

# **An introduction to Internal Consulting Groups (ICGs)**

The first in a series of articles intended to drive dialog, collaboration and benchmarking among a small group of leaders.

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## **Description**

Flexible, cost-effective and impactful consulting solutions. Why companies should leverage internal consulting teams to enhance project execution and enhance employee engagement.

## **What Are ICGs?**

Internal Consulting Groups are simply that, a team of people who form an internal resource pool for a company's project needs. Often times they are built around a practice area or methodology such as project or change management, Lean Six Sigma or organizational design. They frequently provide subject matter experts the opportunity to spread their reach further across the organization by surrounding them with project management experts who operationalize their work.

While the role of external consultant is often critical in driving business outcomes, ICGs are created as a way to offset the high price of big consulting firms or to minimize the costs of third-party consultants. By centralizing the internal and external consultants through one department or team, the company will achieve a more cost effective model, get projects completed faster, and ensure the right deployment of resources.

## **Purpose**

The primary purpose of ICGs is to provide resources, expertise and knowledge so that the company's initiatives are not only completed on time, on budget and to the right quality standards, but that they are sustained beyond the go live date.

They also serve as the talent pipeline for the organization, ensuring that the right skills are matched up with the right opportunities. If a person wishes to enhance their skills and move up within the company, ICGs offer developmental opportunities to learn and grow.

By deploying people to projects in this way, they can gain broad business experience, learn how to navigate the organization and build cross-functional teamwork. ICGs become an ideal training platform from which future executives of the company can be groomed.

### **Benefits**

Internal consultants offer the organization agility and political knowledge that external resources may not be able to provide. This is a critical factor in stakeholder management, and a force-multiplier to driving an effective project. Furthermore, internal consultants typically have less ramp-up time on a project due to familiarity to the business unit, project team or corporation.

ICGs also have a degree of shared accountability in that their objectives are the same as the internal customer's objectives. Their job does not end with a final presentation or a go-live deployment date. These internal resources must live with the results of the project, and even though they may get moved to another initiative, they may still monitor post-launch effectiveness and perform interventions to sustain project benefits.

If an external consulting team is used within a company, an ICG can be leveraged as an oversight group, charged with the on boarding and political mapping elements of a project that can get bogged down for external consultants. Furthermore, they can keep the external consultants focused on the right results and on the company's objectives.

### **Continue the Discussion**

While the benefits of an ICG are vast, it takes time and effort to create one within an organization. STAR Collaborative will explore additional developmental ICG topics through a series of white papers, web forums, and networking events. The following list details the

content and order of the intended discussion, and you are cordially invited to join the dialog. Visit us on the web at [STARcollaborative.com](http://STARcollaborative.com) for more details!

1. Internal versus external consultants
  - a. Advantages and disadvantages
  - b. Opportunity costs/real costs
  - c. The need for variable resource management
2. Requests for help: Pipeline Management
  - a. Run it like a supply chain
  - b. How to make placement decisions
  - c. Decision rights
3. Funding
  - a. Shared service
  - b. Fee for service: No bucks, no Buck Rogers
4. Organizational Design
  - a. Where to place team
  - b. Political/financial challenges
  - c. Competition
  - d. Alignment to strategic goals
5. Community Development
  - a. Methodology driver
  - b. Adoption champions
  - c. Mission: teach/train
  - d. Express/Model/Reinforce
6. Talent Management
  - a. Consulting firm approach
  - b. The need for career coaches
  - c. Living in a matrix

Ed Lefkow and Dan Olson have created and led Internal Consulting Groups within Fortune 100 companies. They formed a consulting company, STAR Collaborative, to leverage their expertise and provide customers the best strategic tools and resources possible.

Their community-based mindset seeks to build a network of practitioners - both clients and consultants - who can learn and adapt together through knowledge-sharing and methodology development.