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**INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS CONSULTING - BEST PRACTICE BEHAVIOURS IN SELLING CONSULTANCY SERVICES TO CLIENT ORGANISATIONS**

NOTE: “Project” is a generic term to describe any task that a consultant takes on for a client organisation. “Procurement” is a generic term to describe the process and, where context requires, the client’s purchasing department.

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**PREAMBLE:**

- consultancy services are often sought at short notice and with a degree of urgency from the client organisation. Where client needs/requirements are ill – defined Consultants may consider the safest course from their perspective will be to offer/persuade the client towards solutions that address the broadest range of issues, rather than hone-in to the client’s real, underlying needs. This in turn can result in a sub-optimal match between project requirements and type/grade of consultant.
- client company seniors, who are often the people actually making the initial contact with a consultant, are sometimes unaware of, or ignore, their own procurement requirements. This can lead to project initiation before the client requirement has been properly defined. It may in extremis result in nugatory work for the consultant organisation, especially where it is later determined that the Project will be better serviced by a formal (consultancy) market test.
- to avoid these problems, consultants are in a useful “gatekeeper” position in being (a) the subject matter expert, where the client will usually have less knowledge (b) self-contained viz a viz clients who may have a number of disparate stakeholder groups and (c) often directly engaged with all stakeholders, whereas within the client organisation there may be a level of disconnect between stakeholder groups.
- in this situation the client looks to the consultant to try to ensure during the different phases of a Project lifecycle that the following *best practice behaviours* are observed. However this is a 2-way street and the client must also endeavour to be an intelligent client and enable the consultant to obtain an accurate appreciation of the overall client requirement and the context in which the solution is required. Only then can the consultant optimize resources against that solution.

- the Best practice behaviours below are drafted with the behaviours of the consultant seen as the principle driver, with the contrasting behaviours of the client indicated in the way that they will assist the consultant to best meet the client’s real needs.
- it is recognized that the client “is king” and that there is a limit to the extent to which the consultant can assist an unwilling client to do things in “the right way”. These best practice behaviours require the consultant to use reasonable endeavours to engage with the client in such a way that help the client to focus on deliverables.
- it is expected that application of these behaviours will be mutually advantageous over the longer term, especially where both parties seek to develop a longer term, ongoing, commercial relationship

| Consultant best practice behaviour required                                                     | Commentary and Recommended Actions                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Equivalent best practice client behaviour                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <b>Project sourcing phase</b>                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Interact with appropriate personnel in client organisation                                      | Discuss with the client the range of people with a legitimate interest in the Project. Make effort to engage proactively with them.                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Make available personnel who can assist the consultant to obtain the necessary insight into the client’s requirements. If competitive tender is underway, treat all consultants equally.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Be proactive in suggesting to client key measures through which future value-add can be tracked | Projects ultimately are about adding value to the client organisation. Discussion of realistic, achievable and measurable “key measures” should be initiated early in discussions – generally not later than the second pre-contract meeting with the client                                                                           | Engage with internal key stakeholders early-on, ideally before initiating discussions with consultants, so as to have a clear idea of the outcomes required and possible measures the client would find useful                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Understand client’s purchasing process. Act within letter and spirit of that process            | <p>Most larger client organisations will have a formalized process. Discuss openly with client that process. Acknowledge the likelihood that a competitive process will be used.</p> <p>Do not bypass the purchasing-acquisition process. These processes are to protect both parties, so consultants are expected to observe them</p> | <p>Avoid encouraging consultants to undertake considerable up-front work, only to find they are later in competition with others.</p> <p>If considerable up-front work is required in order to define requirement fully, consider placing a small contract for project definition work only. Ensure that that consultant is not subsequently invited to project execution phase (preferred strategy) or that the project definition consultant has no advantage over others who will be</p> |

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| Remind client company Seniors that there is a purchasing process with which they may need to engage                       | Client Seniors will often, in the rush to move Projects forward, forget/ignore due process. As this can frustrate Project initiation and lead to re-work. Consultants should use 'due diligence' to ensure that their opposite is aware of the need for "Procurement" engagement early in the acquisition process.                                                                                                                                                                 | Where contact with consultants is initiated by Client Seniors, then ensure the client's procurement department is aware or at the very least is brought-in in sufficient time to enable the appropriate market test. Do not deliberately favour one consultant over others. Exercise a degree of detachment and recognise there will generally be a range of suppliers that can meet the client's needs. It is in the best interests of all stakeholders that the market is appropriately tested. |
| <b>Project execution phase</b>                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| apply the right grade/level of resource to the Project. Only change personnel during a contract if absolutely unavoidable | Discuss with the client the range of grade options possible, and achieve clarity about the optimum grade mix for the Project.<br><br>If a change of personnel, or a consultant promotion during a Project is a possibility, the advise client proactively before Project is initiated.                                                                                                                                                                                             | Form an opinion of what type of consultant will be best suited to undertake the various sub-elements of the Project work. Monitor grades of personnel actually applied.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| interact with appropriate personnel in a client organisation                                                              | Discuss with the client who/what are the range of people with a legitimate interest in the Project. Make an effort to engage proactively with them.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Make available the right personnel. Advise any personnel who may unwittingly be drawn into discussions the limits of the information they should share with the consultant.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Provide relevant and timely management information ("MI") sufficient to keep client fully informed                        | At the commercial level both parties need to keep abreast of progress on Projects. Neither party wishes to invest unduly in the collection, dissemination and analysis of such information. However such information generally is, or should be, readily available to the Consultant. Accordingly the Consultant is expected to collate and disseminate such information in strict accordance with the terms of any contract and/or framework agreement that may also be in place. | Decide in advance the sort of MI that will assist you as client to ensure the project stays on-track.<br><br>Ensure that contract deliverables, including MI, are provided on time.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

| <b>Project conclusion phase</b>                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                             |
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| Disengage in accordance with the terms of the contract                                                 | The client may want to keep the supplier engaged to do other work. This is not in the best long term interests of either party.                                                                     | Client should not allow scope creep. An appropriate <i>contract change process</i> must be in place.                                                                        |
| Do not initiate new projects as extension of existing contract. Require client to provide new contract | It may seem quick and easy to both parties to extend an existing contract to cover other work. Use sparingly, as this can inadvertently lead to scope creep which may lead to later recriminations. | Let the buyer beware! If scope creeps then this may highlight control and management deficiencies within the client organisation.<br><br>Keep the procurement team engaged. |