

Executive Summary of Research Assessment #4

As I continue to research the management consulting industry, I decided to focus on the skills I will need to develop as I begin working on my Original Work.

Research Assessment #4

Date: October 19, 2020

Subject: Skills of Management Consultants

MLA Citations:

"8 Key Consulting Skills Valued by Employers and Clients." Indeed Career Guide, 3 Sept. 2020,
www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/consulting-skills.

Assessment:

As I continue my research in management consulting - after completing an Original Work Proposal on my project plans - I focused on getting a better understanding of the skills of a typical management consultant. In an article that I found on *Indeed* called *8 Key Consulting Skills Valued by Employers and Clients*, I was able to expand my knowledge on the skills that I need to develop as my Original Work progresses.

As developing skills in management consulting-related areas is a part of my Original Work Proposal, I saw it fit that I first gained an understanding of the skills through research - even if it gives me limited understanding of those skills. From previous research, I know that management consultants must be analytical, so before reading the article from *Indeed*, I assumed most (if not all) of the skills that the article discusses would be centered around analysis. Also, I thought that the skills would be focused on connecting analysis with technology integrated methodologies. However, both of my predictions were actually incorrect!

Just like most of the articles I have read, this *Indeed* article provides a background on what management consulting is - but this background focuses on good consultants. It talks about how consultants “offer concrete and specific information” to develop a solution to a business’s problem or provide advice about improving business practices (*Indeed*). Then, the article moves onto discussing the skills associated with management consulting.

Before listing the various skills that consultants have, the article mentions that most consultants “spend [their] days gathering data, formulating a strategy and presenting a plan” to businesses in need of their services (*Indeed*). As for the skills the article lays out, they include: thinking creatively, conceptually, and practically; solving problems; communicating clearly and empathetically; collaborating with all levels of work; organizing/managing time; and having the ability to be curious and credible. Most of the skills that this article listed are skills that I will need to develop over the course of working on my Original Work. The reason why I say this is because I have little or no experience in the field of management consulting as mentioned in previous research assessments. Some of the skills that are mentioned may actually put me to the test of my limited knowledge as most of these skills are like a foreign language. After listing the skills that I will need to develop, the article goes on to provide much more detailed information about each individual skill.

The first skill that the article covers is creative thinking. Based on the article, creative thinking is the type of thinking that allows people to go “beyond the standard... ways of approaching the business of the industry” (*Indeed*). I believe that this is one of the many skills that I will need to develop not just because it is necessary for my future, but also because it is among my weaknesses. The way I think that I should approach developing the skill of creative thinking is through participating in discussions or interviews with professional consultants.

The next skill that the article dives into is thinking conceptually and practically. The article details that conceptual thinking requires consultants to “have a strong sense of intuition” as well as be “a visionary and innovative” (*Indeed*). As for practical thinking, the article describes how consultants need to “transform [others’ vision] into actionable items and deliverables” - all of this is achieved through “outline a specific strategy that narrows a business’s focus” by “[organizing] projects into their component parts, and [assigning] tasks” to benefit the client’s (or company’s) needs. I believe that this particular skill encompasses qualities that I possess as a calculative and assertive person - the need to be practical and the ability to conceptualize my thoughts into a final path or product. As I work on my Original Work, this is a skill that will be strengthened rather than be developed.

After talking about the skill of thinking conceptually and practically, the article reinforces that skill by discussing the skill of problem solving. The article mentions that

problem solving is a skill that consultants heavily rely on as they are asked to solve problems “without a great deal of advance information on issues they might be presented with” as they also need to “react quickly and thoughtfully to help propose solutions” for their clients and is considered to be “among the most valuable skills a consultant can possess” (*Indeed*). This is a skill that I think that is among my weaker skills as compared to the other skills on this list, but is definitely one of the stronger skills among those weaker skills. As I work through my Original Work, I think the best course of action to develop this skill is to work with my mentor or someone in the field to get a better understanding of how they use this skill in their jobs on a daily basis to get a feel for how to thoughtfully and promptly respond to a clients’ needs with advice.

The next skill that this article discusses is communicating clearly and empathetically. The *Indeed* article notes that consultants who communicate with their clients and the client’s employees “clearly, concisely and with empathy” - the empathy shown by consultants as they “[demonstrate] a willingness to hear how a problem is affecting the employees personally” (*Indeed*). This is definitely the weakest skills I have at this point in my tenure in ISM. Wondering why? Well, that’s because I am not the most empathetic person you’ll meet - this is because of how I value life; I value life in how successful it is, not by how good or bad it is. I will definitely need to work on this skill as I know for a fact that if I am going to be successful as a management consultant, I need to be more of myself when I present myself and my ideas to others. I have

discussed this need in previous research assessments as well as received feedback from my ISM peers about “showing” my true self.

The next skill that the article covers goes hand-in-hand with the previous skill as discussed above - the skill is to collaborate with all job levels. Now, this skill as the article puts it, requires “poise, politeness, friendliness, excellent listening skills and public speaking skills” (*Indeed*). The reason for this variety of skills is because as a consultant, I may be hired by “a company’s board, senior management or a specific department within a company” and since I am open to working with so many different clients, I must know how to interact with each of them (*Indeed*). This is a skill that I know I have, but one that requires that I develop it into professional style. I would like to connect with more professionals in the management consulting industry to visualize how those consultants interact with their varying clients and how to prepare prior to meeting with those clients.

Among the last few skills that the article discusses are organizational skills and time management. These two skills go hand-in-hand. Since companies are hiring consultants to provide advice, the consultants’ time and company’s time is most valuable, the consultants need to “conduct meetings with a sense of brevity and efficiency” (*Indeed*). The reason for this is because the consultants need to present themselves in a professional manner. I have firsthand experience with this particular skill when I prepared for Business Professionals of America competitions as I needed to

stay organized to be flawless when presenting to the judges. This is the strongest skill that I have that the article discusses, so it will only end up being strengthened as I work on my Original Work.

The second-to-last skill that this article talks about is curiosity. There's probably a question like: Why is curiosity such an important skill? Well, I had the same question. According to the article, curiosity is important for consultants because they need it to "[ask] thoughtful and focused questions" to their clients to better "understand how each business fits within the framework of its industry, and the ways a business may be innovating its product or its philosophy" (*Indeed*). Now, I understand why a consultant's curiosity is so important, because now I know that curiosity drives innovation for a company. This is a skill that I do possess, but is one the weaker ones. I hope to develop this skill by involving myself with professionals who get the opportunity to share how they use their curiosity to assist in driving a company's next product to success.

The final skill that this article delves into is credibility. Credibility is a vital skill that comes from a consultants' experience in the field and their reputation as someone who has helped companies and people in legitimate and measurable ways" (*Indeed*). I think of my credibility as low at this point in my life, but in order to develop my credibility, I will need to obtain my bachelors degree (then my master's degree), create a professional website (I am planning to change up my digital portfolio later on in my future), and do some college research to expand my knowledge further.

As I continue my research into management consulting, I think I will need to start connecting with professionals and my mentor to expand my experience with these skills to get a start on developing the skills I detailed in this assessment.