

## When a Company Needs a Business Consultant

My consulting practice is built upon the value proposition of “Helping Companies Conquer Their Financial Challenges.” All companies encounter challenges, even when things are going great. In order to help these companies, I need to be in the right place at the right time. I am often called upon to lend assistance when a problem has become a serious situation from lack of attention, instead of when the initial warning signs are starting to become exposed. My challenge in serving clients is educating executive management to be able to identify problems early on and to know when they need to call for assistance.

One reason for this challenge is that many times management doesn’t know that they have a problem. G. K. Chesterton, an English writer once said, “It isn’t that they can’t see the solution. It is that they can’t see the problem.”

Some companies are able to fix their problems on their own. They know when they have a problem. They identify the cause of the problem and map out a path to resolution. They enlist the required resources and track problem resolution status. However, many companies, maybe most companies, don’t always see problems heading their way and when finally ready to tackle them don’t handle the problems in the most effective manner.

There are four stages of problem identification:

1. “There is no issue. Everything is fine.”
2. “I think we may have an issue. We should probably look into that.”
3. “Houston, we have a problem. We need to deal with it before it gets worse.”
4. “We should not have ignored that problem. We now have a crisis on our hands.”

Obviously, addressing a problem at its earliest stage is probably the most efficient and effective way to deal with it. When addressing a problem at any of the above stages, a company should evaluate whether it has the capabilities to adequately address and solve the problem. Unfortunately problems don’t come with a warning siren or flashing red light to help us put resources towards the more important issues or problems each day. Seeing the warning signs of a problem is often a matter of experience, but there are reasons that a company may ignore them:

*“I did not see that problem coming.”*

Managers learn on the job. Lack of managerial maturity sometimes causes problems to remain undetected slipping between the cracks to grow like a weed, developing deep roots and becoming difficult to eradicate.

An experienced business consultant that has periodic contact and is familiar with an organization can bring a fresh perspective and independent eye to highlight potential problems before they arise.

*"I see the problem but do not know how to fix it."*

Many business problems arise once never to arise again. This means that some problems are rare occurrences for which management has no prior basis of experience to rely on.

An experienced business consultant has served multiple clients facing similar problems. He/she can help navigate to problem resolution based on what has worked in the past and apply those strategies to your problem.

*"I will take care of that first thing tomorrow."*

A manager arrives at the office first thing with good intentions to handle the problem that has kept that manager up all night. Two hundred emails, six meetings, and twenty phone calls later the manager might be ready to head home for the day, but did not have time to look into the problem. He/she plans to handle it first thing the next day.

An experienced business consultant can be a resource when there is a task or project that requires content expertise and undivided attention.

*"We have always done it that way."*

Companies get stuck in ruts. Managers use their personal experiences as a basis for making decisions. Sometimes what gets a manager in trouble is that past practices no longer work or are not applicable in the current situation. Unfortunately, the manager does not have a reference point for handling it any other way.

An experienced business consultant can bring best practices to an organization based on similar client experiences.

*"That is going to ruffle some feathers."*

Sometimes it is difficult for management to do what it knows is right and may consider conflict avoidance because of the potential human aspects of the situation.

An experienced business consultant understands how to address difficult situations and manage personnel challenges. The consultant can be used as the catalyst for change and deflect some of the negative repercussions away from management.

Experienced managers see problems on the horizon. Capable managers know when they need help. Prudent managers know when they are in trouble. Smart managers enlist the aid of an experienced business consultant to help them conquer their financial challenges.

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