



MBA&COMPANY

CONSULTANTS ON-DEMAND:

A guide to bringing top talent
closer to your business

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT LIES BEHIND ON-DEMAND NETWORKS?

The way companies conduct business and hire people is changing significantly. From job boards to freelance marketplaces, traditional models of resourcing are being challenged. Online access to talent means that a company starts to expect greater choice from a more accessible talent pool, and subsequently better matches for their resourcing requirements.

34% of the workforce in the US is independent

Simultaneously, increasing numbers of workers are choosing to work independently. It is frequently cited that the 'freelance' population makes up 34% of the US workforce and this shows no signs of slowing down, with Estimates rising to 50% by 2020 (1) – reference (1). The new age of work is upon us.

In the early days of freelance marketplaces the perception was that this was a way to access and provide commodity services: logos for business, cleaning services etc, reflecting the view of who chooses to freelance.

The trend to independent working has extended this on-demand approach to higher-end services. Highly-qualified, highly-experienced consultants are choosing to work independently and deliver their expertise directly to clients needing complex and strategic projects delivered.

In a recent report, McKinsey (2) – reference (2) highlighted that companies struggle to

find the right employees while workers struggle to find work. The emergence of online talent platforms starts to address this gap and as these platforms move from the online job board into marketplaces, the opportunities for better matching increase. McKinsey estimates that the emergence of these platforms, Whether simple online recruitment or complex talent management solutions could potentially contribute \$2.7 trillion to global GDP annually by 2025.

Online talent solutions can contribute \$2.7 trillion to global GDP

The idea of consultants-on-demand brings a new opportunity to business. Consultancy projects and assignments are inextricably linked with complex, high-cost, lengthy delivery cycles. Being able to access the expertise directly, whenever it's needed, makes the relationship between consultants and business much leaner and more agile.

MOVING TO THE HIGH-END: WHY ON-DEMAND IS TAKING OFF FOR BIGGER FIRMS AND CONSULTANCY PROJECTS

As consumers, most of us experience the on-demand economy on a daily basis. The poster children of Air BnB and Uber have become ingrained in our purchasing mindsets. It's no surprise then that we want the similar benefits in our workplaces:

- **Instant availability**
- **Transactional relationships**
- **Guaranteed delivery**

Requirements for outsourced expertise have traditionally been met by consulting firms, with expertise in delivering insight to transform businesses and their processes. Although the landscape of consulting provision is broad, with over 100,000 management consulting firms in the UK alone, the expectation is that complex projects require delivery from the big consulting firms meaning consulting is not accessible to all. And few would associate consultancy projects with the traits of the on-demand approach.

It's time to challenge this perception. Every business looks for greater cost efficiencies, faster turnarounds and high quality delivery. The desire for lean operating models applies to every business, not just the early stage enterprise. And every business needs expertise.

Businesses see the value of recruiting the best individual for a given task, and of only paying for the expertise they need. Instead of adding to a bank of costly employees, organisations are embracing the project economy and discovering that they can reduce their costs and improve outcomes by choosing exceptional talent for each task, rather than having a permanent staff of generalists. In other words, they want talent on-demand. This typically comes in the form of freelancers and contractors.

The on-demand approach is now firmly ensconced for provision of higher end projects. Freelancers and contractors are hired for all manner of tasks – from straightforward project work to critical product launches, contract negotiations, strategy pieces, mergers and acquisitions, clinical trials, research, and innovation projects. Independent contractors are also fulfilling senior roles, often in the form of interim managers, who may be drafted in to cover an absence, manage change or implement a new strategy.

“

Most supertemps are refugees from big corporations and law and consulting firms who value the autonomy and flexibility of temporary or project-based work and find that compensation is comparable to what they earned in full-time jobs – sometimes even better

”

The Harvard Business Review (3) – reference (3) defined this new breed of consultant as the ‘Supertemp - a category of senior freelancer with worldclass talent and impeccable credentials’.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO TAP INTO CONSULTING TALENT

There are multiple models that extend a company's ability to tap into consulting talent. Not all provide the advantages that an on-demand model delivers.

The known network: most executives will have a small network of freelance and independent talent that they call on to ‘help’ out when extra resources are required. Although this network is proven in quality, it is often limited in specialist areas.

Expert Networks provide quick access to industry consultants, but beyond interview calls there is little scope to bring the consultant into the business. Most are full time employees at other firms and so as

well as availability issues, there are compliance and conflicts of interest aspects to consider.

Virtual consultancies create small collections of independent consultants who can deliver a broader reach of projects than acting individually. However, much like known networks, the scope is normally limited – for example similar levels of expertise, or similar areas tend to group together.

Job boards provide online access to a large range of talent, but the recruitment process is the same as in traditional models so there are no efficiency or time savings. Still a good source for full time positions, these don't generally provide the on-demand capability for project resourcing and lean operations.

Interim Recruitment provides shorter term resourcing solutions but the approach is more that of using traditional recruitment and search agencies, and the pool of talent is more limited to those who prefer these assignments to more project-based work.

To discover the top tier talent **and** get the advantages of on-demand there has to be a time-efficient, cost-efficient approach, without having to deal with protracted talent searches and contractual issues. It's also important that in switching to this approach to resourcing, there is a way to ensure that the choice and quality is proven. While **freelance marketplaces** like upwork, Fiverr, Guru etc fulfil the on-demand piece, they don't have the rigour and control required to adequately support the needs of companies looking for a high-end resource.

EXPERTISE ON DEMAND

At MBA & Company we identified a gap in the market, a need for a middle ground between the self-serve freelance marketplace and a more traditional recruitment approach. And as more and more top-tier consultants choose to continue their careers independently, we understand that companies need a reliable method of finding these individuals and engaging their services.

This is why the on-demand marketplaces which focus on top-tier talent are increasingly appealing to businesses.

ADVANTAGES OF THE ON-DEMAND APPROACH TO THOSE BUYING CONSULTANCY SERVICES

For clients who have a requirement to deploy consulting talent, the appeal of expertise on demand is obvious. Talent can be found, engaged and put to work in days, rather than months, enabling a new degree of efficiency and agility – precisely what is needed to respond to today's client needs. A global talent pool of verified experts is ready and waiting, all at no cost, and can be deployed with confidence for a fraction of traditional recruitment costs.

Online marketplaces enable organisations to cherry-pick talent and flex their entire workforce to meet demand, stretching in order to complete projects, and contracting

efficiently and affordably when demand declines: the idea of elastic sourcing.

The expertise that has been gained by these independent consultants means that they can provide unique insight into specific functions, industries and regions shortening the time for businesses using them to see results – whether it's company turnarounds, organisational restructuring or investment decisions.

WHAT DOES AN INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT LOOK LIKE?

There are some myths about what leads a highly qualified, experienced individual to go independent. The rise of the independent has debunked the idea that it is only for those temporarily without full-time work, or for those who are finding it difficult to return to the workplace after time out.

The move to independent working is partly influenced by lifestyle factors, but increasingly consultants are recognising that the best way to use expertise gained through years in consulting and industry, is to apply it directly to similar situations. They can share their knowledge, continue to earn impressive compensation but the transactional nature of their deployment means that the business is saving costs compared with engaging a consulting firm, or bringing in full-time hires.

At MBA & Company our consultants fall into three main categories:

- **the rising stars** who want to combine their experience in consulting firms with managing their own business – the mix of

entrepreneurship and expertise that defines the millennials

"I want to leverage my skills as a consultant while at the same time starting a couple of entrepreneurial ventures"

- **senior consultants** who can bring instant operational expertise to companies requiring talented and experienced consulting leaders to manage the process of business change without having to deploy large teams of less efficient juniors

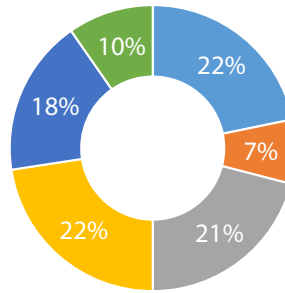
"it gives me the chance to continue pursuing a career in management consulting with the flexibility to choose which projects to do and to dedicate time to other endeavors"

- **industry leaders** who bring unparalleled operational and sector insight to businesses needing the external perspective on how to deliver new initiatives, strategies and innovations and drive business efficiencies and improvements

"When working as an independent consultant, it is much easier to take a step back and look at what is effectively good for the client and for the sector as a whole, and to detach oneself from considerations such as career and one's company's reputation management."

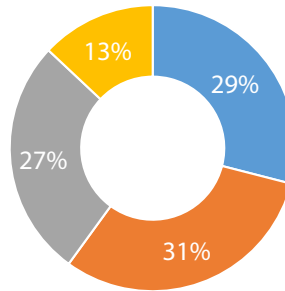
At MBA & Company, over 20,000 consultants are available globally with experience in the top consulting firms, leading industry figures and the desire to deliver the best services to business. To ensure that using this approach delivers on the premise of quality, all consultants are vetted ahead of registration, and then further filtered before shortlisting.

Independent consultants around the world



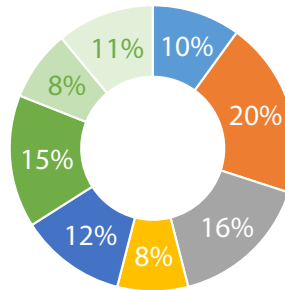
- South America
- Oceania
- North America
- Europe
- Asia
- Africa

Different levels of consultant represented



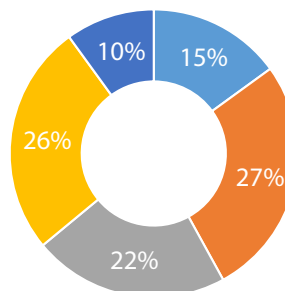
- Associate
- Senior Associate
- Manager
- Director

Consultants have expertise in every sector...



- Corporate Finance
- Management Consultancy
- FMCG
- Technology and Internet
- Energy
- Pharma
- Media and Advertising
- Other

and with a full breadth of functional experience



- Finance
- Strategy
- Sales and Marketing
- Operations
- HR

GETTING STARTED

Since MBA & Company first helped companies discover the best consulting talent we have identified the following scenarios when companies should consider using consultants, as well as the more traditional requirements for deployment like market assessment, due diligence, segment analysis, operational reviews etc.

There are many reasons to hire a consultant, but most of the drivers can be traced back to three key situations: opportunities, threats and gaps.

Opportunities such as new markets, new products, partnerships, mergers, struggling competitors and supply chain agreements should be good news – but they can also present challenges which must be addressed before action can be taken.

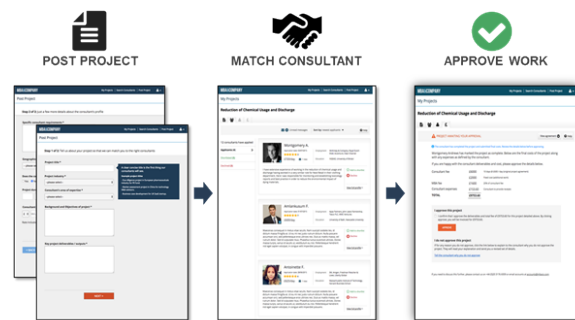
Threats can come from within – such as stagnation, stalled projects and obstructive personnel – or they can be external – such as strong competitors, changing consumer behaviours, international barriers or new regulations. Wherever they originate, threats can leave your business floundering and in need of guidance and direction.

Gaps in your organisation may result from skills shortages, or from having to make job cuts, restructuring or internal strife. Skill or experience gaps can come in the form of a long-term, permanent staffing need, or they may be needed on a short-term basis to address a temporary challenge.

For all of these situations, consultants from MBA & Company can offer a solution. Of course, no organisation wants to engage a

consultant unless the need is real and the benefits tangible, so in this field note we will look more closely at some of the signs that your business might need external support. But only you can decide whether a consultant is the right option in your circumstances.

Once you have decided to discover your next consultant the approach is simple:



This is why companies like Pfizer, Diageo, comparethemarket.com, Royal Sun Alliance, Pizza Hut and easyjet are adopting the on demand approach at MBA & Company.

Why not join them?
Discover the world's best talent for your business at mbaco.com by telling us your project requirements

START NOW

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1) www.crowdsourcing.com/blog/2015/07/how-the-freelance-economy-is-changing-the-world/
 2) www.mckinsey.com/insights/employment_and_growth/connecting_talent_with_opportunity_in_the_digital_age
 3) hbr.org/2012/05/the-rise-of-the-supertemp

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