Consultative Partnering™

Summary and Concept Overview

Summary

Over the past 30 years something profound has happened to the workforces in our companies and government agencies. Everyone from management to manufacturing has found that their jobs demand more from them – not just more time or effort, but new skills and abilities.

Many professionals have found that their job function has suddenly been redefined. They're expected to provide greater value to their clients or customers while (of course) continuing to do what they've always done: use their expertise and knowledge to get the job done, solve problems, and stay within budget and schedule.

No longer is it enough to simply supply expertise to get the job done; professionals must present and use their expertise in the way that best answers the customers' needs and preferences. This, in turn, means working with a range of other people – team members, subject matter experts, end-users, finance professionals – to find out what that way is. For most people, all of this requires a new set of skills and a completely different mindset. In other words, meeting today's challenges means fundamentally changing the way we work.

It is often observed that technology such as e-mail, social networking, cell phones, smartphones and such has changed the way we work. While it has certainly increased the quantity of business (and personal) communication – it has done little to improve the quality. The "technology" we offer in Consultative Partnering is intended to address that deficit. The techniques presented will help you and/or your staff members develop the consultative and partnering skills needed to work effectively with others, thus providing greater value to your customers. These skills give existing expertise greater impact and ensure that consultants are seen as valuable resources in their organizations.

Concept Overview

We define Consultative Partnering as: ***Partnering with others to produce optimum results while simultaneously building trust and commitment…***

At Advance Consulting, we understand that your business is changing and job functions are evolving. Fewer layers of management, the growing emphasis on customer focus, and greater productivity means that today's workplace is very different than it was just a few years ago. This new environment demands broader and more sophisticated skills than ever before.

Whether our organization is servicing internal customers or external clients, the challenges are similar. Success hinges on these individuals' ability to be flexible, work across functional lines, understand the needs of internal and external customer groups, talk their language, sell others on ideas and solutions, link recommendations to the business issues and manage changing organizational factors.

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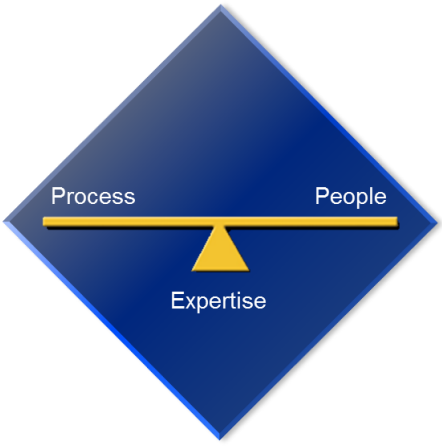
Working Consultatively

Although these new skills may sound like a tall order, in our research and client work we have seen these abilities demonstrated by successful individuals in a range of fields and professions. We call what they do "working consultatively," and we have identified three critical elements of that approach:

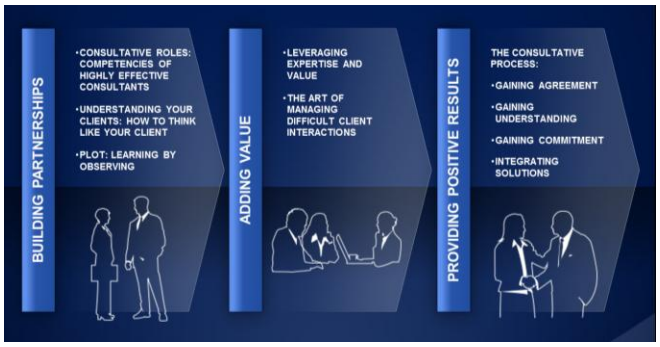
- Knowing how to work effectively with all types of **people**
- Using a strategic and collaborative **process**
- Applying **expertise** in ways that show value



Working consultatively also means keeping these three elements in balance. That is, you must balance your people skills, the most efficient work process, and your role in the work or project. Too much emphasis on any one element, or too little, throws off the *Consultative Balance* with negative results. Keeping these three elements in balance, working consultatively *produces optimum results while simultaneously building trust and commitment*. When people work consultatively, they have a powerful impact on work relationships and results.

Partnering for Results®

Organizational effectiveness is also tied to how people work together to gain results. Teams working collaboratively to solve problems and implement solutions have generated extraordinary achievements from winning the Super Bowl to the first moon landing.



The success of any given project depends greatly on the ability of those involved to work consultatively to partner with each other to solve problems, reach agreements, and implement solutions. Partnering skills enable you to deal with all types of people and situations and be seen as both an individual contributor and a team player.

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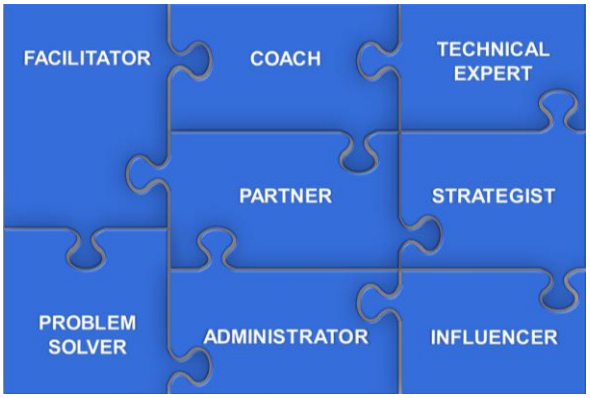
Using the Range of Consultative Roles™

In addition to maintaining the Consultative Balance discussed above, individuals must be able to play a variety of roles, as the situation requires. In our research, we identified a variety of *Consultative Roles*™ that drive virtually every business interaction.



To be truly consultative, people must be able to function not just as project administrator, technical expert, or problem solver, but as facilitator, influencer, strategist, and coach, as needed, all while maintaining their most important role: partner. Advance Consulting works to foster professional development in all eight of these critical roles.

Showing Your Expertise

Your knowledge, skills, and experience are probably what you talk about when someone asks "*What do you do?"* Yet what they are often really asking is "*What can you do for me?"*

At Advance Consulting, we believe that displaying your expertise in ways that your clients and partners can best appreciate it is almost as important as having it in the first place.

Managing Interactions

At the center of the quality of your partnerships with your clients is the quality of your interactions with them. These interactions occur every day, in all kinds of settings – from formal presentations and meetings to informal and one-on-one interactions. If handled skillfully, these interactions can help advance partnerships and enhance commitment and results.

It has been said that each interaction with your clients is a "moment of truth" – an opportunity for your customer to have a positive experience that will build customer loyalty and commitment. Because these interactions (moments of truth) are so critical, you need to be able to ***consciously*** determine the quality of your client interactions, and take steps to improve them if they are not of the quality they should be. To do this – make conscious decisions about how to improve your client interactions – you need to be able to apply a systematic process for managing your client interactions. Our six-step model "answers the mail" and provides a powerful approach for optimizing every client interaction.

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Advance Consulting Inc.

The Bottom Line

We call the concepts discussed above Consultative Partnering, which we define as *partnering with others to produce optimum results while simultaneously building trust and commitment*.

Our workshop series and book present ideas and techniques that enable people to work consultatively. Managers and employees alike can use these tools to broaden their skills and develop their own "consultative partnering" abilities in working with clients and team members. Let us help advance the way you work.

For more information, contact Advance Consulting Inc. at 831-372-9444, info@advanceconsulting.com, or advanceconsulting.com.

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