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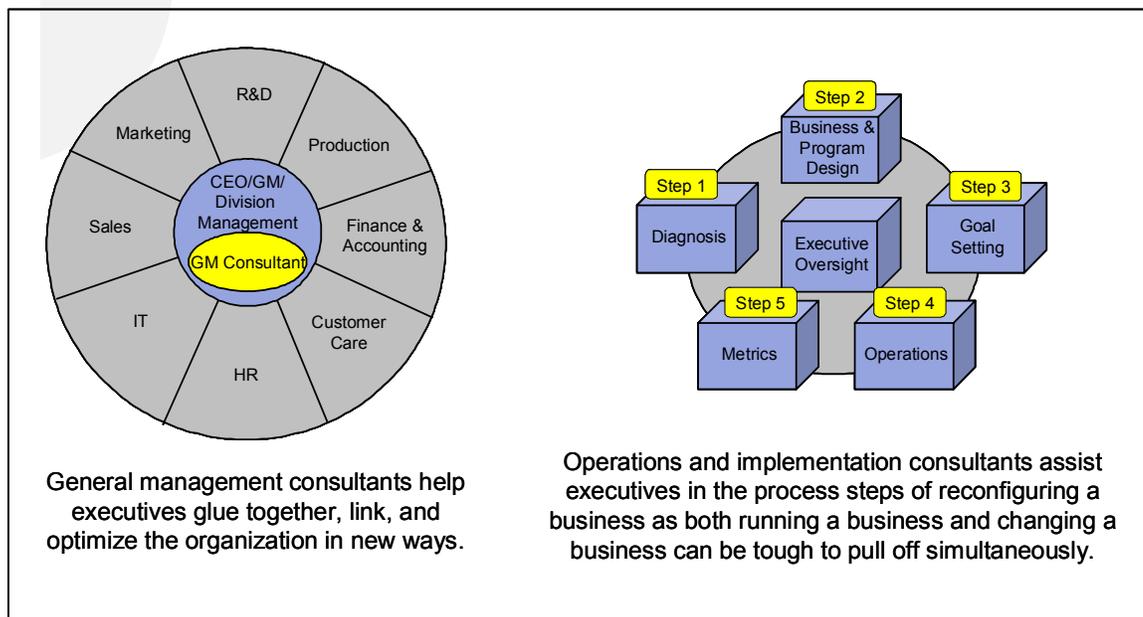
A Note on the Perimeter of General Management Consulting

General Management Consultants Differ from Specialist Consultants

General management consulting, as distinct from specialty functional areas of management consulting such as audit, sales management, marketing analytics, logistics, and finance, can be a foreign concept to many. Business professionals and MBA students often ask me about my experiences with general management consulting. The questions start off very basic. What do you do? How does general management consulting work? What value do you provide? How do you find people who need your services? As the conversation moves along, I find people comprehend the concept and see the value. This brief business note attempts to answer a subset of the questions above as related to the scope of general management consulting. This note also gives some ideas about how one might begin the process of investigating whether a general management consultant is needed.

General Management Consulting Is the Specialty of Cross-Functional Management

A picture is worth a thousand words so I've depicted the role of the general management consultant below.



In essence, the general management consultant is an interim facilitator for the business and helps a CEO, general manager (GM), or division manager link functions of a business together better. General management consultants may also focus on operations and implementation. These latter types of consultants may be used to performing hands-on work

throughout a business and can be used to project manage a change initiative while also plugging gaps as the initiative is rolled out (e.g., through interim management or directly assisting managers responsible for specific functional roles).

How Can I Determine Whether I Need General Management Consultants?

It has often been cited that the best users and customers of general management consultants are those that have used management consultants in the past. For those who have not used consultants before, some form of a “try before you buy” arrangement (perhaps limited to a half-day meeting) may be appropriate. To provide additional context, very typically as a next step some sort of business diagnostic (e.g., 1 day – 2 weeks) is done whereby the consultant can try to get more detailed information about where the business stands. As other options to consider, sometimes management consultants will facilitate 1- to 2-day offsite meetings with all functional managers and the general manager of the business to gather status, issues, desires, needs, and priorities of the business. Hybrids of all of these approaches can also be used. Lunch and learn sessions and roundtable sessions are also good ways to get an initial assessment of consultants. Work together with the consultant to determine what the best approach may be to assess fit. In any case, under all circumstances the consultant should be held to high standards and expected to add value to management of the business.

About the Author

Steve Shu serves as the Managing Director for the S4 Management Group and focuses on the operations implementation practice of the firm. Prior to founding the S4 Management Group, Mr. Shu was Vice President of Operations and Business Development for FiveSight and played a lead role in obtaining FiveSight's first enterprise clients, first international clients in Japan, and first round of corporate venture capital. Mr. Shu joined FiveSight from Pittiglio Rabin Todd and McGrath (PRTM), the premier management consultancy to high-tech firms, where he specialized in interim management and the growth and operations of start-ups, carve-outs, and new lines of business. PRTM was recently ranked the #1 firm in Consulting Magazine in the areas of leadership and consistent placement of managers. Additionally, Mr. Shu has held consulting, management, and systems, software, and design engineering positions with Bellcore (now Telcordia Technologies), FSLI, and AT&T Bell Laboratories (now Lucent Technologies). Mr. Shu holds an MBA from the University of Chicago and both an ME and BS in Electrical Engineering from Cornell University.

About the S4 Management Group

The S4 Management Group is a boutique consulting practice providing general management consulting services in the areas of operations and marketing. S4 Management Group consultants provide services to both executive and line managers ranging from diagnostics to program implementation and performance measurement.

For more information on the S4 Management Group, prospective clients and partners may visit www.s4management.com or send email to info@s4management.com.