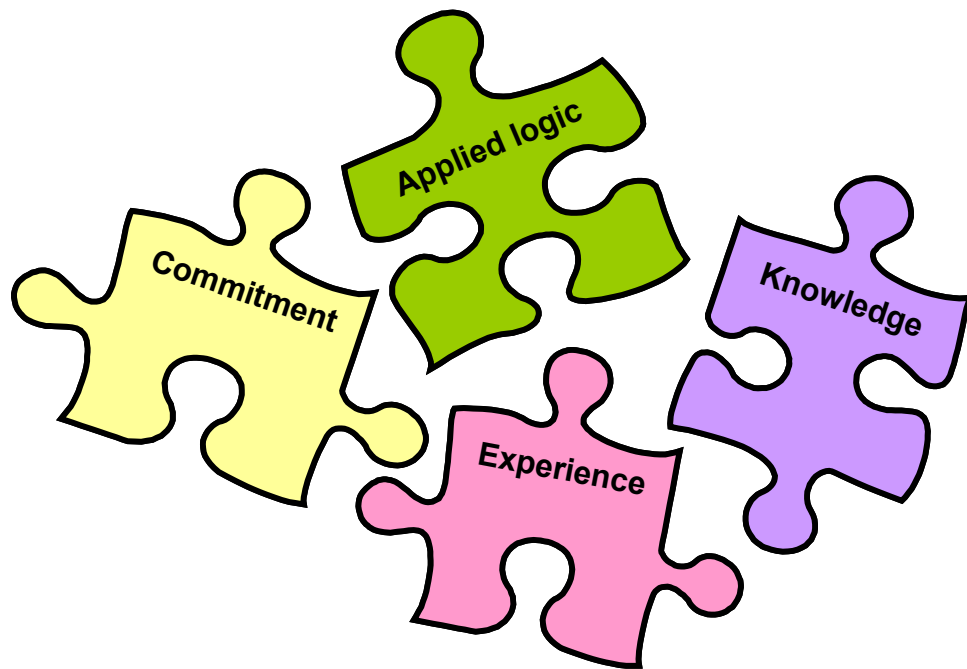


How to choose a management consultant

We tend to trust people more if we have a link to them already. A management consultant is often chosen because of an existing link to a manager or organisation. That is human nature and it can result in a good outcome. There is more, however, to selecting an effective management consultant.

Beyond the existing relationship, clients tend to look for 4 key attributes when choosing a management consultant. All 4 attributes relate to a consultant's ability to successfully approach an issue, quickly get to grips with it and deliver results a client can trust.

The 4 Key Attributes Clients Seek in Consultants



Setting aside existing relationships, the 4 key attributes clients look for in a consultant are:

- **Applied logic:** Ability to combine a structured approach with original thinking
- **Knowledge:** Know-how and skills relevant to the assignment
- **Experience:** Previous work in the industry sector or operating environment
- **Commitment:** Ability to establish trust and deliver results

Applied logic is one way of describing the ability of a consultant to tackle an apparently complex issue in way that quickly breaks it down into its constituent parts and addresses each in turn. Methodology provides a basis for a consultant's structured approach to a problem. The difference between a sound approach and an inspired one is the innate understanding of the principles behind the methodology. Applied logic is the application of original thought within a framework of structured thinking.

Knowledge of similar issues, problems or projects is an essential part of what a management consultant can contribute to an assignment and an organisation. Choose someone who can demonstrate that they know something about the area in which you are

seeking expertise. That doesn't mean it is necessary to find someone who has solved the same problem before – simply that you are satisfied they know enough to be able to apply their general skills and experience for your benefit. Remember that experienced consultants are accustomed to familiarising themselves with a situation and context very quickly.

The **experience** of the consultant should be broader than the internal resources that have already been brought to bear on the situation. The consultant should be able to demonstrate that they have developed practical recommendations in the past that were able to be implemented. Specifically the consultant should be able to demonstrate that they have provided fresh approaches and been proactive in identifying solutions for clients.

Commitment reflects the consultant's track record of putting the client's needs first. This may be evident through providing contrarian advice when necessary, minimising impact on normal business or by actively avoiding conflicts of interest. A committed consultant will also work hard to establish rapport, work diplomatically with staff and deal sensitively with internal politics.

Finding the right consultant

It can be difficult to find a management consultant or consulting firm that supplies all four "jigsaw pieces". Anyone can call themselves a management consultant.

One easy way to identify a qualified management consultant is to look for the "gold standard" in consulting qualifications – Certified Management Consultant or CMC. CMC means that a management consultant meets the international standards of competence, education, experience, and ethical conduct. It is the only international certification of its type.

CMC is an international qualification recognised by all 35 member countries of the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI). A minimum of three years consulting experience is required to become a Certified Management Consultant after completing admission requirements and being interviewed by a panel of existing CMCs.

The CMC designation was initiated by the Institute of Certified Management Consultants of Canada in 1972, and was adopted by the New Zealand Institute of Management Consultants in 1993. All CMCs must belong to an affiliated Institute of Management Consultants and abide by its Code of Professional Conduct.

IMCNZ maintains a register of its members and their areas of speciality. The website address is www.imcnz.org.