

Management Consulting and Organizational Excellence



There are some strong parallels between the management consulting body of knowledge and organizational excellence. But there are a few gaps too. Knowing more about organizational excellence can help management consultants add value to client assignments and work with leaders to improve organizational performance.

Roles in Management Consulting

Management consulting is an advisory service contracted for and provided to organizations by qualified professionals who assist, in an objective and independent manner, the client organization to identify issues, analyse issues, recommend solutions and assist with implementation when requested.

Consulting professionals usually play one of three roles: (1) Expert - that solves problems and brings technical skills and credibility to recommendations. In this role, the consultant offers general business knowledge and experience and deep expertise in a particular functional and/or industry sector area, (2) Resource - that provides information that will be helpful to decision making. In this instance, the consultant leverages research and analytical skills and leaves the solution up to the client, (3) Process – that helps the organization to gather information, solve problems and implement changes. In this situation, the consultant draws on facilitation skills and involves the client as an active participant in analyzing issues and developing solutions.

Body of Knowledge for Management Consulting and Organizational Excellence

Certified Management Consultants (CMC) have training in six functional areas and use a strategic approach in their work with client organizations. In the following diagram, these six functional areas are listed alongside the key management areas of an excellence model.

CMC BOK – Functional Areas	EXCELLENCE MODELS – Key Management Areas
Strategy	Governance
Financial	Leadership
Marketing	Planning
Human Resources	Customers
Information Technology	Employees
Production/Operations	Work Processes
	Suppliers & Partners
	Resource Management
	Continuous Improvement & Performance Measurement

Using a strategic approach, consultants seek to understand the strategy and mandate of the client organization. What are the vision, mission and core values? Where is the organization today and where does it want to be in the future? What are the internal strengths and weaknesses and external

opportunities and threats? Such an understanding enables the consultant to work with the client toward a common aim and to address issues and achieve desired outcomes.

Particularly helpful to assessing the organization's current state is the diagnostic provided by an excellence model. Excellence models are comprised of the principles and best management practices that are common to high performing organizations and include a balanced system of measurement. The principles describe the culture of excellence or way people work together. The best management practices fall under key management areas. And the balanced system of measurement provides a read on how the organization is performing by key management area and for the organization as a whole.

One of the most powerful aspects of using an excellence model as a diagnostic is the interrelationships between the principles and best management practices and between the best management practices themselves. For example, if the organization has a challenge with:

- any principle related to the culture of excellence, the consultant can examine the best management practices directly related to the principle
- a particular key management area, the consultant can examine the best management practices related to it
- a particular best management practice, the consultant can examine the practice in more detail and the other practices directly related to it

This table provides a high level snapshot of these interrelationships

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/phxb5qqcnit6o4j/Relationship%20between%20Principles%20and%20Best%20Management%20Practices.pdf?dl=0> .

Gaps in Education and Training Programs

In my 30 years of consulting, I have not come across too many issues with client organizations across industry sectors that cannot be addressed by an excellence model. Surprisingly, I stumbled upon excellence models back in the late 1980's when the models were being developed^{1,2,3,4}. When I learned more about excellence models the stars aligned. Here was a system of interrelated and interconnected best management practices that when successfully implemented would contribute to building a culture committed to excellence and improving organizational performance !

Having earned an MBA degree and a CMC designation, most of the information was familiar to me. But I did notice some gaps in the foregoing educational and professional development programs. These gaps included important learnings such as:

- systems thinking
- plan-do-study-act cycle
- common versus special variation
- the cost of quality
- the business case for employee health and wellness
- research validating the models^{5,6,7,8,9}

Adding Value for Management Consultants and Client Organizations

Over my career, knowledge about organizational excellence has provided incredible value to my work as a management consultant and as a corporate trainer. And I believe it is important to share this knowledge with my professional counterparts so they can benefit as well. After all, if we are all well versed in the subject matter, we can deliver a higher level of service to our clients and clearly demonstrate the results of our work.

If you are interested in learning more about excellence models, I have written a publication entitled the Organizational Excellence Framework (Dawn Ringrose, 2010). The publication is unique in that it integrates the leading global excellence models and provides implementation guidelines for the user. In essence, the publication shares “what we know in organizational excellence’ with ‘how we implement it in management consulting’.

Please feel free to download a copy of the Organizational Excellence Framework publication at no charge on the home page <http://organizationalexcellencespecialists.ca/>.

References

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About the Author



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