

8 Tactics for Hiring a Consultant

By Mara Shorr

It's tricky to find a consultant. Each one leads you to believe that they are the only one who can make your dreams come true.

The options can be overwhelming, so how can you pare down the selection to find a match? Follow these eight tips to hire a consultant that strengthens your business.

1. Ask For References

Any company with proven success will be proud to share its success stories with you, and your colleagues will be happy to praise a worthwhile consultant. In addition, do a quick search on them to find out which conferences, publications and associations they have relationships with.

2. Ask For Spa Knowledge

A generalized firm is not going to be able to "get" what you do easily, and it could involve a lot more training on the front end. Social media experience for a lawn care company doesn't show a strong track record in the skin care space.

3. Determine Longevity

Ask how they can understand your company's needs, and how long they have been in business. Are they simply consulting until they find something full-time, or is this their passion?

Longevity speaks, as does their experiences. If a consultant used to own a medspa, find out why they choose to leave it behind. If it was because it financially ran itself into the ground, that isn't someone

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you want handling the books for your business.

4. Identify Services and Partnerships

Determine if the consultant focuses only on the administrative, operational and financial aspect of your business, or if they also offer website design. Find out if they handle search engine optimization (SEO) and marketing, or focus on accounting services. Learn if they bring affiliate relationships to the table, and if they know who to source for services they do not offer.

5. Feel Out Their Fit

Do you want the consultant to guide your existing team in the right direction in social media or accounting? Or, are you looking for a consultant, consulting company or contractor to take the place of a part-time or full-time employee?

Make sure they work well with any other consultants you've already hired, including your public relations firm, website design firm or SEO company.

6. Sign a Non-disclosure and a Non-compete

A non-disclosure ensures that protected information about your clients, patients or employees stays between you and the consultant.

In addition, ask for a non-compete with other similar business entities within a certain radius, if justified. Be realistic about your expectations, since a day spa isn't necessarily competing with a nearby plastic surgeon's office.

7. Confirm Billing Structure

While it's realistic to ask for a free initial consult to make sure both parties are a good fit for one another, you can't expect to pick your consultant's brain unpaid for months. Find out upfront if you'll be billed on a retainer or by the hour, what those charges are and how they dictate the clock.

8. Keep Your Options Open

Unless you're set on one consultant, interview a few. Be sure to ask the above questions to all of them. Lastly, compare their answers and see who is truly the best fit for you.)



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