

The Consulting Apprenticeship

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Chapter 12 Excerpt for Use Only at Cornell University

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WHAT A SAMPLE MANAGEMENT
CONSULTING DELIVERABLE LOOKS
LIKE

It is relatively easy to find papers, articles, and magazine publications written by those at management consulting firms. While these publications can be excellent sources of information, they tend shed light on the thought leadership, research base, and marketing aspects of consulting firms. For those that are trying to learn about consulting firms and the presentations they produce for clients to facilitate strategy and change, there is comparatively less public information that represents a concrete, traditional management consulting deliverable. In a large part, this is because many consulting engagements involve confidential relationships between the consulting firm and the client, and disclosure is not permitted.

In this chapter, I reference a number of examples of consulting deliverables (Note: most are public-sector deliverables). While not universally true, there are two themes that are widely used in consulting presentations:

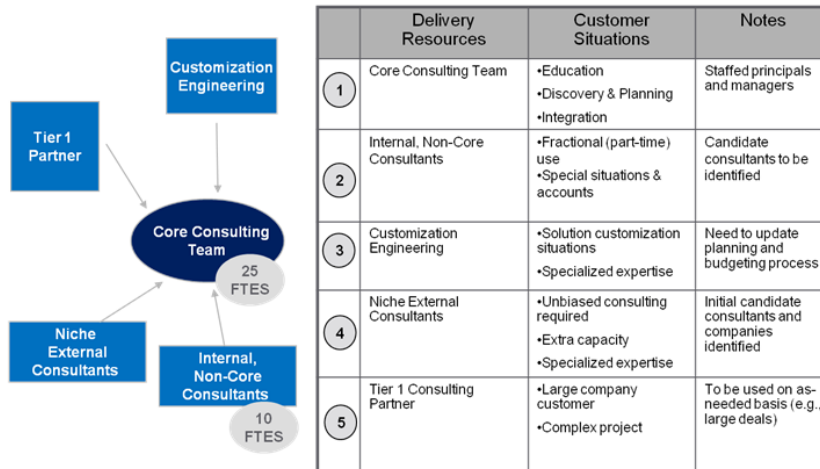
- The presentations reflect how best practice consulting should be driven by facts and a scientific approach to the fullest extent possible. For example, it is very common from presentations to contain both benchmarking information and comprehensive

analysis from numerous perspectives.

- In my opinion, the best presentations implement “key takeaway-style” as opposed to “topic-style” titling of slides. Key takeaway-style titling is a method that I did not have much exposure to before entering consulting back in the late 1990s, and to this day it is still a method that I infrequently see in corporate environments. See the figures below as examples.

Key Takeaway-Style

Delivery strategy will be based on core team of 25 FTEs with augmentation to address different situations



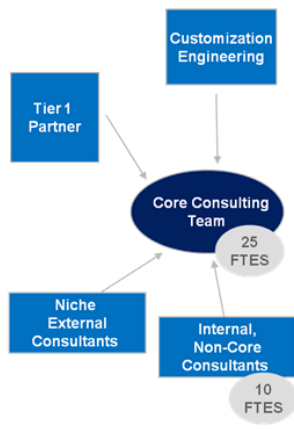
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Topic-Style

Delivery strategy



	Delivery Resources	Customer Situations	Notes
1	Core Consulting Team	•Education •Discovery & Planning •Integration	Staffed principals and managers
2	Internal, Non-Core Consultants	•Fractional (part-time) use •Special situations & accounts	Candidate consultants to be identified
3	Customization Engineering	•Solution customization situations •Specialized expertise	Need to update planning and budgeting process
4	Niche External Consultants	•Unbiased consulting required •Extra capacity •Specialized expertise	Initial candidate consultants and companies identified
5	Tier 1 Consulting Partner	•Large company customer •Complex project	To be used on as-needed basis (e.g., large deals)

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Notice how the title for the first slide reads, "Delivery strategy will be based on core team of 25 FTEs with augmentation based on situation." Even if one can't read the detailed figures in the slides, one can read just the titles of the slides to get the overall executive storyline. The title for the first slide makes it clear what the consultant wanted the audience to take away as the key message. It turns out that the primary focus for this slide was to support the financial budgeting process, and so the consultant wanted to point out 25 FTEs as the resource need for the core team. Now suppose that instead of key takeaway-style that topic-style titling was used. See how the second slide reads, "Delivery strategy." In this case one has to read the entire slide to try to extract the key message. And the key message that the audience takes away might end up being different from what the consultant wanted them to take away. In this case, one audience member might first look at the box on the left that reads, "Tier 1 Partner." They might conclude that the company needs to immediately work on its Tier 1 Partner relationship. Another audience member might look at the five types of delivery

resources and start to conclude that customer situation analysis scenarios are the most important thing to focus on. While these may all be good things to discuss, the consultant risks losing both attention of the audience and focus on the end goal.

Now it is important to caveat this discussion by mentioning that the presentation deliverable is only one type of deliverable by a consulting firm. It is also worth mentioning that it is easy to look at a deliverable and completely miss the process aspect of how consulting deliverables may be generated. The process may be equally, if not more important than the deliverable, and the process varies by consulting firm.

Takeaway Exercise: Broaden your perspectives by looking at sample deliverables from a number of consulting firms listed at <http://steveshuconsulting.com/2010/01/chap12-consulting-apprenticeship>