

ON POINT

executive briefing report



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Key Points:

- > Good consultants prefer to deal in facts and avoid rumors and conjecture.
- > Good consultants sift through a lot of data and continuously weed out the irrelevant.
- > Good consultants plan and think ahead, typically on paper.
- > Good consultants like to bounce ideas off the client to "test" ideas and potential solutions. They come up with emerging hypothesis as they start collecting information or the project moves forward.
- > Good consultants are like the best executives. They have very similar qualities as described in this report.
- > The difference between the good executive and the good consultant is that the executive cannot always tell you the truth. That's called politics.
- > The good consultant knows they must tell you what they see, even if it not "popular". Because they are good, they are not afraid of losing a client because of telling the truth.

For more information on this subject or for more information go to: www.josephbmurphy.com or contact Joe Murphy (see below)

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Professional Qualities v. 4.05.05A

10 Qualities To Look For When Hiring Consultants (Or An Executive For That Matter)

Good consultants possess some form of special expertise. This expertise can come in the form of: experience, knowledge, talent, and skills. They make this expertise available to you the client in order to help you with some problem or specific need.

To many this is obvious. What's not obvious are the qualities a consultant running an important project or engagement must possess to ensure its successful outcome. Whether you are hiring an individual consultant for a specific task or whether you are hiring a firm for a project that requires a team of consultants, these ten qualities can be critical and are often overlooked, if not completely understood.

Below is an encapsulation of the ten qualities for you to interview for that makes up the qualities of a very successful consultant, engagement lead or for that matter, an executive that may become a permanent member of your staff.

1. **A Pentchant for Facts:** The good consultant is drawn to facts. They get behind the superficial and they dig. They insist on facts and facts only. Then they verify the facts for accuracy. They don't make decisions on opinion or conjecture alone. They may start there, but then they validate by looking for facts.
2. **Sift and Filter Out:** A good consultant applies a filter or screen to sift out the extraneous. They weed out data and discard it when they find it irrelevant to the key matter at hand. They cut through facts, opinion and emotions that may cloud the issue. They neatly summarize what the issues are and what needs to be done.
3. **See All Sides and Angles:** The good consultant sees all six sides of a box and then they peer inside. They just don't look at the top of the box and open it. They see the problem from multiple angles and viewpoints. They don't skim the surface of an important issue. They do a "deep dive". They attain the relevant facts and they begin to create alternatives and multiple approaches to solving an issue or problem.
4. **Think Ahead:** The good consultant sees the steps and actions that must occur in order to get something done. Whether it is a meeting or the project itself, they "play down the board" as they say in chess, looking at the steps and seeing the variations of each potential move. They see the consequences and risks of each move beforehand and they prepare for the risks and the unexpected so they can act and respond immediately.
5. **Avoid Quick Fixes:** The good consultant avoids quick fixes and abhors catch phrases like, "boil the ocean" and bromides. They refuse to accept verbal solutions or verbal brush offs like when someone says "We're talking about reality", that are usually used to conceal problems.
6. **Precision:** A good consultant is precise, especially when it comes to speaking and writing. They look for ways to convey whatever it is they are trying to communicate so that there is no confusion. They avoid pontificating and they try their hardest to get across their points and make sure that they understand others.
7. **Self Discipline:** A good consultant is very disciplined and this translates into getting the task done with a commitment and dedication to the work that only serve the client's best interests. They do not cut corners on important matters and they do not approximate and rationalize in order to justify errors.
8. **Honest to a Fault:** The good consultant is honest to the point that they may lose potential future business in order to serve the client's interests. They will tell the client things the client may not want to hear but has to, in order to help the company avoid future problems. This does not mean that the good consultant does not sweat prior to delivering a hard message. They sweat to find the right words in order to deliver the message tactfully.
9. **Reliable:** The good consultant can be counted on to do what it was they said they would do, in the time frame and in the manner they committed to doing it. The client is hardly ever surprised or blindsided. If the consultant cannot do whatever it is that was promised, they tell the client immediately and explain why it cannot be done.
10. **Leadership:** The good consultant is a good leader. They build teams, communicate and work through others to get things done. They look for common goals and create a vision of the future through the project. They share or pass on the credit readily to others, subordinate their own needs and make themselves part of the team. They persuade, cajole and roll up their sleeves to do the dirty work that everyone else has to do. The good consultant knows the difference between management and leadership and when to apply either skill.

You can interview for these qualities through well phrased questions. But the best way to find out whether the consultant, team lead or executive you are looking at hiring possesses these qualities is through prior work. That is you must talk to client references where they performed and worked with the people who made up their teams.