



The Telecom Consultant Bulletin

Insights, Viewpoints & Facts
from Telecom's Influencer Community

Produced by [The Brookside Group](#)

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This Month's Theme: How To Effectively Work With Consultants

Welcome!

The objective of this month's Telecom Consultant Bulletin is to shed and share some insights on how vendors can more effectively work with and support consultants; both as an ongoing source of information/support and when working with consultants during the sales process.



Next month, we will turn the tables and offer insights on what consultants need to do better in working with and seeking the support of vendors.

Both sides need to better understand the quid-pro-quo required for a successful and effective consultant/vendor relationship, i.e., one that creates new business opportunities for both parties and provides the best solutions for their mutual customers.

Feel free to email (msawka@brooksidegroup.com) or call (973-543-6765) me anytime with any questions, to discuss any of our insights or to suggest how we can make this monthly bulletin of more value to you.

I hope everyone had a great summer!

Sincerely,

Mick Sawka
The Brookside Group

Consultants' Market Views

Working with Consultants - How to Make the Best of It
by [Byron Battles](#) & [Richard Hathaway](#)

A consultant can fill many roles depending on the client's requirements: subject matter expert, confidential advisor, "answer" person, solution architect, "bullet catcher", or even several roles simultaneously. The most likely role in which you [vendors] will encounter the consultant is in his/her role as "client advocate."

And why does the client need an advocate? Consider your initial approach: you are prepared with new glossy brochures and a bullet point technical story to tell the prospective customer everything he or she needs to know about your product and how it will solve problems, save money, generate revenues, and address other business issues. Of course you are well prepared...and so are all of your competitors.

Who is the client to trust and believe especially since this may be the first time in ten years they have shopped for a new telecommunications system? As the client's advocate the consultant has gone through the process more often, is familiar with a wider range of products, and can apply valuable experiences gleaned from other similar projects.

The consultant helps the client navigate through the inherently subjective selection process in a structured, rigorous, and objective manner, so that facts, figures, and client-specific mission requirements are highlighted and considered with the appropriate weight. Finally, the consultant's job is to help identify the "best value", not necessarily the lowest cost, solution.

So, a consultant is in the picture, and you need to make the best of it. Here are some "do's and don'ts" in dealing with consultants.

DO...

- Find out if the consultant is *truly* independent, i.e., the only remuneration he/she receives is from the client, i.e., no commissions, kickbacks, or finder fees. You can check with your Consultant Liaison Program (CLP) manager for that information. [As well as other pertinent background information on the consultant]
- Introduce yourself to the consultant. [Hold a joint meeting or conference call with your CLP manager and the consultant]
- Ask what the protocols for contact and communications will be during the process.
- Provide accurate and objective information in a timely manner.
- "Dial-back" the high pressure sales approach.
- Listen and learn as much as possible about the client's business requirements first, then figure out what technology will meet them.
- Maintain a professional approach. This is not personal, it's business.

DO NOT...

- Go around the consultant to reach the customer directly. That is a primary reason the consultant is on board.
- Assume that all technologies will address customers' issues equally or in the same manner.
- Bash your competition. It diverts your focus and can raise doubt about your solution's capabilities. Concentrate on your strengths, not another vendor's weakness.
- Rely on market research too heavily. After all, everyone is "number one" in something.

While this is not a comprehensive list of what or what not to do, this should provide a starting point for you to consider in how to approach your next consultant-related opportunity. Remember that a professional independent consultant will work hard to ensure a level playing field for all vendors in which the client's best interests are served. A level playing field may be in your best interest as well.

About the Authors:

Byron Battles is the Principal of [The Battles Group](#), LLC, based in Silver Spring, MD and works with a mixture of commercial and government clients. Rick Hathaway, Principal of RLH Telecom Solutions, LLC, has significant experience with healthcare and call center clients. They are the current Past President and President, respectively, of the Society of Telecommunications Consultants ([STC](#)), the largest professional association of independent telecom consultants in North America.

Brookside's Market Views

Working with Consultants - Know Your Audience

by Mick Sawka, The Brookside Group

Consultants know why vendors reach out to them and provide information and support through Consultant Liaison Programs (CLPs), web portals, conferences, webinars, field sales, channel referrals, etc. They know the vendor is trying to educate and "sell" them on its products and services as the best solutions for the consultant to recommend to his or her clients.

"Sell" is the operative word here. In order to effectively sell anything to anyone, you need to know your target audience and design your products, services and sales strategy specific to their needs, wants, characteristics, personalities, etc. Most vendors understand this and do this for their customers. Herein lies where vendors often fall short with consultants.

Far too often, vendors reuse or repackage customer sales/marketing collaterals, web pages/portals, presentations, events, etc. for consultants without fully understanding the role consultants play, how they work with their clients, and specifically what, where, when and how they need information and support from vendors. I have seen many consultant/vendor encounters fail because the vendor simply reused what was developed for their customers and the vendor "presenter" did not know the consultant audience.

It is critical for vendors to invest the time and resource to fully understand the role, operations, characteristics, client mix and support needs of consultants at each stage of their client engagements, e.g., baseline, plan, design, evaluate, deploy. Consultant information (content) and support resources can then be developed and provided accordingly.

It is equally critical to share this understanding, i.e., train, those organizations who will help support consultants - from senior management presentations to product management white papers to responding to specific consultant requests to the RFP support process to field/channel deployment support.

As a starting point, vendors need to better recognize and understand the following about consultants. Consultants:

- Do not want to be sold to;
- Want to be recognized and understood for who they are and the role they play;
- Need technical details, not fluff, i.e., how your products work (underlying technologies) and why they are better (underlying development strategy and migration plan);
- Want to better serve their clients with new knowledge and services.

Invest in better understanding the consultants who are most active and influential in your served markets. The return on this investment will quickly lead to more successful engagements and deployments for your mutual customers.

Consultants' Market Fact: Did You Know . . .

Vendor Consultant Programs are consultants' preferred source of vendor specific information and support

- 87% of consultants selectively use and rely on vendor consultant programs.
- 20% of consultants who use vendor consultant programs have built highly valued business relationships with those programs that best support their needs. These relationships directly contribute to consultants' decisions to recommend that vendor's products or services to their clients.
- 38% of consultants who use vendor consultant programs rely on these programs to provide the information and support necessary to determine whether or not to include that vendor's products and services in their solution assessments/RFPs.

Source: The Brookside Group's 2009 State of the Telecom Consulting Market Study - Click [HERE](#) to download an executive summary of this study

Market News & Events

- **Updated Brookside Web Site:** Our web site has a new look and updated content - Please check it out. Click [HERE](#) to go to the site.
- **STC Fall Conference** - I will be attending the STC (Society of Telecommunications Consultants) Fall Conference from September 28 to October 1 at the Omni Mandalay at Las Colinas hotel in Dallas, TX. Click [HERE](#) for more information on this bi-annual conference attended by both independent consultants and industry vendors.
- **Qwest Consultant Program Cloud Computing Survey** - Help Qwest learn more about your cloud computing consulting activities/needs and find out what your consultant colleagues are doing in cloud computing consulting. Participate in this consultant survey and receive a summary of survey findings. Click [HERE](#) to go to the survey.

Questions, Comments, Suggestions?

Contact The Brookside Group

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