Consulting Skills: Professional Development For Staff

In *The Future of Staff Groups*, Joel Henning wrote “The future of staff functions will depend on their **direct and explicit contribution to positive business results.**” In order to make that direct and explicit contribution, staff functions must shift “from operational to strategic, from policing to partnering, from administrative to consultative, from reactive to proactive, and from activity-focused to solution-focused,” according to David Ulrich in Human Resource Champions.

This critical shift requires a new perspective and a whole new set of skills. Staff professionals in HR, Finance, Technology, Legal, Compliance, Risk Management, and other functions must master the consulting skills of partnering with line managers to jointly develop successful solutions that address both the needs of the individual business unit and the corporation as a whole.

Building the consulting skills of staff professionals helps your organization achieve the following benefits:

- More creative and innovative solutions to business problems through the integration of staff expertise and the business partner’s expertise
- More effective and efficient use of resources through leveraging across the company
- Avoidance of the "silo effect" of single transaction deals between one staff person and one line manager; increasing overall efficiency across the company
- More strategic decision making, more lasting solutions
- Improved credibility of staff functions, and stronger business relationships
- Shift the staff functions from policing to partnering

Consulting Skills Training highlights:

- Why consulting skills are needed
- The AHA Consulting Skills model and how it gets results
- What to say when they ask you to do something
- How to identify and diagnose the business needs behind a request
- How to shift to the mindset of your business partner
- How to negotiate who is responsible for what and develop a collaborative relationship – the consulting “contract”
- How to make a compelling case for your professional recommendations
- 5 steps for influencing others
- How to respond when they resist your recommendations
- What to say when you have to say no to their requests
- How to build trust, credibility, and respect for your staff function

**Consulting Skills Methodology**

Participants in Consulting Skills spend most of their workshop time in practices with coaching and feedback in P2P Videolabs™ – AlexanderHancock’s trademarked process for rapid development of business communication skills. They bring their own real situations to use in the practice sessions. Customized case studies build confidence and competence in applying the consulting skills and tools.

**Consulting Skills Customized Solutions**

To ensure that training is not just an “event,” but instead produces **enduring results**, we customize Consulting Skills to fit your unique situation, business strategy, culture, and people. After discussion with you and other experts within your organization, we select the emphasis, specific skills to be developed, key learning points, exercises, and case studies for practice to create a solution tailored just for you.

**Consulting Skills Applications**

The following are some of the ways our clients have used custom versions of Consulting Skills:

- To equip HR, Finance, Legal, and IT professionals to play a more strategic role and transition from being technical/transactional experts to full business partners
- To change the corporate culture to support the field business units instead of dictating to them
- To ensure that new business initiatives are developed drawing on the expertise of all stakeholders across the organization
- To reduce systems development costs through better communication and definition of business requirements
- To help staff groups to be sought after for their expertise and insights rather than be avoided as obstacles in the business process

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