

Editor's Note

Zip, Zing and Consulting Success

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This issue of the JPC continues our broad mandate, which is to examine consulting from a broader, more practical, perspective. The articles assembled here suggest again that consulting, at its most basic, is a practical, value-added activity in which professionals, utilizing a variety of different tools, work with their clients to deliver the best possible solutions. Consulting remains a broad field, with boundaries that remain largely undefined. This openness has both positive and negative effects on the practice of consulting that has led to some demands for greater standardization, even policing. These issues will be taken up in a future issue of JPC.

The breadth of work undertaken by consultants and the largely unregulated nature of the profession increases the need to examine carefully what it is that consultants do and how they go about their craft. Addleson and Berger's *Putting Zing Back into Organizational Consulting* is a thoughtful piece in which the authors invite consultants to pay closer attention to how they organize, something they classify as the "zing" of consulting. Focusing on the zing as opposed to the traditional focus on "the zation" is said to come at a price. A rethinking of the possibilities that come from positive relationships where cooperation and collaboration are embraced is part of the message that Addleson and Berger share. Consulting as they see it "involves working *with*, not *for*, the client." By concentrating on the zing, consultants unleash their potential to revision the consulting task, changing in turn the way they help clients.

All of this is part of becoming a better consultant, a theme taken up by Hargis. Coping with economic uncertainty, or "lean times," is part of the ongoing reality of consulting. Finding ways to maximize the value of what are typically seen as wasted moments is important to the consultant's reorientation. Hargis' key point is that "consultants do not have 'professional' lives and 'personal' lives but *whole* lives." Moving away from a compartmentalized existence is useful from the point of view of an integrated or holistic view of consultant. In a word, consultants are real people too and play a variety of different roles. Finding ways to improve one's capacity in multiple roles ultimately feeds into the image of a more balanced and engaged consultant.

Consultants who are more engaged are more likely to see the connection between their individual and professional identities. As many consultants will know from experience, life is not always a smooth ride. Indeed, as Salmon says in her article, growing pains offer consultants the

opportunity to review and perhaps reposition their practice. *Growing Pains: A Learning Process for Rebranding and Repositioning Your Consulting Practice* is a consultant's approach to the need to take stock. An important lesson communicated by Salmon and other contributors to this issue is the importance of continuous personal and professional development. Salmon encourages us to, "Capitalize on every opportunity to learn."

Consultants, perhaps as much as anyone else, run the risk of complacency. In such situations rebranding and repositioning can be an important means of stepping back and recreating a compelling vision for your consulting practice. The hoped-for end result is a successful consulting career. In our Practitioner's Corner, King identifies eight key principles of successful consulting that center on seeing consulting as a vocation. The principles are simple (e.g., be true to yourself; make a commitment to excellence; and perform a reality check) and require no special training to be implemented. What we get from all this is a package of simple solutions that the aspiring or experienced consultant can adapt for immediate use.

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