



Friends-of-the-Firm Mini-Briefing

Consultants Should Be Business Doctors

By

Alan Dunn, President, GDI Consulting & Training Company, 2020

The management consulting professional, much like the medical doctor professional, can play a vital role in the health and welfare of the corporate patient. Management consultants are often responsible for the assimilation and dissemination of new ideas that have quite often provided profound benefits to their clientele. Much like their medical doctor counterpart, management consultants are also responsible for seeing their clients successfully implement a prescribed course of action.



Good management consultants follow the same client processes as do medical doctors. In fact, it has often been said that the difference between a good management consultant and a bad one is how effectively they follow the “*diagnostic process*.” This process begins with the development of a relationship with the corporate client, followed by capable, careful, and humble diagnosis of the problem. It is the diagnosis methodologies that often separate the good consultants from the bad consultants.

Management consultants execute several roles. Some consultants can perform all the roles when required, but most cannot. It is important to know what roles are necessary and staff the right consultant in the right role. At GDI, we segment our consulting roles into five categories:

1. **Executive Consultants.** Consultants in this role develop & nurture relationships with key decision makers & influencers at client project sites. Executive trust, presence, passion & innovation are critical characteristics of consultants fulfilling this role. Substantial breadth & depth of experience is a prerequisite for executing the responsibilities of this role.
2. **Analysts.** Consultants in this role perform structured analysis, mobilization, project design & financial rationalization activities. When fulfilling this role, our consultants will probably be using GDI proprietary methodologies to determine root causes of problems & designing useful & practical solutions to those problems.
3. **Guides.** Consultants in this role are responsible for guiding client teams through Implementation & Results Delivery (I&RD) projects, often using proprietary GDI tools & methodologies. This role requires that the Guide provide “*leadership from behind*” to

the client appointed Project Manager... while NOT taking responsibility for the client's actions.

4. **Developers.** Consultants in this role are responsible for developing training courseware, models, methodologies, digital documentaries, books, "*Plain Wrap*" processes & software tools for use on client related projects. When fulfilling this role, consultants apply significant creative skills, focusing on creating tools that can be leveraged across assignments & client relationships.
5. **Experts.** Consultants in this role are responsible for delivering specific expert opinions on specific issues presented by the client. These opinions are based on years of experience & fact-based study and are presented as a solution to a client's specific need.

After the management consultant has developed a relationship with a client and diagnosed the problem, prescriptions can then be applied. After the prescriptions for the diagnosed problems, follow-up by the consultant should happen on a regular basis. It is only through follow-up that the consultant can know if the prescription was proper or requires some fine-tuning.

Relationship development, diagnosis, prescription, and follow-up is the code for the successful management consultant. Proceeding any other way is like prescribing dangerous drugs without the prerequisite knowledge of the drug's biological effects. Following this entire process will reduce the potential of this problem and will improve client profitability... the best sign of corporate "*health.*"

About the Author



Alan G. Dunn is currently President of GDI Consulting & Training Company and founder of the Manufacturing Executive Institute (MEI). He is also the creator and lead-instructor of the 18-month Next Generation Global Supply Chain Leadership Development Program at the California Institute of Technology's (Caltech) Center for Technology & Management Education (CTME), where he has taught since 1984. Mr. Dunn also serves on the University of California at Riverside's (UCR) Advisory Board for Transformative Leadership in Disruptive Times.

Mr. Dunn specializes in supply chain management, strategic planning, manufacturing management, operations management, leadership development, cost management and business finance.

Previously, Mr. Dunn was a Vice President at Gemini Management Consulting and a Partner at Coopers & Lybrand. In both positions, he led large technical manufacturing teams through innovative productivity enhancement projects. Mr. Dunn has participated in >188 significant manufacturing and distribution projects inside >118 companies. He has worked in 24 countries and across most manufacturing sectors.

Over his 40-year career in global supply chain consulting, Mr. Dunn has served on the Boards of Directors of numerous public, private and non-profit companies. He is the recipient of the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD) prestigious "*Director of the Year*" award in 2007.

Alan is a career Association of Supply Chain Management (ASCM) volunteer, having served as the President of the Orange County Chapter in 1984 and Chairman of ASCM in 2015. He was inducted into the "*ASCM New England Supply Chain Conference Hall of Fame*" in 2022.

Mr. Dunn has a degree in business management from California State University, Fullerton.

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