

BAM Management Consultancy Network	
Coffee chat: 21st June 2023 08:30 – 09:30 on Zoom	
Aims	
<p>The topic of our coffee chat this month was:</p> <p><i>What are the specific ‘soft’ behavioural skills that consultants need that differ from those required in conventional management roles, or require a much higher level of effectiveness?</i></p>	
Emerging themes	
1.	Managers manage continuity, consultants manage discontinuity. Increased automation of processes mean that managers are increasingly engaged in managing discontinuity in the form of projects. The roles of managers and consultants are therefore converging.
2.	Consultants need well-honed political astuteness. They know the client hierarchy from an organisation chart, but they do not have the tacit knowledge of where the power lies. Reading the room, identifying who holds informal power in a group by observing them, is a useful skill.
3.	Consultants must be able to cope with the ambiguity of not knowing how everything works whilst making inputs that are perceived by the client to be valuable. They must become skilled at combining their outside knowledge and expertise with the client’s inside knowledge
4.	Consultants must be able to sell a solution, gain trust and maintain buy in. They are often required to sell a message that the client may not wish to deliver themselves. Sales skills are important to secure an assignment in the first place; building trust is key for consultancy sales.
5.	Consultants must adapt their behaviour and even their personality to meet the expectations of the client and build a productive relationship. They need to become aware of how their persona and reactions trigger other people and manage them accordingly. They become skilled at presenting their consultant “face”.
6.	Consultants need to be able to empathise with the client’s issues and play them back. As the consultant – client relationship progresses, they may form a bond. However the consultant should not allow this to cloud their judgement if their contact is the source of a problem.
7.	Consultants bring in best practice but what works well is not universal and they need the skills and creativity to understand how implementation and resistance can be managed.
8.	Consultants must be able to attune to the cultural context of the client organisation and its readiness to implement change. They need to understand the impact of the change to be implemented, and the potential skills mismatch.
9.	Consultants need to be able to transfer skills and knowledge to the client and deliver change in a sustainable way that ensures longevity of the recommendations
10.	Consultants need the emotional intelligence to be able to cope with difficult relationships where the client’s attitude may be the result of their own personal predispositions.

11.	Consultants need the courage of their convictions and the skills to disagree with a powerful client. How to challenge a client is an important decision, whether to do it in a meeting with others present or arrange a one-to-one conversation. It is important to be respectful, especially when the client is older and in cultures where age commands respect. Tone of voice is important, one has to stay calm but be confident in the message.
12.	If the client challenges the consultant, the consultant also needs good judgement and listening skills – the client may have a point! The consultant will have to be able to think on their feet, in a stressful situation. They must avoid coming across as arrogant.
13.	Consultants are usually in the position of going to the client. They also need the skills and ability to manage and leverage situations where the client comes to them.
14.	Consultants working with family businesses may have to understand and work with family dynamics as well as business ones.