



The Telecom Consultant Bulletin

Insights, Viewpoints & Facts
from Telecom's Influencer Community

Produced by [The Brookside Group](#)

September 2010

This Month's Theme: The Quid Pro Quo in Consultant/Vendor Relations

Welcome!

Quid Pro Quo is commonly understood to mean a relatively equal give and take, or exchange of goods or services for the benefit of the individuals or organizations involved. Within a business relationship or business networking context, the give and take or exchange is often done to help each party develop new business.



What, therefore, is the Quid Pro Quo in consultant/vendor relationships? To me, this is fairly straightforward. Consultants can recommend vendor solutions to their clients, which often lead to new business opportunities for the vendor (more than 80% of consultant recommendations are implemented by their client and lead to a sale). Vendors can provide consultants with information, knowledge and support they need to improve and/or expand the solutions/services they can provide both current and new clients, i.e., new business opportunities.

Why then, is there often a disconnect in this Quid Pro Quo between consultants and vendors? Based on our experience, and feedback we received from consultants and vendor consultant program managers on this topic, the disconnect seems to be a lack of understanding for what each party expects from the other and/or poor/insufficient follow-up between the two parties.

Consultants want vendors to better understand and respond to their information/support needs specific to each project. In return, vendors want consultants to provide feedback on each project to confirm that they got what they needed and provide status/outcome of the project, i.e., was the vendor's solution recommended?

It sounds like both sides need to more proactively take the time to better understand and agree on what they expect from each other and how to provide it, before they agree to work together.

Investing in any type of business relationship comes down to ROI. Determining the definition and calculation of ROI in the consultant/vendor relationship is a good place to start. This means better business case development and reporting processes, which neither side has been particularly good at.

I hope my thoughts and the feedback below help consultants and vendors build a better two-way bridge between each other to accommodate an equal exchange, or Quid Pro Quo.

Sincerely,

Mick Sawka
The Brookside Group

What Consultants Want More Of From Vendors

Here is a summary of what 12 telecom consultants said, when asked:

In your opinion, what ONE thing do VENDORS need to do better in working with CONSULTANTS?

(based on an email survey of consultants conducted by The Brookside Group)

The underlying theme of what these consultants say they want more of from vendors starts with better recognition and understanding.

Without fully recognizing and understanding the client role, value and influence consultants have, vendors are less able to provide the specific support and resources consultants need. This recognition and understanding starts with a dedicated Consultant Program Manager who has the skills, authority and knowledge to understand and quickly provide access to the specific information and support resources consultants need at each stage of their client engagement (including deployment support and escalation).

To fully achieve this, the consultant program manager must solicit committed and well-delineated support from key organizations such as field sales, channel partners, product management, and, ultimately senior management. This requires promoting and emphasizing to each of these organizations the value and financial influence the consultant community has throughout the enterprise market.

As emphasized by the consultants, the cornerstones of effective vendor support are:

- **Trust** in who the consultant is and what the consultant asks for;
- **Commitment** and availability from throughout the organization;
- **Consistency** of support throughout and across consultant client engagements;
- **Accuracy** (including completeness and timeliness) in the information provided, especially RFP responses.

As aptly put by one well-established consultant:

"Vendors would benefit by recognizing the unique relationship between client and consultant, and provide consultant support with that in mind. Consultants need access to real and timely information. Being directed to a website full of marketing material

with little substance does not help. In all my years of consulting, I have never found replacement for a good consultant [program] manager."

What Vendors Want More Of From Consultants

Here is a summary of what 8 vendor consultant program managers said, when asked:

In your opinion, what ONE thing do CONSULTANTS need to do better in working with VENDORS?

(based on an email survey of vendor consultant program managers conducted by The Brookside Group)

The underlying theme of what these vendor consultant program managers say they want more of from consultants is pretty universal, namely, *"Please circle back with us!"*

Far too often, consultants ask for information, support or an RFP response for a client project and then don't provide any feedback to the vendor on whether or not it was the information they needed, or (more importantly) the outcome of the RFP. Knowing what solution areas the consultant needs to better understand and providing RFP win/loss updates is critical to the success of the consultant program manager. A simple "yes, that's the information I needed" or "here's where we are with the client, e.g., your solution is being/was/was not considered" would be of real value to the consultant program manager.

Consultant Program resources are limited and the most valid metric a program manager can use to demonstrate the value of the consultant program and solicit additional much needed support is some measure of the new sales opportunities consultants represent. Ideally, this would also include RFP win/loss results and why the solution was or was not recommended.

Every time a consultant requests support or issues a RFP, it takes time and resource for the vendor to respond, i.e., a real cost to the organization. Without feedback from the consultant, both vendors and partners will ultimately view the consultant as a time and resource constraint and will be reluctant to support that consultant in the future.

The consultant program managers emphasized that support/responsiveness is a two-way street and *"professional courtesy goes a long way to ensure a long-term [mutually beneficial] relationship."*

Consultants' Market Fact: Did You Know . . .

While most consultants prefer vendor consultant programs as their first-stop source of vendor specific information and support, they will quickly go elsewhere if the consultant program does not meet their needs. Other sources consultants go to, in priority order, include:

- 1. Personal vendor contacts**
- 2. Field sales (direct and/or channel partners)**
- 3. Company web site**

4. Industry journals, associations, conferences

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.
- **Cloud Computing Survey** - Participate in our quarterly Telecom Consultant Insights survey. This 4Q10 survey focuses on Cloud Computing and current consulting interest/activity in this emerging market. By participating, we will share the survey findings with you. Click [HERE](#) to access the survey.
- **Cypress Communications New Consultant Program** - Click [HERE](#) to learn more about this fully hosted and managed UC, VoIP and data networking provider.

Questions, Comments, Suggestions?

Contact The Brookside Group

Call us: 973-543-6765

[Email us](#)

[Go to our web site](#)

[Submit a question or request](#)