these throughout the organization, focusing on collaboration both vertically and horizontally (Owen, Goldwasser (Lawrence <https://assignbuster.com/tools-and-skills-for-performance-consulting/>

Owen, 2008), Choate, and Blitz, 2008). When consulting from the start of the process the consultant must define what each other's roles will be throughout the entire process. It is very important to understand what the client's expectations are and then work solely off of what the client wants and what the he hopes to accomplish.

Owen, Goldwasser, Choate, and Blitz (2008) stated that " Alignment is a key step in ensuring that the business strategy is communicated and enabled throughout the organization both vertically and horizontally. Alignment also requires looking at the organization from the perspective of innovation objectives, and then using the insights gained to position the organization to meet those objectives" (p. 39). Vertical alignment helps to explain the business strategy objective and also transforms it into an organizational strategy as well as an implementation plan.

This helps to provide both the client and consultant comfortable about change in the future. Horizontal alignment requires the implementation of a new organizational unit for redefining the existing one. Thamhain (2004) reported that " If at all possible the introduction of new management tools and techniques should be consistent with the established project management practices within the organization. The more the new order of operation is congruent with the existing practices, procedures, and distributed knowledge of the organization, the more self sustaining and successful the change intervention will be" (p. 4). This is where the highest level of acceptance is found because these useful tools are added incrementally. When implementing new tools and techniques they should be tested on smaller projects with those who are more experienced. Thamhain

(2002) suggest that “ ensuring that organizational members are more proactive and aggressive toward change is not an easy task but must be facilitated systematically by both consultants and management. Any project management tool or technique, for example must be integrated into the continuously changing business process” (p. 6). When coming up with new techniques it is also important to ensure that the client understands what role he or she will play during the implementation stage. To avoid these problems one must conduct a thorough assessment of the problem, and he also must have some background information on the company. Commitment is one of the most important things in the consulting process. In that it helps the consultant obtain buy in from the client and members who become a part of the project.

In addition to that, this helps to ensure that everyone is working towards one common goal, and it will alleviate all confusion between the consultant and client. Owen, Goldwasser, Choate, and Blitz (2008) reported that “ organizations that are serious about collaboration for innovation make an ongoing commitment to transformation and change. Creating a collaborative culture happens over time through leadership communication and reinforcement, the development and ongoing tracking of key measures, and institutionalized learning and knowledge management to continually develop the capabilities needed for collaborative innovation” (p. 1). The consultant should be able to facilitate change whereas it will foster a climate for continuous learning and improvement. Furthermore, this means that the consultant and client should maintain collaboration and reuse it. Over time this will help to establish processes to learn and change. Consequently, this

will help the client be able to aid himself in solving issues within the company in the future internally. One of the most important aspects of consulting is empathy which means understanding the nature of the client's problem.

This is important because it will make your client feel much more comfortable about revealing important information. The consultant must also get to the root of the problem and find any underlying issues that may be making the problem get worse. According to Parker (2003) research suggest that work with a client can often be extended simply by gaining a better understanding of where the client wants to go and what impedes getting there—a process that requires explicit exploration with the client of these broader aspirations and related frustrations.

While this may be stating the obvious, consulting teams often become so focused on the engagement at hand that they don't consider the client's broader needs until the end of the assignment (Parker, 2003). Research has been done by Kostman and Schiemann (2005), which suggest that the most commonly used principles and techniques include continuous improvement, customer satisfaction, loyalty measurements, and project management (Kostman and Schiemann, 2005).

In addition to that, after conducting surveys and research, it was found that organizations who receive the highest marks for successful implementation of quality initiatives are those that have support from top leadership, possess and quality culture and do a good job of managing their people effectively. Research has the shown the relationship between employee engagement and organizational performance. Kostman and Schiemann reported that <https://assignbuster.com/tools-and-skills-for-performance-consulting/>

(2005) “ engaged employees –those more highly connected and committed to their organization –dramatically outperform their peers on numerous measures, including their attention to quality and service.

They further said that this does indeed contribute to the successful implementation of quality initiatives but is only one part of the bigger picture” (p. 40). Furthermore during the consulting process, there are several techniques that can be used, however one must look deeper into the problem and decide what approach is suitable to help circumvent the problem. During the consulting process, tools such as commitment and being able to facilitate change are key concepts because this is what will help keep the collaborative effort throughout.

It is also important when using these tools to have some of the goals of the project linked closely to the goals of the organization. Kostman and Schiemann (2005) reported that “ gaining top leadership support, developing quality minded cultures and more effectively managing the hidden driver of quality—people equity—are the critical difference between success and failure” (Kostman and Schiemann, 2005). Lastly, consulting requires a lot of action research that the majority of the time helps uncover any underlining problems or issue in the organization that may cause the entire project to collapse.

Therefore, to consult flawlessly these tools will help to obtain buy in as well as maintain confidentiality, and it helps all parties feel more comfortable in presenting authentic information. When one serves as the leader of an organization it is important to understand your employees and leave open communication so that employees feel that they are capable of consulting

<https://assignbuster.com/tools-and-skills-for-performance-consulting/>

their boss when they need help. In addition to that a leader must acknowledge his employees' at all times to help them to feel more comfortable and appreciated for their performance.

Further, a leader must be authentic with his staff especially when it comes to on the job assigned duties. It is important to be able to not only reward your staff but encourage your staff to exceed all aspects of the job for the better of the organization. Fleet and Griffin (2006) stated that " if a top manager is commonly known to be untruthful, if a leader does not respect the rights of others, or if the leader puts profits before all else, others in the organization will likely recognize the signals.

As the signals get institutionalized throughout the firm, it's culture will become increasingly dysfunctional"(p. 704 ). Most organizations are centered around the leader or CEO, and the example he sets or how he leads the company can have a major impact on his or her employees. Consequently, leaders play a major part in how the company and its employees function within the organization. It is important for the leader to be open to receiving ideas from his staff in that it helps employees to feel like opinion count and that they can make a difference in the company.

Harris and Kuhnert stated (2008) that " acknowledging the ideas of others is paramount to increasing success within the organization and makes leaders at this level more effective. This level of development is not without drawbacks, because leaders still depend on input from outside sources to make decisions. The opinions of others matter more, and leaders risk making decisions by depending on those who lack the appropriate expertise" (p. 50). Seeking information from leaders have a better probability and it also is <https://assignbuster.com/tools-and-skills-for-performance-consulting/>

much less riskier than seeking advice from someone who is unaware of what's going on in the organization.

However, leaders must recognize that for an organization to be successful the example that he sets forth must help his staff in meeting all of the companies' needs as well as keep their performance on a consistent level. Reward and punishment plays a major in the behavior of your employees as well as how leaders delegate to their staff what is expected. According to Bell and Jones (2007), a rule or behavior is conventional if it is recognized to be valued in one group but not necessarily applicable to thers, or moral if it is considered necessary to be followed by everyone regardless of group membership or local preferences (Bell and Jones, 2007). Furthermore, leaders also must help his staff adapt to change and he should paint his employees a mental picture of his vision and where he would like for the company to be on an ongoing basis. Harris and Kuhnert (2008) reported that " leading change encompasses the ability to challenge the status quo, and higher level leaders do not define themselves by how others see them.

Effective leaders acquire their source of understanding within, that is, who they are and can relinquish ties with outside sources to make effective decisions" (p. 61). The main goal of a consultant is to affect changes in their clients which will help achieve the purpose more effectively. In addition to that, a consultant should know what his client is capable of doing and what he actually can do. For leadership to achieve business needs, they must increase staff morale to improve employee performance, and must not allow employees too many options for when company goals aren't being met.

Schaffer (1999) stated that “ to ensure success each project should be constructed to produce plan that the client is ready, willing, and able to implement. Also instead of tackling a huge project all at once, the client and the consultant can carve off sub-projects, each focused on a near term goal that both parties are reasonably certain can be achieved. It is important for leadership to be aware of what is working well and what is not working well. However, they must also have an idea of what an improved system might look like, and facilitate learning to the employees so that they help to keep this system consistent.

According to Kendra and Taplin (2004), “ the primary tool for change is education that is designed to increase people ideas, beliefs, and behaviors, which will bring about new approaches to organizational challenges” (p. 23). Many consultants try studying a problem in whole and offering a complete remedy before the problem is diagnosed, or before uncovering any underlying problems. Moreover, consultants define the project in terms of their expertise and not in terms of the clients specific results that need to be achieved.

What’s more important is that leaders must understand what their employees are contributing to the company and they must be effective in helping them meet company goals. Fleet and Griffin (2006) stated “ some important factors that help management achieve business needs are, how leaders reward and punish employees, agendas that are set for meetings, how they react to problematic situations for change, whether they follow the companies’ code of ethics, and how they decide who gets promoted or receives special privileges” (p. 704).



As a result, it is important for consultants to examine how leaders construct meaning out of particular situations because it may help clarify why some leaders are effective while others are not. Harris and Kuhnert (2008) stated that “evaluating leadership effectiveness can prove quite difficult due to the complexity of organizational success indicators, difficulty in obtaining such information, and external factors often beyond the leader’s control. Therefore some suggest a 360 degree feedback can serve as a proxy measure for leadership effectiveness, because it provides us with a well-rounded measure of performance” (p. 1). Also leaders need to be comfortable with dealing with conflict at all levels, and they must be able to handle people’s resistance to change. Besides if leaders aren’t capable of facilitating change they won’t be considered as effective change agents. According to Harris and Kuhnert (2008), research suggest that to improve a organizations’ functions one should involve individuals from within the organization which may further develop individuals and lead to a larger organizational change (Harris and Kuhnert, 2008).

Consequently, leadership plays an undeniably central role in the successful operation of a company. Also leadership responsiveness to employee requests will result in more favorable employee attitudes and behavior. The environment that the company provides plays a major role in leadership behaviors. Moreover flawless consulting involves many critical steps and useful tools that were provided in this paper, which was supported by research. In addition flawless consulting requires clear communication, authenticity, and confidentiality.

Consultants must realize that with all projects you must have an objective and a ultimate goal that needs to be accomplished in the end that is measurable. However, consultant and client must have a collaborative effort from the start of the project. Further they must establish each other's roles and map out a game plan and put it in writing. This serves as a agreement that can be referred to throughout the entire process. Facilitating change is another tool that will prove to be effective throughout your project.

As a result, to consult flawlessly consultants must involve everyone who will be affected by the project. Therefore, when it comes to consulting there are several rules of engagement that must be adhered to in order affect change within an organization. Antonio Tencati, L. Z. (2008). The Collaborative Enterprise. *Journal of Business Ethics* , 367-376. Retrieved from ABI/Inform Global on February 24, 2009 Chris M. Bell, J. H. -J. (2007). Power, Self-Regulation and the Moralization of Behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics* , 503-514. Retrieved from ABI Inform Global on February 29, 2009

Antonio Tencati, L. Z. (2008). The Collaborative Enterprise. *Journal of Business Ethics* , 367-376. Chris M. Bell, J. H. -J. (2007). Power, Self-Regulation and the Moralization of Behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics* , 503-514. Dewhurst, V. M. (2009). A Definitive Framework for Internal Communication. *Strategic Communication Research Forum* , 16-19. Griffin, D. D. (2006). Dysfunctional Organizational Culture. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 698-708. Lauren S. Harris, K. W. (2007). Looking through the Lens of Leadership: A Constructive Developmental Approach.

*Leadership and Organizational Development Journal* , 47-67. Lawrence Owen, C. G. (2008). Collaborative Innovation throughout the extended Enterprise.

<https://assignbuster.com/tools-and-skills-for-performance-consulting/>

Emerald Group Publishing , 39-45. Retrieved from ABI/Inform Global on March 30, 2009 Miriam Y. Lacey, T. C. (2007). Curriculum Implications Based on Analysis of Internal Consulting Best Practices. Organizational Development Journal , 199-233. Parker, S. (2003). Understanding What Clients Value. ABI Inform Global , 5. Schaffer, R. H. (1999). Replacing Recommendations with Results. Consulting Psychology Journal , 242-251.

Sussman, W. I. (2009). Team Charters: Theoretical Foundations and Practical Implications for Quality and Performance. The Quality Management Journal , 7-17. Taplin, K. A. (2004). Change agent Competencies for InformationTechnologyProject Managers. Consulting Psychology Journal , 20-34. Ted Shore, T. S. (2006). Leadership Responsiveness, Equity, Sensitivity, and Employee Attitudes and Behavior. Journal of Business and Psychology , 227-241. Thahmain, H. J. (2004). 15 Rules for Consulting in Support of a Client Project. ABI/Inform Global , 42-46.