

## The Seven Basic Problems of Traditional Consulting

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Traditional - task-based - consulting has seven inherent problems. Clients want to achieve certain improvements in their lives (including but not limited to their businesses), but traditional consulting focuses on performing tasks and that's it.

Consultants mix the means and the ends of their engagements. Let's say I want to go to the airport. That is a specific end. The means to achieve that end is to turn left a few times, turn right a few times and stop at a few traffic lights.

But just because it randomly turn left, turn right and stop at a few traffic lights, I don't necessarily end up at the airport. I performed the same tactics (means), but lost sight of the strategy (end).

End this problem plagues most consulting engagements. One reason for that is that most consultants get paid for expended time, so they have an incentive to expand the time they expend.

### So, Let's See The Other Problems

**Problem 1:** The consultant takes all the initiative and responsibility, while the client sits back and demand results. The client first passes the problem to the consultant, then the consultant develops a solution and passes it back to the client as a "saving-your-arse" package. Consulting is about collaboration. Bringing together the client's functional expertise (law, accounting, computers, cars, etc.) and the consultant's process expertise (marketing, sales, teamwork, coaching, focus groups, etc.) is the secret of creating quantum leap improvements.

**Problem 2:** The objectives of the projects are defined in terms of number of hours worked, tasks to be performed and deliverables to be created. For example: We deliver three one-day workshops with detailed workbooks and obtain feedback from participants. This is useless. There is no intention in improving anything, only performing certain tasks. Objectives must be defined in terms of qualitative and quantitative improvement in the client's condition. For example: Increasing sales by 20% within six months, which will improve overall morale, reduce sales talent attrition and stress level.

**Problem 3:** Offering a huge comprehensive earth-shattering solution. "Look, I know you only have a blocked toilet, but we will bulldoze your house, plough up the land, kill all your livestock, burn down the surrounding forest, kill all the wildlife and then start from square zero and build you the ranch of your dreams and beyond. It will take about five years and \$10 million of your money." The consultant must offer projects in small chewable bites, so clients can see measurable improvements in only a few weeks.

**Problem 4:** Determining the project's scope in terms of what to study and analyse. Consultants love collecting and analysing data and client find this reassuring that the job will be well done. But whatever actions the results of the analysis call for, the client's people may not be ready for, so it is all wasted. The project's scope ought to be determined by what people are ready, willing and able to do. It is about

people's readiness for the project. You can teach me how to fly a 747 intellectually, but emotionally I am not ready to take that kind of risk and responsibility.

**Problem 5:** In traditional consulting, when the tasks and deliverables are defined, an army of consultants invades your premises and they start performing their "magic" with very little involvement on your part. You just receive the deliverables when the time comes. In high-impact rapid-cycle consulting, you are fully involved. The consultant (one single dude or dudess) focuses on supporting your implementation team that does the work. You use the consultant as leverage not as outsourced labourer.

**Problem 6:** Charging time-based fees based hourly and daily rates. This is an ultimate lose-lose situation. If s/he wants to earn some money, the consultant is forced to work slowly and ineffectively. After all, the longer s/he can sustain the client's problems, the more s/he can get paid. Instead of improving the client's condition, the consultant's objective is to create more deliverables, thus selling more chunks of time. Make sure you receive several "lump sum" type investment options, so you are free to choose the appropriate investment options knowing exactly how much the whole project will cost.

**Problem 7:** There must be an even balance between catching clients a fish and teaching them how to fish. In traditional consulting there is hardly any knowledge sharing. The firm's people come in - basically as outsourced labourers - and perform the work FOR the client. That is not consulting, but simple contract work, which is the same as plain garden-variety employment minus the benefits and pension. Consultants put in the time and create the deliverables, but after they have gone, clients know no more about the topic than a goat knows about nuclear physics, thus the project was not worth cross-eyed badger spit. Every time clients get hungry, they have to re-hire the "consultants", and there goes ROI down the drain.

## **End Results**

In traditional consulting you must make a huge upfront investment in buying the time of an army of outsourced labourers (well, consultants of some sort), and wait for months or even years for the first shreds of improvement. Traditional task-based consulting represents high risks and frequently low return on your investment.

In contrast to traditional task-based consulting, in result-based consulting you take less risk, make better use of consultants, who also teach your people how to do it next time. You realise better return on your investment while expanding your own internal performance capability.

Also, using the newly found money of the small rapid cycle projects, you can finance further improvements without reaching deeper into your own pocket.

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