

So, You Want to be a Consultant
Communication Studies Department
<http://www.mnstate.edu/cmst>

Overview: Larger consulting firms usually provide expertise in a variety of areas, whereas smaller consulting firms generally specialize in one area of consulting. *Administrative management and general management consulting services* firms, for example, offer advice on an organization's day-to-day operations, such as budgeting, asset management, strategic and financial planning, records management, and tax strategy. Management consulting firms also might advise clients in the implementation and use of the latest office technology or computer programs that could increase office productivity. Effective management of a client's human capital is the primary work of consulting firms that offer *human resources consulting services*. Firms that focus on this area advise clients on effective personnel policies, employee salaries and benefits, employee recruitment and training, and employee assessment. One human resources consulting specialty is *executive search consulting* or *executive recruiting*. Firms in this industry often are referred to as "headhunters." *Marketing consulting services* firms provide assistance to firms in areas ranging from product development to customer service. They may advise on new product marketability, new and existing product pricing (to maximize sales and profit), forecasting sales, planning and implementing a marketing strategy, and improving customer service to help the firm's overall image.

While some management consulting firms specialize in a particular business process, others provide a range of business services specific to one industry, such as health care. Many professionals—for example, doctors—are highly skilled in the technical aspects of their job, but lack the business expertise to manage their practice effectively. Management consultants advise these clients regarding issues such as staff recruitment, compensation and benefits, asset management, marketing, and other business operations. Some management consultants offer advice on matters pertaining directly to the industry in question.

Education and Training: Most consulting specialties provide a variety of different ways to enter the profession. Whereas very few universities or colleges offer formal programs of study in management consulting, many fields provide a suitable background. These fields include most areas of business and management, such as marketing and accounting, as well as economics, computer and information sciences, and engineering.

Other Qualifications: Most consulting firms require their employees to possess a variety of skills in addition to technical skills or industry knowledge. To a large extent, a college degree is only one desired qualification; workers also must possess proven analytical and problem-solving abilities, excellent written and verbal communications skills, experience in a particular specialty, assertiveness and motivation, strong attention to detail, and a willingness to work long hours if necessary. Many consultants undergo training to learn these and related skills, such as project management and building relationships with clients. Consultants also must possess high ethical standards.

Job Outlook: Despite the projected growth in the industry, there will be **keen competition** for jobs because the prestigious and independent nature of the work and the generous salary and benefits generally attract more jobseekers than openings every year. Individuals with the most education and job experience will likely have the best job prospects.

For More Information: <http://www.bls.gov/oco>

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook