

WHY A CAREER IN
HR CONSULTING
IS THE RIGHT MOVE FOR YOU



Are you considering a career change, and you're not sure if you should find another permanent position, or join the world of HR consulting?

I can understand why you'd be unsure. While you're familiar with the world of permanent HR positions, consulting is a new venture. What's more, there isn't exactly an instruction manual for becoming a consultant.

You don't have to worry about that anymore; consider this document your instruction manual. With this eBook, you can learn what makes a successful consultant and how to get started as an HR consultant based on our history placing professionals with projects that help them grow their career and harness their market worth. Let's start with the questions you might have about consulting; I'll share some insights to help clear things up.



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Why Become a Consultant?

If you ask anyone why they change jobs, there may be several reasons, many of them shared by people regardless of industries. When I speak to HR consultants about the reasons they made the leap, I hear a lot of the same factors. They require autonomy, they want more variety, they're seeking increased compensation, or they're interested in building new skills, to name a few.

Whatever the reasons may be, one fact remains the same:

Making a move to HR consulting isn't the same as finding a new permanent position. There are advantages and risks to both paths but being informed is the first step.

Let's look at some of the reasons why HR consulting is the right move for you.

Autonomy

If you're overwhelmed in your current role or have experienced work situations where you were understaffed which led to long hours and increased obligations, consulting offers a break from unrealistic workloads and can offer more autonomy and control in your career.

As a consultant, you have more control over how you spend your time. You have the freedom to choose your projects, and you can select the work situations that fit with your life and your requirements in that moment. If you're interested in project work, you can focus on project-based assignments. If you're more interested in developing a broader range of skills and experiences, interim consulting could be your path. The choice is yours.

Often, your workload is much more structured and specific. Clients may be under strict spending budgets for projects and, as such, will avoid paying overtime, keeping your work weeks much closer to 40 hours. You're usually afforded more flexibility in your starting and ending times each day, which gives you more control over your commute as well as your work/life balance.



Autonomy (cont'd)

When you're brought onto a job as a consultant, the client has hired you as a subject matter expert. As an expert, you can focus on the specific goals and client objectives and get started adding value on day one. The role of an expert also affords a lot of trust from your clients.

Clients will often trust that you will deliver the results that they require without much direction from them because of your abilities and experience.

Because of this unique relationship, consulting allows you to not only be freer in the way you do your job but also allow focus on the specific needs of your clients and achieve successful results without much distraction.



Gain Exposure to Decision Makers

If you're more focused on growing your career, network, or putting your HR skills to work, consulting can also help. I think there is a misconception that consulting is only for industry veterans who have graduated to the end of their careers. The consulting world is filled with qualified HR pros who want to gain new skills and face new challenges in order to grow regardless of their tenure.

Early on in any career, gaining access to decision-makers and having the ability to affect change in your organization are both a challenge. While you may have been a part of a team that completed a project, it's not always simple to demonstrate to leaders how your specific expertise and your skillset helped accomplish that task. What's more, without access to decision-makers, it's harder to identify their exact wishes and drivers. As a consultant, you're typically working directly with high-level decision-makers and completing specific tasks that are important to them.

Identifying and executing clients' plans quickly and effectively is an invaluable skill both inside and outside of the consulting world.

Positions Well-Suited to Consulting

While the job market and the availability of specific skills vary, projects that require technical skills generally see higher demand as consultants. For instance, in the current consulting market, technical talent acquisition (TA) professionals are in high demand.

As a TA consultant, the number of open requisitions assigned to each recruiter is generally a bit lower than their corporate recruiting peers and often sits below 20 open requisitions.



TA consultants are typically assigned

< 20

open requisitions



This managed workload allows you to focus more of your time and effort on the quality of your work and does not force you to rush decisions or settle for less-desirable talent.

You can't focus on technical skills and not mention software professionals. Organizations across the Twin Cities Metro and around the US are feeling the pressure to modernize their HR departments through technology, creating tremendous opportunities for consultants with tech and analytical skills. Within HRIS, consulting is huge, especially when it comes to large scale projects for organizations such as implementing new systems or building out new processes in existing environments. The technical skills mixed with project work that are outside of the ability for existing HR teams creates a situation that is perfect for the use of consultants. You've no doubt heard the words **"digital transformation"** thrown around, and because of the focus on becoming a digitally driven company, HR organizations are scrambling to find the best solutions to set them up for growth within this digital age.

Take Advantage of Market Value

Once you've got in-demand skills and the experience to be an effective consultant, you can better leverage your market value and pay. If you've been with an employer for a long time, you've no doubt received merit increases for both your performance and time in the role. What many people don't realize is that when the demand for your expertise changes and increases the value of your skillset, you may not see that immediate gain from your employer as a full-time employee. As a consultant, you can capitalize to your changing market value with each project and ensure that you are getting paid commiserate to your valued experience.



Starting out, many consultants have trouble determining their market value, even with recommendations from career sites. By connecting with a specialized consulting recruiting firm, you can rely on their experience placing consultants as well as their knowledge of the current market. They can give you a realistic idea at what you should be charging for your services, and even represent you to their clients if you are a fit for an existing project.

To get an approximate feel for your compensation as an HR consultant, you can follow this equation:

**Your current annual salary + 10% / 2080
(working hours in a year) = Hourly Rate**

The Barrier & Risks of Consulting

The first, and most common risk moving into consulting is the finite nature of your projects. As a consultant, eventually, each project you're assigned to will end, and the biggest worry is where you'll find the next project. Maintaining a network of contacts to develop new business can be a big job, especially as you are focused on completing projects.

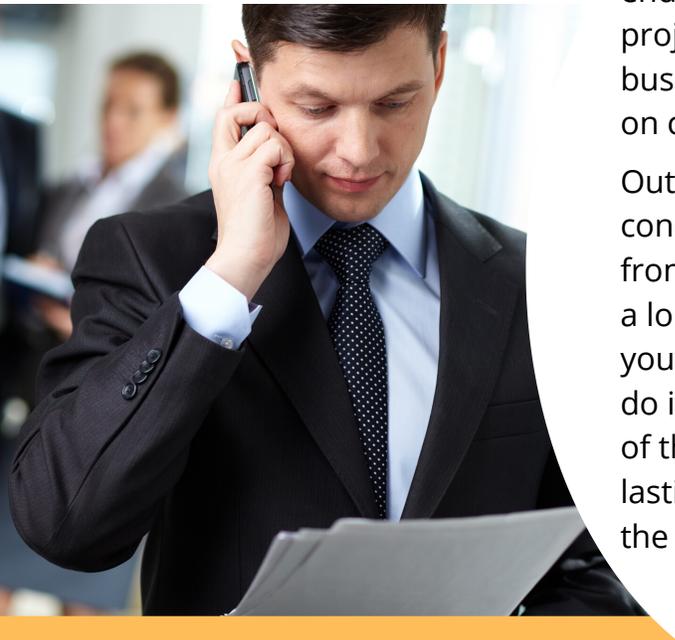
For many consultants, the solution to this issue is to partner with a specialized consulting firm and allow the firm to do the business development work.



When you are an active consultant with an agency, they handle heavy sales work for you.

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Outside of the uncertainty of your next role, other consultants we've spoken with sometimes feel detached from their peers when they have worked as a consultant for a long time. The lone-wolf lifestyle of a consultant can mean you don't get the same chance to bond with a team as you do in a permanent position. For many people, that is a part of their corporate job they miss. While you can still build lasting relationships, a consistent working relationship with the same team may be harder to come by.



Where Should You Start?

By now, you've learned a range of reasons why consulting might be the right choice for your next role. If you're thinking, "This is what I need, but I'm not sure where to start," we've got you covered.

As with any new venture, the first step is research. Connecting with a specialized consultant recruiter is a great way to learn more about getting into consulting. I recommend that once you find a firm, try to get in contact with both one of their specialized recruiters that align with your profession, as well as someone currently doing the consulting work you are considering. Both people will have a wealth of knowledge to help you get started and choose the right projects for you.

In my experience, there are three camps of people who take the leap and move into consulting:

- 1** You left your old position in search of another permanent position but have fallen into consulting in the interim until you find a new permanent position.
- 2** You have been working as a consultant for a couple of years, but you'll eventually return to permanent work because you might miss being part of a team. You left a permanent position to seek better compensation or gain new skills, but you aren't looking to consult forever.
- 3** You're climbing the corporate ladder and work as a consultant to simplify your life and gain new skills through contract work. You're focused on the things I mentioned earlier; learning new skills and experience working directly with decision-makers.

Regardless of your situation consulting can work for you. Attend networking events with other consultants to learn their opinions and get advice. Seek out blogs and other online content from experts in the consulting industry to learn about the current market climate, how to develop your skills, or simply how to get started. Versique has a large body of free content that you can access at any time.

Even though consulting may seem like a detached lifestyle, it doesn't have to be. Working with a specialized consultant recruitment firm gives you a support network to help you find projects, develop your skills, and mitigate the unforeseen risks. If you're ready to kick-off your consulting career, I'd love to help you gather the tools and insight you need to succeed. Contact me today; we can work together to get you on a successful path as an HR consultant.

ABOUT VERSIQUE

Versique is one of the largest talent acquisition firms in the Midwest, specializing in three core areas: Executive Search, Direct Hire, and HR Consulting.

Our team of recruiters specializes in the following practice areas: Information Technology, Human Resources, Digital Marketing, Engineering/Operations, Finance/Accounting, Healthcare Leadership, Sales, Banking and Finance, Consumer Packaged Goods, and Executive Retained Search. Versique also has an internal digital marketing agency, Parqa Marketing.

Versique was recently listed as a Top 150 Workplace by the Star Tribune.

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