



## **INDEPENDENT CONSULTING: A NEW PARADIGM**

Success in Business  $\neq$  Success as an Independent Consultant

Discover why and what you must do now to **accelerate your transition from doing business to transforming business** to becoming the Independent Consultant of choice.

## Table of Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
Imagine this...	3
About me	4
Why did I write this report?	5
<b>INDEPENDENT CONSULTING – A GREAT PROFESSION TO BE IN RIGHT NOW</b>	<b>7</b>
What is Independent Consulting?	7
The time is right for Independent Consultants	9
Confidence in the global economy is strengthening.	9
Demand for Consulting continues to grow despite the pandemic.	10
Good news for Independent Consultants!	10
There will still be opportunities for UK Independent Consultants within the EU despite "Brexit".	11
IR35 should not be limiting your Independent Consulting opportunities in the UK.	12
The rewards for success as an Independent Consultant are high.	12
A quick recap	14
<b>HOW ARE YOU MANAGING SO FAR?</b>	<b>15</b>
6 ways that independent consulting differs from business management	15
1. Client expectations are different.	15
2. Things may feel a bit awkward.	16
3. You're simultaneously running your own business.	16
4. You need to be pro-active in seeking your next contract.	16
5. Your current business network may not be much help.	17
6. Your previous business experience is not enough.	17
Avoid your biggest fears	18
<b>TRANSFORM YOURSELF: 5 CRITICAL STEPS</b>	<b>19</b>
Step 1: Transform your value proposition	19
Clarifying your target business niche	20
Emphasising your core content expertise	20
Reinforcing your consulting credentials	20
Step 2: Transform your lead generation strategies	22
Becoming an associate	22
Leveraging your network	23
Step 3: Transform your consulting capabilities.	24
Step 4: Transform your operating style – become remarkable	29
Step 5: Transform your time management	31
<b>IN SUMMARY</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>NEXT STEPS</b>	<b>36</b>
Useful further reading	38



## INTRODUCTION

### Imagine this...

- You are the Independent Consultant of choice in your field
  - New consulting contracts land in your lap, rather than you having to seek them out;
  - You are considered a pre-eminent authority and trusted expert in your field;
  - You have an enviable record of driving sustainable business improvements;
- All your professional aspirations are being realised;
- Your business is achieving the financial goals you've set.

Congratulations on your decision to download and read this report. I'm sure you will find the contents thought-provoking and insightful. **If you've recently transitioned from a successful career in business to the role of Independent Consultant, then this report is for you.** If you're seriously *considering* the move from business employee to Independent Consultant, then it may well help you with your decision.

#### Within these pages, you will discover:

- what independent consulting is, why this is a great time to be an Independent Consultant and what the rewards are;
- why success in business  $\neq$  success as an Independent Consultant;
- the single word that is critical in your transition from doing business to transforming business and becoming the Independent Consultant of choice in your field;
- the 5 essential steps you need to take now to accelerate your success as an Independent Consultant; and
- the capabilities above all others you must master to secure a constant stream of clients and higher daily rates.

You will find a wealth of useful information in this report. Still, it barely scratches the surface of what you need to know and of what I will be bringing to you in the future. I uncover some harsh realities that may prove to be uncomfortable reading; however, I discuss them because of the valuable lessons they provide. Please bear with me to the end.

**Once you have finished reading this report, I believe you will look at your future through new eyes, with inspiration, anticipation and optimism.**

## About me

Before we get into the main contents of the report, I would like to take a few minutes to introduce myself.

**My business career spans almost 40 years**, although I really can't believe it has been that long. I started off spending more than a decade in various international marketing, sales and general management roles with **Unilever**, one of the world's leading fast-moving consumer goods companies. I subsequently transitioned into consultancy and have led business transformation projects for high profile organisations including **GlaxoSmithKline, Merck, Eli Lilly, Johnson and Johnson, Sanofi- Aventis, Tesco, Shell and Alfa Laval**. I went Independent in 2005 and alongside my Consulting engagements I set up "**The Independents' Consultant**" and am now dedicating my efforts to supporting Independent Consultants, like you, in their transition from business management into Independent Consulting. I will provide more information about this venture in the final chapter of the report.

I don't intend to run through my detailed CV here - you will find it in its entirety on LinkedIn, [www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com). Please do go ahead and check me out.

But don't just take it from me - here are a couple of client testimonials about my work; and if you go to [www.TheIndependentsConsultant.com](http://www.TheIndependentsConsultant.com), you will find plenty more from both clients and other Independent Consultants – please have a look at these too.

“

I have had the real pleasure (not something I say lightly) of working with Clive during a two year period on a significant and transformational change project.

He demonstrated superior skills during the scoping phase of the programme, driving and leading strong connectivity and very senior stakeholder engagement across the business, including Commercial, Medical, Supply Chain, Finance and other functions. I found him to have a very broad appreciation of what it takes to shape a complex programme, in addition to providing me personally with everything I needed to gain CEO and CMO approval for this £100m+ project. He also shows great ability to pull a team together, building a very motivated and energised workforce to deliver.

Whilst moving into the implementation phase, Clive brought about very strong project controls, driving alignment across the organisation and continually reducing costs through challenging the norm.

One thing that sets Clive apart is the personal accountability he demonstrates day in-day out. Another key (and often rare) strength was his ability to seamlessly integrate into the company culture and his flexibility and capability to shape and relentlessly deliver against a complex set of requirements.

He has my sincere recommendation. A great professional.”

**Senior client** – Global Pharmaceuticals Company

“

Clive excels at driving complex, global, change programs. He brings big Consulting Company know-how, energy and discipline as an Independent Consultant. His ability to lead and develop a global program strategy in addition to his attention to detail is how he ensures 100% success. What really separates Clive from other Big Company or Independent Consultants is his ability to learn the business and develop trusting relationships; this enables him to gain credibility and command respect from senior stakeholders which drives the best, right-first-time result.

The 'Clive-way' differentiates him; his structured approach, calm, professional drive, and impeccable attention to detail make his contribution invaluable. I've worked with Clive on multiple programs over the last 6 years and I look forward to working with him again as I know the results and overall experience will be my gain!”

**Programme Business Lead** – Global Pharmaceuticals Company

## Why did I write this report?

**I've lost count of the times that I have come across Independent Consultants who have transitioned from a successful career in business but just do not have the required level of consulting capabilities to realise their full potential.**

Let me give you a little more context...

When I'm building project teams for clients, I always know the profile of people I need. To be honest though it has been a struggle to find the right Consultants from the Independent sector. In fact, on one project it took me over 6 months to get the team together. What I found time and time again were competent former business managers who were not project ready and/or client ready.

**Project ready:** possessing the right project delivery skills or team behaviours.

**Client ready:** displaying relevant business-change knowledge and the consulting capabilities to be successful as an Independent Consultant

It's not just me who is experiencing this. I have often heard the same complaint from my Consulting peers around the world. Now don't get me wrong, there are some great Independent Consultants who have transitioned from business roles. But these are the ones who have learnt the consulting tool kit, excel at using it....and it's a funny old thing, these are the ones who are fully utilised!

It seems to me that there is a misguided assumption that a successful career in business management will automatically translate into success as an Independent Consultant; that it's just a natural career progression. In fact, I believed this too when I started out as a consultant.

Well it's just not the case. A new paradigm is required...

### **Success in business ≠ success as an Independent Consultant**

We have a talented group of individuals out there who have false expectations, are limiting themselves in what can be achieved or earned and are not set up for success. Are you part of this group?

This situation has frustrated me, has frustrated colleagues of mine and I'm sure is frustrating those who are just not cutting it as Independent Consultants. So I thought, why don't I try and do something about this? After all, I have a wealth of Business and Consulting experience behind me, with the last 13 years as an Independent Consultant. I would be well positioned to drive the creation of the next generation of great Independent Consultants drawn from the business sector. Many of my Consulting colleagues agree!

So, I have changed my direction and founded **The Independents' Consultant** as I described briefly in the About Me section above - this report is a key step. In it I hope to:

- kick start this process of supporting business executives turned Independent Consultants;
- provide you with some initial direction and guidance;
- encourage you to challenge the way you are doing things at the moment;
- offer you some actionable tips that you can use as soon as you have finished reading; and
- begin a longer-term dialogue with you.

Let's get going...

## INDEPENDENT CONSULTING – A GREAT PROFESSION TO BE IN RIGHT NOW

In this chapter I will be discussing some of the key trends in the Independent Consulting industry and why it's a great time to be involved. But before that, I want to check we are on the same page when it comes to terminology.

### What is Independent Consulting?

**It's all a little confusing!** If you look at job adverts, read articles, check out consulting websites, and/or review contacts on LinkedIn, you'll see all of the following terms used:

**Independent Consultants, Independent Management Consultants, Contractors, Contingent Workers, Interims, Freelancers, Independents, Executive Coaches, Leadership Coaches, Organisational Development Consultants, Change Consultants, Business Consultants.** . .the list is endless.

Confused? Me too...let's try and make some sense of it...

A couple of standard titles are often used to encompass all of these roles: **“Freelancer” or “Independent”, both of which can be defined as follows:**

*“All genuine business owners without employees, working in a range of skilled and non-manual occupations (creative, managerial, professional, scientific, technical)”<sup>1</sup>*

As I see it there are 3 separate categories of freelance workers. These are:

- Contractors (sometimes referred to as Contingent Workers)
- Interims (also known as Temporaries in some countries)
- Independent Consultants

**Contractors** are hired to perform specific tasks when the required skills or resources are not available in-house, for example, copywriters, software developers and website designers.

**Interims or temporaries** are used to fill or organisational roles for a specified time period, a time when the skills or resources are not available in-house. Interims are particularly convenient when a company needs to fill a position quickly and doesn't have the time to undergo a full recruitment process. Interims serve at various levels within organisations. They may be Marketing Directors, Sales Managers, Factory Managers, Senior Engineers, or Chief Technology Officers, to name a few.

<sup>1</sup> Exploring the UK Freelance Workforce: John Kitching and David Smallbone

And that leaves **Independent Consultants**...

Interestingly enough, it is alleged that the use of the word “Consultant” to mean “one qualified to give professional advice” was first used in a Sherlock Holmes story in 1893.

*“I’m a Consulting Detective, if you can understand what that is. Here in London we have lots of government detectives and lots of private ones. When these fellows are at fault, they come to me, and I manage to put them on the right scent.” Sherlock Holmes - A Study in Scarlet (1893)*

Whilst Sherlock was referring to himself as a detectives’ consultant, a lot of what we do as Independent Consultants actually involves detective work. We have to determine initially where an organisation is at the present time and what steps are needed to improve it—or at least a select segment of it. That can take some digging.

Every project that I have worked on as a Consultant over the past 20 plus years has involved one or more of the following business transformation phases:

- helping a business leadership team **discover** what the burning platform for change is and what the benefits for implementing that change will be;
- working with the organisation to determine what is needed and to **design** new ways of working to meet these needs;
- developing a **plan** to engage the entire organisation and embrace the new ways of working;
- supporting individuals and teams to **implement** the changes;
- guiding them to **sustain** or embed the changes in order to realise the projected benefits.

In short, all my consulting projects have been about transforming a part or all of the business. Given that, I have developed my own description of what an Independent Consultant is:

### **Independent Consultant:**

“An Independent Professional who is the catalyst for delivering sustainable business transformation”

Clive Mallard, The Independents’ Consultant



Let me explain a little more...

**Independent** - sole director and employee of one's own business, probably a Limited Company;

**Professional** - someone who has a strong capability (proven competence) in the specific and relevant field;

**Catalyst** - something or someone who precipitates change without himself / herself being affected;

**Delivering** - defining and implementing a new way of working, realising the benefits of improvement;

**Sustainable** - change that has become embedded: "This is the way we do things now";

**Business transformation** - People often talk about business change. But for me change can be good or bad. I prefer to use the word "transformation", which is a bit more positive and output-based. Transformation can be of an entire business, a business division, a functional area or indeed just a specific problem area. We could be looking at process, system, organisational or behavioural transformation.

I hope this makes sense to you and helps to clear up any confusion.

## The time is right for Independent Consultants

Regardless of whether you have left your successful business career to become an Independent Consultant full-time or are still actively engaged in a business role, but seriously considering making the move, your timing is perfect. There's an abundance of good news for the industry - and for you.

### Confidence in the global economy is strengthening

The October 2021 International Monetary Fund (IMF) report estimated a global GDP growth rate of 5.9 per cent in 2021 and 4.9 percent in 2022<sup>2</sup>. The same report projects UK growth to be 6.8 percent in 2021 and 5.0 percent in 2022<sup>2</sup>. For the US the predicted growth rates are 6.0 percent in 2021 and 5.2 percent in 2022<sup>2</sup>. It is anticipated that growth will return to more normal levels from 2023

Clearly these growth projections are following significant slumps due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, but they show that economies are heading in the right direction; and therefore demand for goods and services is on the increase.

**This strengthening will mean businesses will be expanding and investing, which is good news for the consultancy sector.**

<sup>2</sup> World Economics Outlook Update; IMF; October 2021

## **Demand for Consulting Services grows, despite the Pandemic**

A recent study from the MCA, representative body for the UK's consulting industry shows that the sector grew in 2020 by 2.5% and is widely forecasted to accelerate dramatically in the coming twelve months. Estimates vary between 9% and 13%, with the 3 biggest areas of growth in Digital Technology, the Public Sector and Health/Life Sciences.

Whilst the Big 4 Consultancy firms continue to dominate the market – PwC, Deloitte, Ernst&Young and KPMG, there are 3 trends emerging:

- Small to mid-sized Consulting firms are carving out strongholds in niche markets, driven by clients' needs for more specialization
- Remote working which has become almost the normal during the Pandemic will continue, enabled by new virtual and digital platforms
- New consulting models are being deployed, in particular an increased use of Associates (see below) rather than direct employees;

So what does all this mean for you?

## **Good news for Independent Consultants!**

Firstly the move to more specialization does align itself well with the Independent Consulting model-specific interventions on a smaller scale rather than sending in larger more generalist teams.

Similarly remote working is something that we have all got used to, including clients, so this can easily be adopted by Independents.

Let me say a little more about Associates.

Consulting firms have always supplemented their employee-consultants with Independent Consultants, whom they call “Associates”. This benefits them in a couple of ways:

- It allows them to manage peaks in demand effectively. Some consultancy firms even plan their own resources to meet client demands only during business troughs and rely on Independent Consultants to fill the gap during good times.
- It provides them with access to specialist or niche skills that they may not have in-house.

Smaller consulting firms actually use the largest numbers of associates; some even use them exclusively to staff their projects.

“The benefits of using associates are certainly being recognised by consulting firms of all sizes and descriptions...”

“...The firm of the future should have a network of external partnerships to call on where necessary”

“...Nearly one in five clients strongly agreed that consulting firms should be willing to use external specialists”

**The Consulting Firm of the Future; Source Information Services Ltd**

It seems that clients are very comfortable with this arrangement. In fact, they encourage it. They believe that the use of Associates better enables their projects to be staffed with the proper specialist knowledge and skills – competencies that often cannot be provided by one consulting firm.

With Coronavirus restrictions easing, the UK's Independent's confidence in their own businesses and the business environment in general is at its highest level for several years<sup>3</sup>.

So it seems that the future of the Independent Consulting sector looks promising.

But how will Brexit affect things in the UK?

## **There will still be opportunities for UK Independent Consultants within the EU despite "Brexit".**

As many of you in the UK will know, we formally left the European Union on 31 January 2020 and there is a new agreement in place to set out the “rules” between the UK and the EU. There are a number of considerations that you should be aware of if you plan to contract with a business in the EU, but here are 3 main ones:

- Freedom of movement with the EU member states has now ended and you can only travel visa free for 90 days in any 180 day period – although this could vary depending on the country you are visiting. So Consulting work could be carried out in country without obtaining a work visa or permit.

<sup>3</sup> The Association for the Independent Professionals and the Self Employed, UK (IPSE)

- There is no mutual recognition of Professional qualifications. So you may need to check that the qualifications you have are recognised in the country you are visiting.
- You may need to notify HMRC that you're working abroad and you may need to pay social security contributions in the country that you work.

However, with remote working becoming much more normal and accepted, then a combination of this with some face to face meetings should still enable high quality results to be delivered without being restrained by the new EU rules of engagement.

My final point on Brexit is to always check UK Government guidance before entering into an engagement with an organisation in an EU country.

And what about IR35 in the UK?

## **IR35 should not be limiting your Independent Consulting opportunities in the UK.**

IR35 regulations in the UK now apply to both Public and Private sectors. This is an enormously complex subject, beyond the scope of this report. However the opportunities open to Independent Consultants should not change as a result.

Yes, the new regulations may impact the way you work and how you pay tax...but not necessarily so!

Please remain positive and take advice on how this could affect you and your Limited Company if you have one.

## **The rewards for success as an Independent Consultant are high.**

So, the outlook for Independent Consultants looks positive. But what about the rewards for success?

Personally, I have experienced 2 main benefits in my time as an Independent Consultant:

### **The feel-good factor:**

- helping clients achieve great things they did not think possible;
- forming strong bonds with people in client organisations;
- being appreciated for what I do;
- gaining trust;
- building a strong network and establishing credibility with my peers;
- obtaining contract offers with no effort. I have really not had to market my services actively for years.



## The financial rewards

- high daily rates (in the top 5% of Independent Consultants), combined with high utilisation

And I'm not alone. . .

I surveyed over 100 Independent Consultants who shared what they found to be the most enjoyable aspects of the role. Below is a summary of their responses:

- having flexibility; being able to work on their own terms
- making a difference to clients;
- being their own boss;
- providing great delivery and adding value;
- feeling appreciated for the value they bring;
- receiving references and gratitude;
- building trust and relationships;
- leaving a legacy;
- enjoying a high level of personal income.

I began this report by asking you to imagine this. . .

- **You are the Independent Consultant of choice in your field**
  - New consulting contracts land in your lap, rather than you having to seek them out;
  - You are considered a pre-eminent authority and trusted expert in your field;
  - You have an enviable record of driving sustainable business improvements;
- **All your professional aspirations are being realised;**
- **Your business is achieving the financial goals you've set.**

**These are not pipe dreams. I've achieved these things; others have, too. And so can you.**

“  
Believe you can and you're halfway there.”

Theodore Roosevelt (26th President of the United States)

## A quick recap

If you've enjoyed a successful business career and have recently transitioned into Independent Consulting, congratulations! You've made a great choice at the right time because

- confidence in the global economy is strengthening;
- the demand for consulting continues to grow;
- there will still be EU opportunities for UK Independent Consultants despite Brexit; and
- the rewards for success as an Independent Consultant can be fantastic!

So, I encourage you to read on. In the next two chapters, I address some of the specific problems you may encounter and suggest some immediate steps you can take to accelerate your journey from doing business to transforming business to becoming the Independent Consultant of choice in your field.

## HOW ARE YOU MANAGING SO FAR?

If you have already made the leap from business employee to Independent Consultant, I hope that you are feeling positive about what you're doing and are pleased with your results thus far. I hope that you're getting the client contracts you want and are experiencing some of the rewards I have described.

If so, consider yourself fortunate because many who move from business into consulting have some real doubts about their decision. It is typical to feel a little overwhelmed with everything you have to do and it is often a struggle to find the right clients. It is quite common to feel lonely and unsure of who to turn to for help.

**Being a consultant is not the same as being employed.**

### 6 ways that Independent Consulting differs from business management.

#### 1. Client expectations are different.

Clients' expectations of Independent Consultants are similar to those of employed consultants. In my experience clients want you to:

- understand their businesses almost immediately;
- inject pace and momentum;
- challenge hard;
- ask questions the clients don't ask themselves;
- provide an independent /objective view that is unaffected by company politics and bias;
- shake things up a little;
- work in a collaborative manner;
- gain the confidence of team member quickly;
- align yourself with the culture and values of the organisation; and
- deliver some early wins.

“Clients are buying people; understanding of client values as well as objectives are highly prized.”

Diversity and Choice in Management Consulting; MCA

Even before delivering an outcome, however, the way you operate and your behaviours can go a long way to reassuring a client early on that its money has been, or will be, well spent.

**Ultimately, though, a client wants to see superior results, accelerated delivery, and a real return on its investment. Clients expect you to add value.**

And keep in mind that your client will typically be paying more for your services than it would for a contractor, an interim, or an employee.

“Strive not to be a man of success, but rather to be a man of value.”

Albert Einstein (Physicist 1879 – 1955)

## 2. Things may feel a bit awkward

When you first visit a client's site, you may be viewed with suspicion. Managers and staff often feel nervous when consultants are called in. They may have had bad past experiences in which consultant-led changes resulted in nothing but redundancies. They may question why existing employees can't do what needs to be done - why an external consultant is needed at all. They will not necessarily understand the value you can add.

This can be really tough when you're first embarking in your new role of Independent Consultant. I certainly felt it in a big way early on in my consulting career. **You may feel a little like a goldfish in a bowl, swimming around on your own while everyone looks in on you.**

Does this sound familiar?

## 3. You're simultaneously running your own business

Whilst you must focus on providing phenomenal client delivery, you are also business owner, sole director and full-time employee of your company.

You are the Marketing Manager, Sales Manager, Accounts Manager, Bookkeeper, Website Designer and Administrative Assistant all rolled into one. You may have some part-time assistance, but basically it's all on your shoulders.

“  
The buck stops here.”

Sign on the desk of Harry S. Truman, 33rd President of the United States

It's not much different from the new restaurant owner who gets up at the crack of dawn to prepare for the first service of the day; is fully engaged all day and night satisfying his or her customers; and then has to cash up, prepare invoices, and plan the next day. Oh, yes, and there has to be some time allocated to sleep. **The responsibilities can be completely overwhelming.**

## 4. You need to be pro-active in seeking your next contract

As an Independent Consultant you are responsible for securing your next contract, at least early on. This will occupy your mind. There are a number of ways to promote yourself out there, some of which I list below:

- social Media e.g. LinkedIn;
- job boards on recruitment websites e.g. Linked In, Top Consultant;
- recruitment agencies;
- referrals from network;
- direct application to consulting firms



- your own website;
- networking events;
- posting articles / blogs;
- trade publications / newspapers.

**The questions are: where should you focus your efforts and where will you find the time?**

## 5. Your current business network may not be much help

Consider for a moment your current business network and ask yourself, “are these the best people to help me in getting Independent Consulting contracts?”

You may have an extensive group of 1st level contacts on LinkedIn, collected during your various business career roles. If you are new to Independent Consulting, your network may seem to be the most obvious and best route to obtaining your first contract. If, in fact, anyone in your network is currently deploying a consultant team or is looking to procure a consultancy firm, that’s good news for you.

However, **I more often see or hear about Independent Consultants who are hired back by a previous employer** to fill a role at what seems to be a good daily rate but is almost certainly less than could be secured elsewhere. Furthermore, it is typically just a task-based role - a contractor’s role, as I defined earlier. Whilst these opportunities may be tempting, I suggest they will end up frustrating you and ultimately slow your progress to your goals. It’s too easy to get stuck in the wrong role for too long.

## 6. Your previous business experience is not enough

**Success in business ≠ success as an Independent Consultant** – you’ve read that a few times already.

Now don’t get me wrong here - business competence, experience, and acumen are key ingredients to success as an Independent Consultant. You will be expected to have relevant content expertise. After all, you will be dealing with business managers and leaders every day, will need to speak the same language and have credibility.

Nevertheless, as a consultant, a catalyst for sustainable business transformation, you need to do things differently. You cannot conduct yourself as you did when performing your previous business roles.

“  
If you do what you’ve always done,  
you’ll get what you’ve always gotten.”  
Tony Robbins (life coach and motivational speaker)

**You need to learn how to transition from doing business to transforming business.**

## Avoid your biggest fears

Please read my last statement again, “You need to learn how to transition from doing business to transforming business”

**I’m going to be blunt here. If you don’t get this then you will never cut it as an Independent Consultant. If you do, but don’t do anything about it, then you may as well go back to doing what you did before and get what you always had - Consulting isn’t for you.**

And, believe me, failure as an Independent Consultant has ugly consequences, including:

- long periods of no or low income;
- short-duration contracts;
- inability to get extensions;
- lower daily rates than you think you deserve (or than you need);
- being forced into accepting the position, in effect, of an Independent Employee;
- losing face in front of your family and peers;
- financial disaster.

Nobody wants to suffer any of these. To avoid doing so, you need a new approach.

The next chapter describes what this is and some practical steps you can take now...

## TRANSFORM YOURSELF: 5 CRITICAL STEPS

I mentioned at the beginning of this report that there is **a single word that is critical to your transition from doing business to transforming business.**

**That word is TRANSFORM.** In this chapter, I will take you through what I see as the 5 essential steps you must take to transform your approach and set you on the right road to becoming the Independent Consultant of choice in your field.

At the end of each step there is a short exercise that I recommend strongly you complete in order to derive the most value.

### Step 1: Transform your Value Proposition.

Firstly, what do I mean by value proposition?

Well, think of it as the reason (preferably a unique one) that clients choose you over others; or the reason that a consulting firm would select you for a project as an Associate. It's what makes you different as an Independent Consultant.

Consider it your 30-second commercial. If this is all people read about you, then it has to contain everything they need to know to differentiate you from everyone else. Transforming your value proposition is a tough task but the time and effort you put into it will pay off as you seek new clients.

I was watching a TV cookery programme the other day and the host mentioned "signature dishes". Every great chef has one; it's what he or she is known for, it's what brings people into his or her restaurant and it's what tends to command higher prices. **Think of your value proposition as your very own "signature dish".**

Your value proposition as an Independent Consultant will be different from what you may have used in your business career. It should include 3 dimensions:

- clarifying your target business niche;
- emphasising your core content expertise;
- reinforcing your consulting credentials.

Helping you develop this in full is beyond the scope of this report; however, I'll give you some guidance here to get you started.

## Clarifying your target business niche:

By this I mean, clarifying which industry are you most familiar with and have the best understanding of. Then within this industry, is there a functional area that you have a specific expertise in or even a narrower niche within that functional area?

As an example, my main industry is Pharmaceuticals, with a core functional expertise in Manufacturing and Supply and a niche focus on packaging operations.

You may of course have more than one business niche and that's fine as long as you have a solid understanding of each. In my case I also have significant experience of marketing and sales in Pharmaceuticals, in particular sales force effectiveness.

## Emphasising your core content expertise:

This dimension relates to what you have achieved specifically within your business niche. Questions to ask yourself could be:

- what are the typical frustrations, issues, and /or concerns that you know businesses in your niche typically experience?
- what are the consequences of these concerns for them?
- what experience and successes have you had in designing and implementing solutions to these concerns?
- what results have you achieved?
- how has your approach been different or unique?
- how will the client benefit if it chooses to contract with you?

If you have some improvement metrics or proof of performance that can back up your claims of expertise, then that would be helpful. Always think through what differentiates you from your competition (e.g., “developed a unique solution for”, “recognised by the industry”).

## Reinforcing your consulting credentials:

Your consulting skills are, of course, paramount to your success as an Independent Consultant. I address this aspect in more detail in my discussion of **Step 3: “Transform your consulting capabilities”**. I will comment fully on how to build this dimension of your value proposition there.

So pulling this all together, you will need to integrate your target business niche and your core content expertise into a single statement, similar to the following:



**“An Independent Consulting professional with an in-depth understanding of (functional area) within (market / niche). Renowned for helping businesses transform their (key issue) through (what makes you different). Typical improvements in (key performance indicators) have been in excess of (benefit in terms of local currency or % improvement)”.**

You may have more than one value proposition - and that’s okay. In fact, it is more than okay. You may have to tailor a statement to a specific market or client need. General , though, if you’ve focused on areas where you bring the most value, you won’t find it neces ary to compose more than a couple of variations.

In “Next Steps” on page 36, I talk about the “Independent Consultant’s Index” where you can find more details about how to develop a compelling value proposition

### Exercises

- List the industries and functional areas with which you’re most familiar.
- Rank them in terms of your level of expertise or experience.

Target business niche		Ranking
Industry	Functional area	

- Identify the key issues you know clients in each of your target business niches typically experience and rank each of them in terms of potential cost to the business (high, medium or low).
- Then rank your level of expertise or experience in helping clients overcome these issues (high, medium or low).
- Finally, note what differentiates you from your competition. In your value proposition, you will want to focus on issues that have a high cost to the business and in which you have strong expertise - preferably unique.

Target business niche	Key issue	Business cost (H,M,L)	Your expertise (H,M,L)	What differentiates you?

- Have a go at pulling together the business niche and core content expertise dimensions of your value proposition, drawing from your responses above.
- Check out the final part of [Step 3: Transform your consulting capabilities](#) to complete your value proposition.

## Step 2: Transform your lead generation strategies.

Companies who rely on one lead generation method are taking an incredible risk. For example, let's say a company relies solely on Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) to attract leads, and it's near the top of the organic listings on the 1st page of Google. "Good news," I hear you say and it is indeed - until Google changes its algorithm (as it does) and that company disappears from sight in the rankings. It is then in big trouble.

This should be no different for your business.

Let's assume you choose to use a single recruitment agency to promote yourself to clients. First off, your potential access to assignments will be limited to those that the agency can find. And secondly, if the agency goes out of business or is unsuccessful in landing roles for you, then you'll be in trouble. [Never put all your eggs in one basket.](#)

In the previous chapter, I suggested a range of channels you could use to find opportunities and promote yourself in the market. You may find that some work better than others for you. Try a number of them, measure your results, keep using those that are proving effective and eliminate those that aren't. The key is to use multiple lead generation strategies. This gives you the greatest chance of landing the contracts you want in the shortest period of time.

I don't have the space here to elaborate on all of the possible lead generation strategies for Independent Consultants. However, I do want to focus on 2 of them:

- becoming an Associate; and
- leveraging your network;

### Becoming an Associate:

[Becoming an Associate for consultancy firms is a growing opportunity for Independent Consultants as we have seen earlier.](#)

Let's consider Associate opportunities provided by the largest consulting firms first. These opportunities certainly exist. A couple of my contacts within the larger consultancies tell me that they use Associates now and will look to do more so in future. "The Consulting Firm of the Future"<sup>4</sup> report to which I have already referred reinforces this view. This said, these will be tough positions to land for early career Independents. Independent Consultants with a successful consulting track record and business experience in a relevant industry are most likely to be chosen to fill these positions first.

<sup>4</sup>The Consulting Firm of The Future; Source Information Services Limited

**I am convinced, however, that a real, accessible and growing opportunity for Associates exists with smaller consultancy firms.** I'll refer to these as SMCs – Small and Medium-sized Consultancies. My viewpoint is backed up by the overwhelming opinion of my peers running SMCs. They have told me that they are struggling to find Independent Consultants with the right skills to staff projects. **SMCs are searching for capable Associates now.**

A pre-requisite to gain assignments as an Associate, though, is to have solid consulting capabilities – I will address this shortly in **Step 3: Transform your consulting capabilities.**

### **Leveraging your network:**

I have mentioned that your present business network may not be of much help to you in securing your desired roles as an Independent Consultant. You need to remain vigilant that you don't end up heading down the wrong path. This said, **it is worth reviewing every contact in your existing network to find out whether he or she is in a position to guide you to a suitable contract opportunity or refer you to someone who can.**

In any case, it's time to build a new network of people who may be better placed to help you achieve your goals. This should include other Independent Consultants (preferably those who have been doing it longer than you or who have transitioned from business roles), SMCs, and recruitment agencies that specialise in your market niche.

Regular posting on LinkedIn - whether your own content or commenting on others - will position you and your credibility.

LinkedIn is a good place to start. You can search for and contact individuals on this site. The Sales Navigator tool within LinkedIn can help you with this. In addition, joining relevant LinkedIn groups and contributing to these is another way to get noticed.

Trade Associations, such as IPSE (Independent Professionals and Self Employed) in the UK, offer another opportunity. These associations usually have networking events and /or forums in which you can get involved.

Bear in mind that your primary focus should be on how best to leverage your value proposition to win the contracts you want, at the rates you deserve.

**Exercises:**

- List the lead generation strategies that you currently use. Assess which work most effectively for you (i.e. high number of leads, good conversion rates). Rank the top 3, perhaps;

Lead generation strategies	<i>Most effective ranking</i>

- List other lead generation strategies you might try (check back on my earlier list or think of some new strategies);

.....

.....

.....

- Keep using the effective lead generation strategies and discard the ineffective ones. Test out some new strategies;
- Search out SMCs that are recruiting Associates and serve your target market niche. Get in contact;
- Review your current network and identify any past contacts who may be able to help you. Get in touch with them;
- Start building a new network through LinkedIn.

**Step 3: Transform your consulting capabilities.**

This is absolutely the most critical step in the entire process of transforming your approach. If you do nothing else, take action in this area. **Without strong consulting capabilities you will struggle to find the right assignments and will certainly not be considered for Associate roles.**

Reinforcing your consulting capabilities will be a key dimension in transforming your value proposition (Step 1) and will impact your approach to transforming your lead generation strategies (Step 2). It will also be key to transforming your operating style (Step 4) and will serve to guide you in transforming your time management (Step 5), as I discuss later in this chapter.

Let me tell you a short story - a personal, but relevant, experience.

I made the transition from business to consulting over 20 years ago. I joined Gemini Consulting, a remarkable organisation that brought together an eclectic mix of the brightest, most driven individuals with whom I have ever had the pleasure of working.

“  
When People Matter and Results Count.”  
- Gemini Consulting

Gemini was sought after by large organisations because of its track record of successfully transforming businesses and getting extraordinary results from their people.

I thought I would transition effortlessly into an effective consultant. After all, I had a great track record in business and had landed the role after a tough interview process. How wrong could I be?

Not surprisingly, the first couple of weeks with Gemini involved intensive training. This was when we were introduced to the consulting business, consulting skills and the consulting tool kit. People used to joke that this was when they put the chips in our necks! It was a whole new world to me - change models, brown papers, facilitation, RACIs, (roles and responsibilities), benefits cases. To be honest, I didn't really know what they were talking about half the time. In retrospect, however, I realise that this was a crucial step in the journey I was to make in consulting.

You also need to go on this journey. **If you're not willing to spend the time and effort necessary to develop your consulting capabilities, you should consider another profession.**

Before I describe what I mean by consulting capabilities in more detail, let me talk about business change.

If you Google business change, you will find tons of material on change management theories, principles, concepts and change consulting. Your search will reveal some useful articles that are worth your while reading. In fact, I have recommended one or two books for you in the Suggested Reading section at the end of this report.

It is important for you, as an Independent Consultant, to understand the process a business needs to go through to implement a sustainable transformation. You must know the phases, the critical success factors and the mistakes companies make. And then you need to select and use the right consulting interventions at the right time.

In my experience, there are 5 phases, common to the transformation of a single aspect of the business, a functional area, or the entire organisation. These are:

- **discover** what the burning platform for change is and what the prize will be;
- **design** new ways of working;
- **plan** how to engage the organisation in embracing the new ways of working;
- **implement** the changes across the business;
- **sustain** or embed the changes and realise the benefits of the prize

Within these 5 phases of business transformation, I have also defined 18 steps wherein consulting intervention could be required. But more about that later...back to the topic of consulting capabilities.

You may wonder why I use the word “capability” rather than “skill” or “competence”. Well, in my mind, you can learn a skill. If you can apply it, you can be competent. But to be capable, you need to be able to apply it at the right time and use it consistently to deliver your desired outcome. In short, a capability is embedded in your behaviour.

I like to split consulting capabilities into 2 categories:

- **core consulting capabilities** that can be used at any stage of a business transformation; think of these as your bread and butter if you like;
- **delivery capabilities** that are most relevant during one of the 5 phases of the business transformation process.

Let me give you some examples.

**Core consulting capabilities** include meeting and workshop management, facilitation skills, stakeholder management, giving persuasive presentations, mapping processes, using problem solving tools and techniques, giving and receiving feedback, effective team working, roles and responsibilities charting and project management.

**Delivery capabilities** are best considered in terms of the 5 phases of transformation, so these include:

- **discover**: visioning, strategy development, transformation mapping, using diagnostic tools and business case development;
- **design**: organisational engagement, current state mapping, opportunity identification, future state development, validation techniques, piloting / testing, quick wins;
- **plan**: implementation approaches, implementation planning, sustainability (embeddedness) planning;
- **implement**: implementation training, benefits tracking / use of dashboards;
- **sustain**: sustainability tracking, knowledge capture.



As you can see, there's a lot to master - and there are other consulting capabilities that I have not mentioned. However, the good news is that this can be done a step at a time. And as you get involved more in projects, especially if engaged as an Associate, you can accelerate your learning by observing and working with others.

In **Step 1: Transform your value proposition** I talked about how you will need to build a dimension on your consulting capabilities into your value proposition. To do this you will need to ask yourself questions like:

- in what types of transformation projects have you been successfully involved? If you are new to consulting, think of changes you have helped implement in your role as an employee;
- how is your approach to solving business problems different?
- is there a particular aspect of consulting that you have mastered and made your own?

Examples of how to *reinforce your consulting capabilities* could be:

**“Leading practitioner in leveraging the High-Performance Teams framework to deliver extraordinary results from project teams.”**

**“Strong track record of working with clients to develop vision statements and strategies to achieve them”.**

It may be a little early in your Independent Consulting career to do this but I have included it here for completeness.

### **Exercises:**

- Take a few minutes to capture your present level of expertise with regards to the consulting capabilities I have mentioned so far. I've listed some to get you started, but you may want to create your own spreadsheet to record your thoughts. I suggest that you make some notes on each, such as particular areas of strength. Think of the expertise levels in the table below as follows:
  - Entry level: Limited knowledge or practical experience
  - Skilled: Some knowledge and experience of using in business roles rather than a consulting context
  - Practitioner: Sound knowledge and some experience of using as an Independent Consultant
  - Expert: Expert knowledge and strong experience of using as an Independent Consultant. Able to coach others.

### Core Consulting Capabilities:

Core Consulting Capabilities	Entry level	Skilled	Practitioner	Expert	Not sure what it is	Notes
Meeting & workshop management						
Facilitation skills						
Stakeholder management						

### Delivery Capabilities:

Delivery Capability	Entry level	Skilled	Practitioner	Expert	Not sure what it is	Notes
Visioning						
Strategy development						
Transformation mapping						

- Highlight in your tables the core consulting and delivery capabilities where you feel you need the most development;
- Include a statement in your value proposition about any particular strength or differentiator in your core consulting or delivery capabilities. If you are not yet able to do this, make a note of it as an action point for the future.

## Step 4: Transform your operating style – become remarkable

**Let's reflect back on what I have discussed about client expectations.**

... “Injecting pace and momentum, challenging hard, shaking things up a little, getting the confidence of team members fast, aligning with the culture and values of the organisation... behaviours that can go a long way to reassuring a client early on that their money has been or will be well spent...”

If this is your natural *modus operandi*, then you're on the right track. If not, then it's time to consider how you need to change things.

If this is your natural *modus operandi*, then you're on the right track. If not, then it's time to consider how you need to change things.

Early on in my Independent career, I read a book by Seth Godin: *Purple Cow: Transform your business by being remarkable*.<sup>5</sup> It struck a chord with me.

It begins by telling the tale of Mr Godin's family travelling through the roads of France, enchanted by the hundreds of storybook cows grazing in lovely pastures right next to the road. After a while though, the new cows were just like the old cows and what was once amazing was soon common or boring. “A Purple Cow, though: now, that would be interesting. (for a while). The essence of the Purple Cow is that it must be remarkable.”

The book focuses on how and why you need to be remarkable in business to survive. Whilst it was written over 15 years ago, I believe the message is still just as relevant today, if not more so. **Being remarkable is something I have put at the heart of my business** and I include it here as the focus of **Step 4: Transform your operating style**.

I can give you a few pointers here but this is something you will need really to work out for yourself. Think clearly about how you operate today, how your client operates, test out new approaches, determine what works and what doesn't.

For example, if your client organisation's operating style tends to be everyone working in front of a computer screen, change this by making things visual. Print out project documents and stick them on the wall in your project area; write next steps on flipcharts and make them visible; run 10 minute “next steps reviews” every morning in the project space rather than tucked away in a meeting room; invite people outside the project team to get involved by walking them through the wall.

If there is a 9 to 5 culture in the business, then come in early and stay late for a period. Find a way of delivering value between the hours of 5 and 9. The large consultancy firms are very good at this, creating the perception that they work 24/7, which of course they don't!

<sup>5</sup> *Purple Cow; Transform your business by being remarkable* Seth Godin; 2003

**The mere act of using your consulting capabilities effectively should differentiate you from many others on the project team or within the business.**

I do have to tell you that in practice, sadly, I often find the opposite of what I am describing. I see some consultants who prefer to take the easier road and “go native” - forgetting what they are being paid quite highly to do and instead behaving as everyone else does. They then fade into the background and become, in effect, Independent Employees. This is the fast track to early contract termination, no contract extensions, no testimonials and an abrupt end to their Independent Consulting aspirations. So beware of this one!

**Exercises:**

- Reflect on your current or most recent client engagement. List what you have done that has been perceived as different or remarkable....and why.
- Select the activities that have had the most impact (top 5, perhaps).

Client	What have I done that is perceived as different or remarkable	Why	<i>Most impact ranking</i>

- Repeat this exercise for a number of clients
- List any other activities that could be great differentiators for you in future

Other activities to make me different or remarkable:

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- Now take your top 5 behaviours and weave them into future projects. Also test out some of the other activities that you have identified and see what impact they have.

## Step 5: Transform your time management.

This one will make a big difference to both your effectiveness and your sanity!

Given the client expectations of Independent Consultants that I covered earlier, **time pressure on client site is always going to be a way of life for a consultant**. Since you will be with the client team most days from early to late, this will then put pressure on everything else you need to do either for your business or personally.

Let's focus first on how you can transform your time management with clients and then move on to what you can do to optimise time in your own business.

Here are some techniques that have worked for me to free up time on client site:

“

Either you run the day, or the day runs you.”

-Jim Rohn (personal development speaker and author)

- limit the time that team members spend on email – maybe establish 2 or 3 windows per day;
- challenge the meeting mentality that all organisations have – for example, only allow attendance at meetings with objectives and agendas issued in advance;
- make sure that you manage even the simplest meetings effectively with agendas, time contracts and structure;
- use the 80/20 principle<sup>6</sup> to prioritise what you do - 80% of what you achieve will come from 20% of your time spent; identify what the 80% of your time is spent doing and allocate more of this to value adding activities;
- ensure you have the right project support – data analysts, administrative support, help to produce your PowerPoint presentations.

Your consulting capabilities will also benefit you enormously here. For example, understanding roles and responsibilities will help avoid duplication of effort. Effective stakeholder management will help to get recommendations approved first time. Solid project management will help deliver projects on time in full. **Do you see how the consulting capabilities are at the heart of everything that we do?**

What about when you're not with your clients? How do you find the time to run your own business, market yourself, keep abreast of your industry and develop your professional skills?

<sup>6</sup> “The 80/20 principle: The Secret Of Achieving More With Less”; Richard Koch;

For me, this comes down to one word: **Outsource**.

Of course, you can't outsource everything and outsourcing has a cost. The trick here is to **spend your time on the activities that will create revenue and profit for your business and outsource as much of the rest that you can.**

Examples of activities to spend your time on would be:

- developing and updating your value proposition;
- selecting and initiating your lead generation strategies;
- attending networking or trade association events;
- professional development - this has to be a priority if you wish to increase your daily rates;
- keeping abreast of your market trends and key issues – only you can do this, although you can subscribe to relevant RSS feeds, follow organisations on Twitter, join groups on Facebook or sign up to sites that collate market research on specific topics.

“

Those who spend over £500 per year on work-related training are more likely to earn a higher daily rate.”

- Benchmarking Survey; IPSE

My top suggestions for tasks to outsource are:

- writing your CV – there are companies that will interview you once to get input but then write the CV for you. Why not use professionals who do this for a living?
- creating your profile on LinkedIn and other networking sites – as above, there are companies who can do this for you;
- bookkeeping – there are many specialist organisations who will do this for you at a modest cost;
- managing your tax affairs;
- invoicing and payments;
- writing articles and blogs – you can draft an outline and get a professional copywriter to do the rest, at low cost using companies such as Upwork.com;
- marketing your services through certain channels.

You may be surprised to see “marketing your services” on the list for outsource. I have included it because once you are signed up as an Associate for a consulting firm or on the books of a recruitment agency, then they will actually be marketing your services to clients. Yes, you will need to promote your services in the first instance and there will still be a round of client interviews before winning an assignment but at least you have someone doing part of the work for you.

My closing message for this section is, **“Be ruthless with your time” – this will help you achieve more with your clients and focus on what's really important in your own business.**



**Exercises:**

- List the time management techniques that work well for you currently in optimising your time with clients. Which ones are the most effective? (Pick the top 5, perhaps.)

Time management techniques	<i>Most effective ranking</i>

- Are there any other time management strategies you might employ? (check back on what has worked for me or think of some new techniques).

Other time management techniques to use with clients:

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- When you are next on the client's site, reinforce the most effective time management techniques that you have used before and introduce some new ones.
- List the tasks for your business that you currently outsource.

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- List any other tasks you could outsource to free up more time.

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- What tasks do you want to spend more time on yourself in your business?

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- Develop a time management action plan for your business tasks (outsourcing / where to spend your time more) with target dates

Time management actions	When?

## IN SUMMARY

Let me summarise what I have covered in this report...

- I have defined an Independent Consultant as an **Independent Professional who is the catalyst for delivering sustainable business transformation;**
- **there could hardly be a better time to be an Independent Consultant** - the global economy is growing, business confidence is strengthening and the demand for Independent Consultancy services is on the up;
- new consulting models will provide greater opportunities for Independent Consultants as Associates with small to medium sized firms;
- if you are successful as an Independent Consultant the **rewards are fantastic;**
- Independent Consulting is different from business management;
- the thinking that success in business management = success as an Independent Consultant is flawed. **A new paradigm is required;**
- to make the successful transition from doing business to transforming business you must first **transform your approach** in 5 ways
  - Transform your value proposition;
  - Transform your lead generation strategies;
  - Transform your consulting capabilities;
  - Transform your operating style - become remarkable;
  - Transform your time management.

The exercises I have described are not an end in themselves, more a starter! If you haven't done so already, allocate some time to work through them – I know it will be time well spent.

Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg. There's a lot more to learn. Read on to find out how I can support you in the future...

## NEXT STEPS

This report is a key step in the distillation of many years of consulting knowledge, experience and learning. So, you may be asking yourself, “what’s next?”

As I said earlier, I have created **The Independents' Consultant**, an organisation dedicated to guiding and supporting you and other Independent Consultants globally.

The Independents' Consultant is your catalyst for delivering sustainable transformation in your own business. We will help you develop all the essential business transformation, consulting and project delivery capabilities to accelerate your journey from doing business to transforming business to becoming the Independent Consultant of choice in your field.

We have a set of online learning programmes that cover both the core consulting capabilities and the delivery capabilities. These are structured around the 5 phases of business transformation and the 18 steps within these phases where consulting interventions are possible. I have included everything that I have learnt over many years on how to set up and drive successful projects. None of this is theory – all the tools and techniques have been tried and tested successfully with clients. They have worked for consultancy firms, they have worked for me and they will work for you too.

The Independents' Consultant also gives you access to a dedicated Facebook page, an invitation only LinkedIn group and a LinkedIn company page. Through these you get access to articles and posts relevant to your role as an Independent Consultant and most importantly access to a network of other Independent Consultants.

Go to [www.TheIndependentsConsultant.com](http://www.TheIndependentsConsultant.com) to find out more about how we can support you in realising your full potential as an Independent Consultant

Before finishing I would just like to mention the Independent Consultant's Index. This is a unique self-assessment tool that will give you a snapshot of where you are on your Independent Consulting journey against 4 areas of your business, **Vision and Strategy**, **Professional Credibility**, **Consulting Capability** and **Marketing and Sales Competence**. It will help you establish what you wish to achieve and what the steps are to get you there; maintaining a focus though on how to gain and retain clients. You will identify where your opportunities for improvement are and develop a timed action plan for both the short, medium and longer term.

To find out more about the Independent Consultant's Index, [click here](#).

And finally...

I sincerely hope you've gained the value from this report that I promised at the start. Please do feel free to email me with your comments and thoughts. Any feedback will be much appreciated.

[clive@theindependentsconsultant.com](mailto:clive@theindependentsconsultant.com)

To your success



**Clive Mallard**

## Useful further reading

Publication	Author	Publisher	Relevance
<b>HBR's 10 Must Reads On Change Management</b>	Various	Harvard Business Review Press, 2011	Collection of ideas and best practice on how to make sustainable business change happen
<b>Purple Cow:</b> Transform Your Business By Being Remarkable	Seth Godin	Portfolio, 2003	The importance of being remarkable in your business
<b>The E-Myth Revisited:</b> Why Most Small Businesses Don't Work And What To Do About It	Michael E. Gerber	Harper Collins, 1995	How to run your business and do your technical work (i.e. consulting) at the same time
<b>The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People:</b> Powerful Lessons In Personal Change	Stephen R. Covey	Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 1989	Framework for adapting to change in business or personal life
<b>The 80/20 Principle:</b> The Secret Of Achieving More With Less	Richard Koch	Nicholas Brealey Publishing Limited, 1998 2011	How to focus on the activities that create the results in your business
<b>Who Moved My Cheese:</b> An Amazing Way To Deal With Change in Your Work And In Your Life	Dr Spencer Johnson	Ebury Publishing, 1999	How to deal seriously with change but not take yourself too seriously