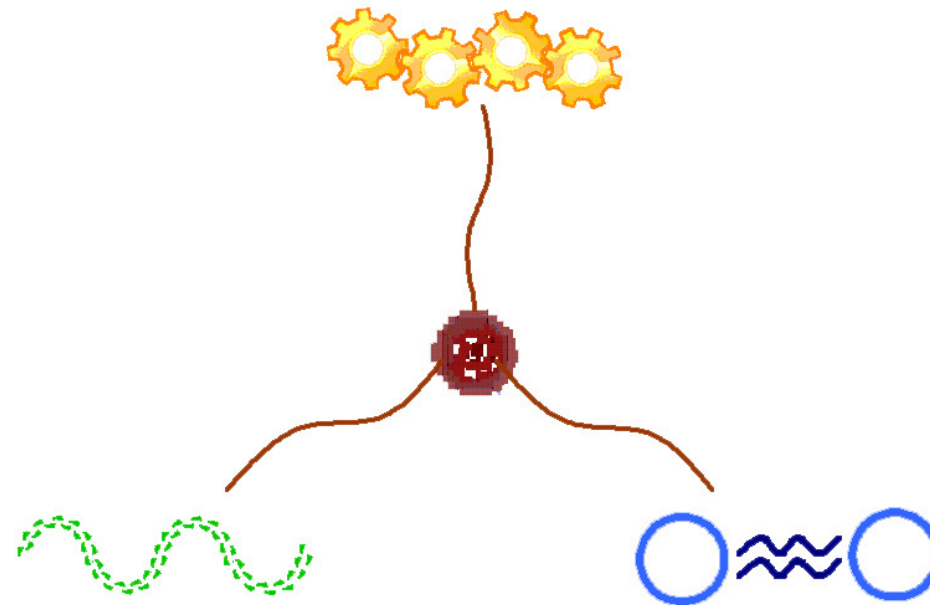


ACTING AS A LONG-TERM CONSULTANT: CHALLENGES FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

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GOALS

1. to develop a theoretical framework based on consulting experience
2. to describe the value of long-term consulting as one branch within different roles consultants can take in their engagements
3. to illustrate the important elements and challenges for
 - the consultant's practice
 - the consultant-client relationship
 - the consultant's business model
 - and the expertise the consultant is able to contribute

TOPICS – OVERVIEW

1. typical patterns in assignment of a long-term consultant
2. different phases in long-term consulting
3. types of clients for long-term consulting
4. three dilemmas in organizational consulting
5. three attitudes of long-term consulting
6. paying careful attention to the client's business
7. opening the client to the idea of a general development of the organization
8. personnel development
9. the client–consultant relationship
10. what can the long-term consultant do make the relationship stable?
11. managing one's calendar
12. stepping back as developmental intervention
13. expanding the consultant's team
14. four models of accounting
15. qualification profile of the long-term consultant

1. TYPICAL PATTERNS IN ASSIGNMENT OF A LONG-TERM CONSULTANT

- the whole consulting process lasts between one and four years
- there are phases of intensive involvement and phases of occasional involvement
- the leading consultant's assignment varies between 1 to 2 days and as much as 7 to 9 days per month
- the leading consultant's interventions range:
 - o from one-hour meetings to two-day workshops
 - o from 5 to 15 meetings per month
 - o from 5 to 20 people from the client's organization attending
- the number of further consultants engaged for different roles (consulting a special project, coaching a manager,...) ranges from 1 to 7
- these contributory consultants/trainers invest between 2 hours and 5 days per month

2. DIFFERENT PHASES IN LONG-TERM CONSULTING

1. create a highly structured process design at the beginning, combined with personnel development of talented people
2. instruct talented key people as internal project managers
3. empower talented people to do your job step by step
4. step back but keep time free for the client – knowing he will call you soon
5. help in times of crisis and chaos
6. help to get things off the ground or finished (do the work that is not finished)
7. be regularly available for feedback and additional help

3. TYPES OF CLIENTS FOR LONG-TERM CONSULTING

long-term consulting:

- is not possible with all types of clients in all industries
- calls for clients who are already sensitive to the importance of the general development processes in their organization

furthermore my experiences show that they

- run their business in a dynamic and prospering sector (or industry)
- have high ambitions and take high risks with their business
- have a clear professional vision about the client-customer relationship in consultancy
- have high expectations regarding commitment and operational availability of people working with them
- are highly interested not only in implementing facts but in learning through the consulting process

4. THREE DILEMMAS IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONSULTING

WAY OUT 1

WAY OUT 1: THE CONSULTANT AS "SERVICE PROVIDER"

client:

- knows what he wants and is looking for someone to provide it
- wants consultant to work for him, not with him

consultant:

- does what the client asks for
- is mainly focused on satisfying the client (and not on developing the whole system)
- truly believes that the client knows what he needs

moving from service provision to cooperation is not trivial and requires specific attitudes and skills on both sides

4. THREE DILEMMAS IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONSULTING

WAY OUT 2

WAY OUT 2:

CONSULTING AS A "COMPETITIVE DISCIPLINE"

- consulting takes place in a highly competitive field
- criteria for what constitutes successful consulting are not clear at all

two visible criteria for success:

- ability to charge high fees
- high name recognition

two problems with this position:

- less is sometimes more (combined with parallel learning on the client's side)
- client is used as an instrument for the consultant's own need gratification (psychodynamic view, Laske 2005)

4. THREE DILEMMAS IN ORGANIZATIONAL CONSULTING

WAY OUT 3

WAY OUT 3: THE CONSULTANT AS "GURU"

- alternative, esoteric and astrological methods in organizational consulting
- for example: translating methods of systematic constellation into organizational life as an attractive alternative for clients striving toward quick solutions with unorthodox methods

two positive aspects:

- they help to integrate "the person" and "values" into the organization
- they are quickly developed

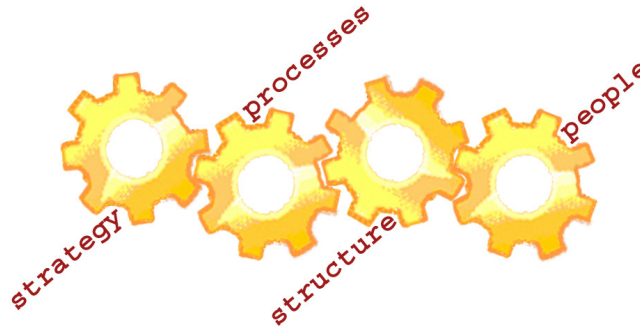
proplems:

- the danger lies the consultant's degree of professionalism (semi-professionalism)
- these methods elevate the consultant to a meta-position, as they must be studied for many years, which is difficult for clients – empowerment problem

5. GOALS OF LONG-TERM CONSULTING

speed

speed up the process (through working simultaneously on very different dimensions of the system = systemic approach)



empowerment

empower the client to take over as soon as possible on a higher level - through consistently combining services the consultant provides with learning opportunities for the client

creating value (performance & sustainability)

focus on the client's organization's underlying needs, combined with the consultant's own approach to what sustainable development for an organization can be

6. PAYING CAREFUL ATTENTION TO THE CLIENT'S BUSINESS

how:

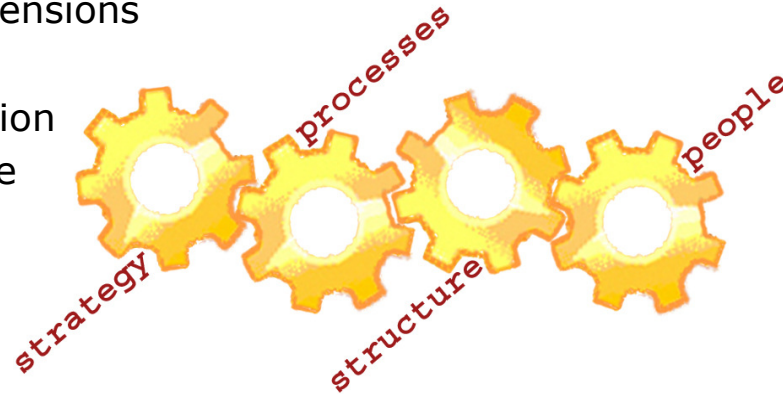
- exchange experiences with colleagues
- surf current internet sites and newspapers
- interview the client about his products and services
- accompany the client when he meets his client

goals:

- learn enough about the underlying logic of the client's business (not going into too much detail)
- be curious, but only as a driving force for being creative regarding the client's issues
- show interest as a basis for relationship building
- appreciate the client's expertise (equalize the high status of being a helper)!
- be a role model for learning (=not knowing) from the first moment !
- get a feeling for the processes the consultant can implement

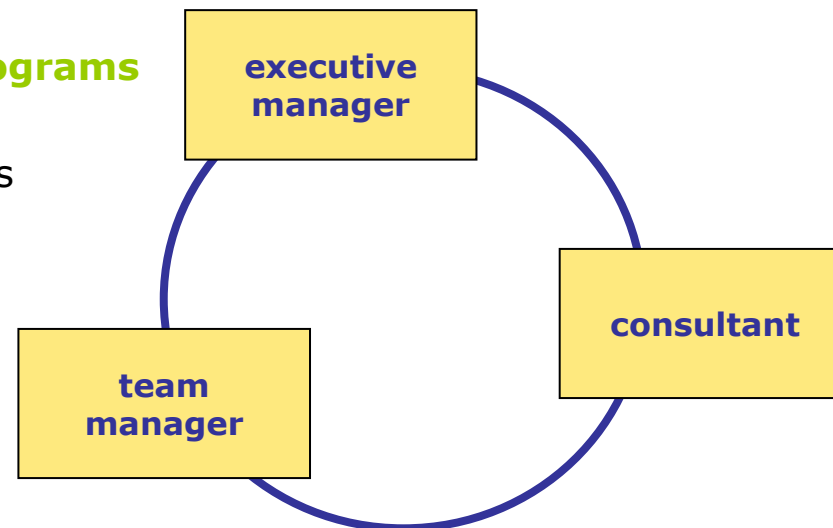
7. OPENING THE CLIENT TO THE IDEA OF A GENEREAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION

- simultaneously working on all four dimensions
- for example: business process orientation and people who know how to cooperate go hand in hand
- every contributory consultant/trainer has to focus on the whole
- consulting projects working on only one dimension produce unbalanced results, which in turn risk being rejected or isolated by the system !!!
- change processes are "interrupted" by new ones – development of the client's capability for change is a sustainable value
- more action-orientation on the part of the consultant – actively combining the dimensions (resisting the tendency to isolate)



8. STRATEGIC PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT REQUIRES

- intense alignment with all strategic and process issues
- the development of business oriented requirement and qualification profiles
- a potential analysis based on the **principles of self-insight**
- **managers who take responsibility** for creating structures for the learning
- **individualized development programs** monitored through **feedback and dialogues** between the developers staff and consultant.
- a long-term consultant who has expertise in understanding potential analysis



9. THE CLIENT – CONSULTANT RELATIONSHIP

- the long-term consulting process cannot be planned
- it must happen step by step along with the developing consulting relationship

psychodynamics of the consulting relationship:

- change required produces ambivalence on the client's side:
if help is needed, the process indicates limitations in his own capabilities
- ambivalence leads to resistance
- the energy of that resistance is projected onto the client-consultant relationship
- the quality of the consulting relationship is the bridge to successful change

10. WHAT CAN THE LONG-TERM CONSULTANT DO TO MAKE THE RELATIONSHIP STABLE?

1. consistently shift from services to cooperation
2. integrate intimate and strategic interactions
 - as role model for the acquired relationship between manager and staff (see basis for strategic personnel development)
3. bond with the people in the client's organization
 - change requires relationships that can be maintained while risks are taken
 - nowadays managers bond to their professional networks rather than to their companies
 - in long-term consulting processes some clients view friendship as the easiest way to bond
 - the long-term consultant is deeply interested in the people's development as professionals without becoming their friend
 - one challenge is bonding with "difficult" or aggressive individuals in the client system
 - such clients can create an adversarial environment for the consultant's work
 - the consultant behaves assertively but not aggressively continuing to offer to build a relationship

11. MANAGING ONE'S CALENDAR

- consultants grow up with the idea that being a successful consultant/trainer is equivalent to having a fully booked calendar
- paradoxically, consultants feel safe when they have little time left for clients
- responsibility is high for complex process whose length and direction cannot easily be predicted, which produces crisis symptoms
- this requires a calendar which is never fully booked over a long period; the consultant can always make an appointment within one or two weeks when really needed
- it cannot easily be combined with extensive training activities or a lot of other parallel activities
- the number of clients the consultant is able to work with in long-term processes is limited
- the demands on the consultant's energy level must also be carefully considered: the consultant cannot give top quality performance all the time; combining different activities can be both challenging and dangerous
- to be able to perform well over a long period, this cyclical involvement is crucial: consultants who try to maximize the level of their capacity utilization run the risk of becoming consultants of the previously described position 2 or, when they run out of energy, position 1

12. STEPPING BACK AS DEVELOPMENTAL INTERVENTION

- today more and more managers and experts have proper education in managing change and/or in organizational development
- the educated client has theoretical knowledge and the consultant can help him to put it into practice effectively
- stepping back is especially necessary when the talented people within the organization feel ready to take responsibility for the work the consultant has been doing so far
- ambitious managers are especially eager to manage the change themselves in order to “harvest the fruits” of their organizational change
- it is a special challenge for the consultant not to be the one who has it “done”

13. THE CONSULTANT TEAM /1

complex change processes require cooperating with consultants/trainers who have a personal approach to the culture and sector, and who are willing always to think of the whole system's development (thinking both as a specialist and as a generalist)

recruiting the best expertise or working with already engaged consultants – both mean developing new cooperation in real-time (lots of background discussion needed)

psychodynamic aspects

1. independence and alignment:

- it is more about playing one's part and searching for the broader rhythm of the whole process
- mutual interest, curiosity and help, intimate and strategic interactions are needed
- the lead consultant has to talk extensively about the context of a long-term consulting process

13. THE CONSULTANT TEAM /2

2. when client's ambivalence meets consultant's competition, simultaneously acting wholeheartedly, quickly and cost-consciously:

- multi-dimensional processes create a frame of how consultant's days must be invested overall
- this requires creativity in order to design each single process faster
- it also requires modesty in order not to sell as much as possible: extendend analysis and diagnostic phases are inadequate, and not every service requested by a generous client is really necessary
- using internal resources and sometimes taking action instead of spending more time on a well-designed process are crucial

14. FOUR MODELS OF ACCOUNTING

- the lead consultant does the complete accounting for the consultant team and allocates the expenses arising accordingly
- the lead consultant runs a "business" assigning other consultants
- the contributory consultant is asked to account for himself and deliver an agreed contribution to the lead consultant
- the contributory consultant is asked to bill the client directly

each method of accounting sends a different message to the client and creates a different psychodynamic situation between the consultants

15. QUALIFICATION PROFILE OF THE LONG-TERM CONSULTANT

the long-term consulting approach described here adds further practical challenge which are essential to the consultant's qualification profile:

- **broad experience of understanding and intervening in all four dimensions of corporate development (strategy, processes, structure and people)**
- being able to learn quickly about industries and products on a general level
- **having the creativity to produce more than one benefit at a time:**
for example, a process designed for change results in a handbook for managing the process in the future, while at the same time the people involved learn how to carry out the change and a working structure for managing similar processes is developed (*see H. Lobnig Strategy paper*)
- **having management skills (being able to set goals, take action and fill in for lack of managerial action in the client's system) and at the same time being able to step back when necessary**
(*see O. Sutrich Kairos profile*)
- being highly oriented to **developing easy but sustainable structures and people in a long-term perspective**
- understanding the **psychodynamic of people** in change and being able to **intervene at a psychological level** (*see K. Motamedi: Neurotic styles*)

16. FINAL REMARKS

all actions are oriented towards the development of the **whole system** – this requires a general qualification in all dimensions of systems – and a lively interest in new developments in all these areas

psychodynamic knowledge is becoming more crucial in order to handle the long-term consulting relationship

team orientation and mutual respect between cooperating consultants is crucial and challenging – consulting companies sometimes provide "first line" and "second line" consultants

long-term consulting is a good basis for **providing help in crisis – helping by means of small interventions**