

## Translating Ideas into Action

We want to thank everyone who has given us feedback on our monthly letters. It was very positive. You seem to enjoy the topics we address; you agree with our general philosophy and the positions we take on relevant industry issues . . . you also seem to like the methodologies we employ, to the degree we have explained them. We don't hear from all of you, but we do hear from enough to have the sense that you support what and how we talk about things. Thank you for that and for your feedback. We are unique in the industry in the way we conduct our business and your feedback is extremely helpful in making sure we understand what is important to you.

But you also have questions. And the one you ask most frequently goes something like this: "We know what you think about various issues and what should be done to address them, but what does your company actually do when you work with someone?"

Initially, this question surprised me. I thought our letters did a good job of explaining what we do, and was somewhat unsure of what else to say. Then, I reread them and, through continued discussions with many of you, I eventually got it. We know what we do. Unfortunately, it's not always that clear to you. We often write about things from thirty thousand feet, you want to see things at ground level. This month I'll try to stay at that level.

First, we do not profess to have all the answers to the issues you need addressed. We understand that there are no universally "right" answers. Some things work in certain situations but not in others. We don't have the proverbial "answer book." What we do have are methodologies that work, extensive insurance industry experience and the ability to ask the right questions. Through them, we challenge what you take for granted and help you identify and move towards your definition of your ideal company. We help you create fundamental improvements in the way you do things.

We have learned that collaboration generates the best results. To that end, we work with you upfront to ensure that the most effective project structure is established. Then we involve your people in the research, evaluation and design work that is done so they support and will implement all identified changes. There's no magic answer book to refer to here. It's you, your people and our consultant, working together, following our methodologies and drawing on everyone's skills and knowledge of your business to ensure that the best results are achieved.

Having said that, here are some of the more specific things that we do. We can help you . . .

1. More clearly understand your company's full potential – what you should be accomplishing to meet the wants, needs and expectations of your key stakeholders who have a vested interest in the company's success (customers, agents, employees, management, etc). With this as a basis, we can identify the changes you need to make to attain this ideal state.
2. Determine the core success measures and measurement metrics that you must consistently attain to ensure your success. We can then ensure that every department has their own specific success measures and that they integrate with your company's measures so everyone is "pulling on the same end of the rope."
3. Create "marketing organizations," where everyone in the company is involved in supporting your sales and retention efforts in meaningful ways that integrate with their other job duties.

4. Redesign and maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of your key work processes. This includes eliminating redundant workflow steps, establishing more appropriate controls, designing jobs, defining needed technical tools and ensuring you get the most from your computer systems (and vice versa).
5. Define your ideal organizational structure. We can help you eliminate “silo” mentalities and describe an organization chart for you that naturally aligns itself to your customers. We eliminate excess levels of management, organizational bottlenecks and organizational situations that promote an inward focus.
6. Determine how much and what type of staff is needed to get your work done by creating computer staffing models based on the way work should be done. Again, we work with your people so they fit your specific situation and then train them on their use and maintenance.
7. Create or refine the processes and tools you need to effectively manage blocks of business, accounts and agencies for those product lines and departments where these relationships are critical to your company’s success.
8. Improve loss ratio results. We not only help you understand where the problems are and how they should be corrected, we then help you build the right infrastructure so they don’t come back.
9. Lower operating expenses. Being more effective costs less – often times a lot less. We find the excesses in your organization and we identify the best way to eliminate them. This sometimes means integrating better with your computer systems. Sometimes improvements take a different track. In all cases, providing the highest value to your customers is always our goal.
10. Make sure you have your best people in key leadership roles. We can help you evaluate your key leaders to ensure you have the right people in key roles. We can also help you create individual growth strategies for employees with unrealized potential.
11. Build ownership cultures. Cultures in which everyone – not just senior management – cares about and is actively working toward improved company results. We do this by ensuring that your organization structure is properly focused on your customers, that success measures are structured properly and employees are properly motivated through well-designed reward, recognition and incentive programs and other improvements.
12. And other unique efforts that require consultants with our capabilities and breadth of experience.

All of these things are done within the framework of a project that we (you and us) define and create together. It is explained in detail in a formal project proposal that we prepare.

These activities explain much of what we do. We can do all of these in a single effort that often results in a complete redesign of your organization or we can do them in smaller projects that address and solve specific problems or opportunities. In any case, the typical result is always significant, with first year dollar savings of frequently 4 to 7 times your investment.

Unlike many other consulting firms, we also have extensive experience with implementation and can help you make sure the necessary changes are put in place quickly and properly. We’ve been through it with many companies. We know what the issues are, where the landmines are hidden and we can be there to help you avoid them.

Your project may require something not mentioned, but rest assured, if you choose to work with us, it will be a well-structured, collaborative experience that you will find very beneficial. It’s what we do. If you’d like to talk about any of these or other topics, give us a call. Also feel free to check our website ([McDonaldConsultingGroup.Com](http://McDonaldConsultingGroup.Com)) for other topics of interest.