

# Careers in the Consulting Industry

**Companies and organizations hire consultants to strategize solutions to business, organizational, or industry specific problems. The value in hiring a consultant is a fresh perspective, objectivity, and/or a specific knowledge base or expertise.**

## Overview:

The consulting industry has seen revenues grow about 16 percent per year. Consulting is one of the best paid professions for recent grads; Consulting salaries are high (for college graduates they start at \$40,000 to \$50,000) exclusive of signing bonuses. For MBAs, salaries start at \$75,000 and can go up to \$140,000, including bonuses.

Consultants can experience intense workloads and hours (typical workweeks are 50 to 80 hours per week though, due to the cyclical nature of consulting, hours can shoot up to 100 hours towards the end of assignments), however it can be rewarding in many ways. It can offer the opportunity for travel, work variety, high salaries, and bonuses.

In addition, consulting firms are typically located in urban locations such as New York City, Boston, San Francisco, etc, which are often desirable places for recent graduates and business professionals. The consulting industry can be greatly affected by the economy. Consultants may experience extreme highs and lows in the amount of projects in their workload. Temporary or permanent layoffs may occur when the project load is light.

## The Consulting Industry can be divided into the following areas:

- **Management Consulting:** examine business operating procedures to identify problems in work and job design within an organization and propose new methods to improve efficiency.
- **Strategy Consulting:** Focus is on identifying the direction, goals, and growth of a company or organization within a specific industry.
- **Information Technology (IT) Consulting:** Focus is on using technology to help an organization become more efficient and achieve its goals.
- **Industry Specific Consulting:** Focus is on a specific industry and can include strategy, management, IT, scientific or technical consulting.

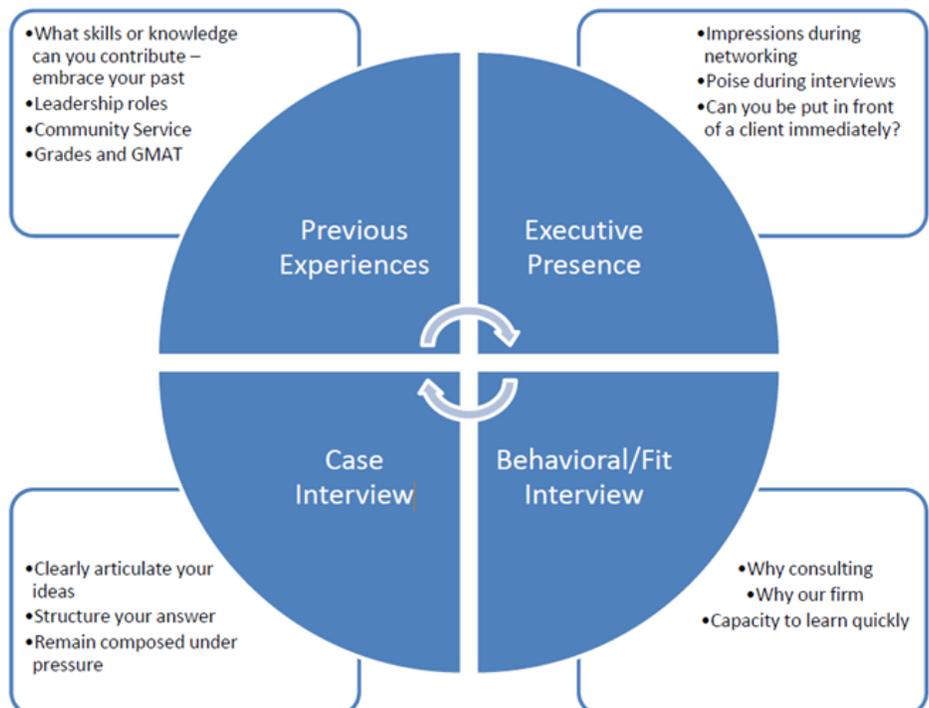
## Consultants work in the following environments:

- Large consulting companies that provide one or more consulting services to many industries
- Small boutique firms that specialize in a particular industry (i.e. health care).
- Internal Consulting Groups within companies and organizations. In this case, consultants are company employees that act as a third party. Internal consultants save companies money because they are already on the payroll and potentially can provide more suitable solutions due to their company knowledge and experience.
- Independent freelancing for companies or organizations in a particular area of expertise.

### 2012 Top 15 Consulting Firms

1. McKinsey & Company
2. The Boston Consulting Group, Inc
3. Bain & Company
4. Booz & Company
5. Deloitte Consulting LLP
6. PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP
7. Monitor Group
8. Ernst & Young LLP
9. Mercer LLC
10. Accenture
11. IBM Global Business Services
12. Oliver Wyman
13. A.T. Kearney
14. KPMG LLP
15. L.E.K. Consulting

For more details on the top 50: Vault Consulting Firm Rankings 2012: The Best Consulting Firms: Prestige



## Careers in the Consulting Industry

### Recruiters look for the following on Resumes:

- Does it show evidence of academic strength?
- Does it exhibit a propensity for leadership/taking responsibility?
- Does it illustrate team player characteristics?
- Examples of relevant functional expertise (e.g. engineering or finance), or for specific industry experience

### Key Skills:

- **Leadership/Management Skills**, as consultants must lead small teams, promote their ideas, and manage projects
- **Teamwork**, as consultants work with both other consultants and customers toward solutions
- **Analytical/Quantitative Thinking Skills**, to crunch numbers and work through information in a logical manner
- **Presentation Skills**, because consultants must present their findings to fellow consultants and clients alike
- **Creativity**, because solving problems often means "thinking out of the box"
- **Communication/Networking Skills**, to develop relationships and cooperate with both coworkers and clients
- **Ability to effectively multi-task**, consultants work in a fast paced environment
- **Problem Solving Skills**, utilizing research and understanding the business to formulate resolutions for problematic situations

### Interview Process

The consulting interview process is usually intense and lengthy, designed to measure whether you have the intellectual horsepower needed for the job. There are two main types of Consulting Interviews: Resume/Behavioral Interview and Case/Problem Interview. For more information on interviews and specific interview question examples go to *Vault.com Career Guide to Consulting*.

#### Behavioral Interview

Used to determine whether you have the right personal qualities to be a good consultant, and to fit into the culture of the company.

Examples of common behavioral questions:

1. How do you deal with someone in your group who isn't pulling his or her weight, or disagrees with your goals?
2. What position do you normally take on a team?
3. Tell me what you're most proud of on your resume.
4. What is the worst mistake you've ever made?
5. Why should we hire you?

#### Case Interview

Used to test your analytical ability, reasoning skills, confidence, and knowledge of business concepts where you are asked to analyze a problem and provide a solution based on the information given.

Examples of common case questions:

1. Why is Intel successful? Will they retain advantage in the future?
2. A big health care company has hired you to determine a strategy for improving profitability through growth. The company hopes to reach its goal in three years. What would you advise?
3. How many gallons of white house paint are sold in the U.S. each year?
4. How many barbers are there in Chicago?
5. You and a neighbor are planning garage sales for the same day. You are both selling the same used TV. You plan on selling the TV for \$100, but your neighbor insists on selling his TV for \$40. What should you do?
6. Why is a manhole cover round?

#### Common Mistakes Made in the Job Search Process:

- No internship interviewing puts students behind on case prep
- Overestimate job availability
- Spend all time networking with 2 or 3 firms, Cast a wider net!
- Ignore firm culture/fit
- Skip self-assessment/may not be the best fit for consulting
- Don't embrace past experience for leverage
- Don't take time to understand full details of consulting industry

#### Resources:

- Consulting Central ([consultingcentral.com](http://consultingcentral.com))
- Consulting Information Services, LLC ([consultinginfo.com](http://consultinginfo.com))
- Consulting Magazine ([consultingmag.com](http://consultingmag.com))
- American Institute of Certified Public Accountants ([aicpa.org](http://aicpa.org))
- American Management Association ([amanet.org](http://amanet.org))

#### Professional Associations:

- Association of Internal management Consultants, Inc. ([aimc.org](http://aimc.org))
- Association of Management Consulting Firms (AMCF) ([amcf.org](http://amcf.org))
- Institute of Management Consultants USA (IMC) ([imcusa.org](http://imcusa.org))
- The American Consultants League ([consultants-league.com](http://consultants-league.com))