

Consulting: the art of problem-solving and deflecting blame

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Last summer, I interned with Deloitte India as a Consulting intern under Strategy, Analytics, Mergers & Acquisitions. I was part of a team that primarily focuses on change management strategies in terms of revenue & operations model & post-merger integration in the financial services & banking sector.

So, what is consulting? Consultants work with client companies to solve specific business challenges. Consulting projects are often done in teams and can focus on a variety of areas, including strategy and technology implementations. Some consultants are independent experts, but many work for consultancies like that of Deloitte, Boston Consulting Group, McKinsey & so on.

I worked on a post-merge deal where my workstream focused on change management and redesigning the revenue model for a retail giant. I also got a chance to work with consultants from the communication strategy team who ensured that the organization and all affected employees understood the implications of the revenue model changes and were well-prepared to make the required changes as a result.

While this project was extremely quantitative, I often had to interpret client information and analyze large quantities of information to summarize the key changes and identify the necessary change enablers to support the changes. Answers are seldom just laid out for you, so a lot of analysis is required to arrive at the best answer. Lastly, I created many presentations

that required me to understand the underlying message that I was trying to convey and summarize the most significant details that would relay that message. Creating slides seems pretty straightforward but presenting information in a concise (and visually appealing) manner requires a great deal of thought.

The learnings were many, the top ones are listed below,

1. **Problem-solving & Story lining:** I learnt the art of conveying a presentation in the form of a story, highlighting key takeaways for each slide. This ensured I had the attention of my audience and conveyed my point concisely. I did get a lot of practice at the art of problem-solving, in situations that are unstructured and new, given I have no experience where there are high stakes involved.
2. **Elevator Pitch:** I understood the importance of having an answer ready at all times. Whether it was an update I had to give in a case team meeting or an explanation when the manager questioned my hypothesis, I ensured I was well prepared and had an answer at hand. It was greatly valued and reflected my confidence and hard work.
3. **Communication:** It was always better to communicate the minutest detail which I felt could be important to the team. It was a trade-off to being precise, but it ensured the team didn't get any surprises at a later stage. Interaction with senior executives regularly also led to constantly improving on oral & written communication skills which will hold you in good stead as and when we move on to something else.
4. **Business Analysis:** Understanding how businesses work, what are the key strategic decisions, and what are those big differentiators that separate the winners from those who did not. I always thought that if we found an answer to a problem, we are done but it's not right the organizational culture & the people are the biggest differentiators in a company.
 - **Networking:** It was helpful to utilize the company conferences or events to network with colleagues at Deloitte. Many times, I would get a solution by speaking up to those who had already encountered a similar problem.

To conclude, my internship experience at Deloitte India was an enriching one. It was a period of great learning not only in terms of professional skills such as problem-solving, client relationships, etc but also in intellectual terms of understanding as to what skills it takes for businesses to be successful apart from their unique selling proposition. Additionally, not to

forget I met a lot of amazing achievers from whom I picked up a few behavioural skills that are in work in progress for me that are empathy, time & stress management.