

THE SENIOR CONSULTANT'S DILEMMA: GETTING PROMOTED TO MANAGEMENT



WHY

One of my first professional services positions was in a small but growing consulting firm. I earned promotions from consultant to senior consultant, and then to team lead in only a few years. Clients commended my work, and I developed an internal training program for new hires. The number of senior partners stayed the same as the firm grew, and with no junior partners, each senior partner had an unwieldy number of direct reports. I proposed a plan to manage the consultants in one of our practice areas, but the senior partners declined to change the firm's management structure.

I left that firm when I saw there was no clear path to management. My annual reviews focused solely on the number of billable hours that I could deliver and my willingness to travel frequently to client sites. There was no training or mentoring program at that firm that might have helped me advance my career. More than a decade passed; I worked at different companies, flew over a million miles, did thousands of hours of client work, and bore similar-sounding job titles with no promotions on the horizon.

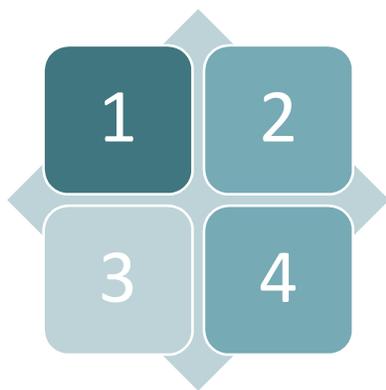
My experience and story are far from unique. In the course of speaking with hundreds of consultants over the years, I learned that this was considered “normal”. I distinctly remember an SAP consultant I met – he had no fixed address, and he chose to live out of hotels 365 days a year. He had a storage container near Dallas-Ft Worth that held his possessions, mostly pre-packed in suitcases. He planned on continuing that lifestyle until retirement.



Many of the professional services managers, directors, VPs and senior partners I have met over the years started out in consulting but picked up MBAs midway through their careers. I made a habit of asking how they had learned their management skills. Without exception, they told me they had learned from a former professional services manager -- they found the MBA did not cover the specific skills and knowledge required to manage a practice area or firm.

FOUR OPTIONS

There have been four classic paths to learning the skills necessary to succeed at professional services management:



- **Becoming an MBA.** This multi-disciplinary course of study takes several years to complete and costs tens of thousands of dollars. It also does not specifically cover managing a professional services organization. On a positive note, you can add “MBA” to your LinkedIn profile, like tens of thousands of other consultants.
- **Attending Harvard Business School’s** one-week intensive Professional Services Management curriculum in Boston, MA for \$14,000. If you have a week off work and about \$17,000 for both the class and the travel expenses, this is a good option. I would appreciate it if you sent me an email after the seminar, as I’ve never met anyone who’s attended it.
- **Reading three books** on professional services management. These books cost under \$100 for the set, are just under 1,000 pages, and they specifically cover management. They also have no hands-on exercises, templates, or tools:
 - o David Maister’s *Managing the Professional Services Firm*, 1993.
 - o Theresa Jansen and Mahesh Baxi’s *Tips from the Trenches: The Collective Wisdom of Over 100 Professional Services Leaders*, 2007
 - o Maureen Broderick’s *The Art of Managing Professional Services*, 2010
- **Getting mentorship** from your current professional services manager. This is the most common option, which has led to some inconsistencies in what people know about managing professional services firms. It’s a bit like the game of telephone – as each person passes the knowledge along, the meaning changes.

A FIFTH OPTION

I created a fifth option over a year of late nights, early mornings and weekends. I am currently working as a professional services manager and realize that I cannot teach enough people in person. Instead, I developed an eight module computer-based training course based on over 20 years of experience, conversations with dozens of other professional services executives and extensive research. The course includes:



- A gap analysis between your current knowledge and the knowledge to succeed in professional services management. This is a free, online tool to determine the skills you need to master to become a capable professional services manager.
- Training on a flexible schedule for the topics identified in the gap analysis. This training is available online or downloadable to an iPad or Android tablet for those long airplane trips. Each module is about an hour long.
- Over twenty-five lab exercises with tools covering the hands-on skills required to succeed. The lab tools use Excel and Word and do not assume the implementation of a particular Professional Services Automation (PSA) suite. Most small firms use Excel rather than a PSA.
- Evaluations at the end of each topic to confirm your mastery.

RESULTS

The full course covers all the fundamental topics a professional services manager needs to succeed.



According to a 2014 industry survey of over 250 professional services firms, their managers earn an average of \$25,000 more per year than their senior consultants, and they travel approximately half as often. These factors undeniably improve their quality of life.

Email me for access to a complimentary 25-question gap analysis tool that will help you identify any skill gaps between what you know and what you need to know as a professional services manager.

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To learn more about the training course, please visit

<http://www.kaynemcgladrey.com/professional-services-management-training/>.