

CONSULTING SKILLS

OVERVIEW

A consultant has been described as someone who borrows your watch to tell you the time, keeps the watch and charges you for the service!

As far as it goes, most of us would agree that there is more than an element of truth in this rather cynical definition. But it would be wrong to think of consultants just in this narrow restricted sense.

Consultants come in many shapes and forms. They may come from outside consulting companies, or from specialist groups within your own company. They may work with you personally on finding a solution to a particular problem, or they may conduct a program of workshops designed to train you and numerous colleagues on new or different working approaches or methods. The advertising agent you engage to buy TV time is a consultant; and so is your company HR manager when you ring him to seek advice.

Consultants - whether from inside or outside a company - need to provide not only a superior product or service, but must be able to demonstrate to their clients that it is worthwhile using their services.

Our "Consulting Skills" program is specifically designed to provide participants with the tools to enable them to operate as effective consultants, internal or external, and whoever and wherever their clients are.

AIM

The aim of the program is to improve participants' ability to operate as consultants by equipping them with a knowledge of the fundamental principles and practices of consulting and providing them with pragmatic tools which will enable them to build their consulting business.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the program, participants will:

1. Have gained a clear understanding of the consulting process and the role played by

consultants, both internally to a company and as external resources.

2. Develop specific skills relating to negotiating, questioning, listening and effective Client-Consultant communications.
3. Feel confident in applying these skills in actual consulting situations.

PROGRAM CONTENT

The program is structured around the following elements :

- a. Understanding the underlying principles of consulting; two parties (client and consultant); the need or problem; helping the client.
- b. Stages of the consulting process: contact and entry; diagnosis; implementation; follow-up support and evaluation.
- c. Problem analysis and diagnosis.
- d. Reports and recommendations; being true to the organisational culture and ethos.
- e. Ethical issues arising for the consultant.
- f. Marketing the consultant.

Every effort is made to tailor the precise program content to reflect the major needs and interests of individual participants and their organisations.

The program uses a blend of classroom sessions, interactive group work and experiential learning activities.

COURSE HANDBOOK

A comprehensive Course Handbook is provided which is used both as a practical resource during the training program, and an ongoing reference source for the future.

EVALUATION

Participants themselves are always invited to provide their responses to the program which provides an indication of participant "comfort level".

However, over time the only real determinant of program success is the extent to which the program may be seen to have impacted upon participant performance.

Our approach is to provide the participant, or a nominated manager or supervisor, with an evaluation instrument for completion several weeks after conclusion of the program. This is essentially an in-house tool for use by the client. However, we encourage organisations to return a copy of the instrument for use in the future review, development and general improvement of the program.

DURATION

The basic program can be conducted over eight hours. However, the preferred model is two full days, while many variations have been developed to meet the needs of particular organisations, ranging from three hours to five days separated by two or three weeks to enable application of the course principles to real work consulting assignments.