

## Where do you go when you need advice?

Everyone needs someone they can depend on. Someone who will always be there and who will provide advice and counsel with only your needs in mind.

As your career progresses and you move up the corporate ladder, one thing becomes clear. It gets harder and harder to get this type of advice and counsel within your company. There may be a lot of reasons for this but two are mentioned more than others. First, you need to be able to talk to someone who understands your situation, your needs and who also has broad industry experience that is both current and accurate. Advice that's not competent is useless. Secondly, you need to talk to someone who doesn't have an agenda, who is more concerned about your success than their own.

Having a long term relationship with the right management consulting firm may be the answer for you.

Their business is to provide professional advice. You can be confident that you'll only get advice in areas where they have the right expertise. There should also be no concern about agendas that are different than yours. You're the customer. That's a pretty powerful position to be in.

For this to work properly, over a broad range of issues, your consultant needs a long term relationship with you and your company. This works best and is also the most cost efficient. Your consultant learns about you and the company while working on other projects and then uses this information to help when you need it. And with most firms, advice like this usually won't cost anything. We have a policy in our firm that encourages our senior management consultants to provide this service for free . . . unless it's very complex and can only be answered with a focused project.

Here are some guidelines that you might want to think about when considering this relationship.

- Make sure the firm and consultant understand your business. Insurance is a unique and complex business. Advice from someone who is trying to learn about insurance is amateurish at best and dangerous at worst.
- Your consultant should know your company. This takes time and means he or she needs to work with you for enough time to really understand how things work. They need to understand the details you are concerned about.
- Your consultant should have a professional level understanding of the fundamentals that drive your company's success. This includes organization structure, process workflows, goal setting and strategic planning, success measurement, marketing, distribution systems, culture and change management.
- It's difficult to have a close personal relationship based on trust with a team of people. We believe you should have a single, two at the most, consultants who share this relationship with you. This means they need to be your consultants. You have to be able to get to them without going through others and count on their help when you need it.

Consider these points the next time you need a management consulting firm for a project. Are they, or more specifically, is the consultant who will do the work for you, the type of person you want a long term relationship with? Does he have the background, skills, and experiences to help you in the future?

If you're not sure, call us and see what we have to offer. We believe you'll be pleased.