
Management Consultancy: What Next?

Fiona Czerniawska (PALGRAVE, London; 2002;
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We consultants are often so busy that we forget to sit back and reflect on where our profession is going as a whole. We need an objective observer (devoid of tabloid sensationalism and pejoratives) to give us that perspective—and Czerniawska does just that. She has done so in prior books and continues to do so in her recent effort, which updates her view of what's in store for consultancies in the dot.bust aftermath of the dot.com era.

She divides the book into two sections—her analysis and prognoses for the profession, and a summary of interviews with each of 18 prominent consultants across the industry. Both parts of the book make good reading, although the first part is repetitive (which does get the message across) and suggests its origin in articles or white papers. If you are thinking about changing your specialty or method of delivery, you'd best read her analysis and the comments of the consultants she's interviewed before doing so.

The bad news about consulting to management is that client demand is shrinking, and one-stop-shopping consultancies are on their way out. (Enron can only be presumed to expedite that trend!) The good news is that despite the bandwagon race to incorporate technology into consulting, and the subsequent recent decline in demand for consulting services, pragmatic consultants need not despair, as the future holds out continued opportunity for those with *practical experience*, not just theory. Niche markets for small consultancies will also continue as larger firms look to partner with experienced consultants rather than to develop all capabilities internally. The traditional consulting model may change, but there's still plenty of consulting opportunity out there for consultants who can fit into these new paradigms. Czerniawska peppers her commentary about this with many clarifying diagrams.

Management Consultancy: What Next? is worth acquiring and reading as a good reality check on the services you and your firm provide, and how they can match up against forecasted market demand. It may just be the prod you need to better fine-tune your own service offerings and marketing plan.

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