

A hand holding a globe with a network of icons. The background is a blue-tinted image of a hand holding a globe, overlaid with a network of white lines and circular icons containing human figures. The globe is centered in the hand, and the network of icons extends outwards, creating a sense of global connectivity and digital technology.

# Seven Questions to Ask Your Consultant

Consultants can add real value to your organization by bringing industry or functional knowledge, problem solving or implementation methodologies and experience. But too often consultants just bring the brand name of the firm they work for. So how do you know if you just have the consulting brand name or a consultant who actually knows their functional area and your business and can help solve your business problem? Try one or more of these seven questions. Pick a consultant in your organization or on your team and ask.

## **1. Can you tell me everything you know about your functional area?**

This question is about the functional area in which the consultant is providing consulting services to your organization. The idea here is to get a well structured and well thought out perspective of the consultants' functional area. Call the consultant into your office, put them in front of the whiteboard with a marker and ask them to tell you everything they know. If your consultant can speak for five minutes or more then they are probably pretty good. But you might be surprised by either how unstructured the dialogue is or worse, how little they do know.

## **2. Can you give me an overview of my industry and company?**

This question can be embarrassing. A good consultant should be a student of the industry and your company and be able to give you a simple industry overview using Porters Five Forces Model or something similar. They should be able to tell you in broad terms what makes a company in your industry successful, the name of your company's CEO, annual revenue and hopefully some recent

## About Us

**Kenny & Company is a management consulting firm offering Strategy, Operations and Technology services to our clients.**

We exist because we love to do the work. After management consulting for 20+ years at some of the largest consulting companies globally, our partners realized that when it comes to consulting, bigger doesn't always mean better.

Instead, we've created a place where our ideas and opinions are grounded in experience, analysis and facts, leading to real problem solving and real solutions – a truly collaborative experience with our clients making their business our business.

We focus on getting the work done and prefer to let our work speak for itself. When we do speak, we don't talk about ourselves, but rather about what we do for our clients. We're proud of the strong character our entire team brings, the high intensity in which we thrive, and above all, doing great work.

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**3. What was the last book/article/blog you read about your area of expertise?**

Consultants need to be students of their functional area and/or industries and to do that they need to be reading and can be reading ahead for you, providing you with interesting insight and opinion about your industry, company or project.

**4. What is your basis for that opinion?**

This is my favorite question of all time ever since I learned the hard way in graduate school the old adage about opinions. When presented with an opinion ask “What is your basis for that opinion?” Consultants live on opinions but too often they are unsupported with research or data. The consulting brand is insufficient to make the opinion a good one. The well presented relevant facts do.

**5. What external information can you provide me about your functional area of expertise, my company or industry?**

This question is similar to question three but deals with one of the key advantages a consultant can bring to your organization – an external perspective. Good clients ask “What do other companies do?”, “Are we the best at this?”, “Who is world-class at this and how can we learn from them?” Good consultants should be getting answers to these questions before you even ask them. Many clients forget to even ask.

**6. What have you contributed to or published in your area of expertise?**

This is a tough one and to be fair many consultants lack the opportunity or infrastructure in their firms to contribute to firm thoughtware or publish. However they should at least be interested and looking to make their work a case study or credential.

**7. Give me your CEO elevator pitch about this engagement/project.**

Another favorite question, because many consultants just “Do” without the context of what they are trying to achieve for your organization or project. Can the consultant give the CEO of your company the business case and status of your project in one minute? “I am working on process flows”, just fails to cut it. A good consultant will gain an in depth understanding of the engagement/project over time. This is simply a prerequisite to performing at the highest level. They need to demonstrate an understanding of why, and what it is going to do to benefit your company. The elevator pitch should roll off the consultants tongue – if not it’s a red flag.

**Conclusion**

I am very proud to be a consultant and to have worked for some prestigious firms but we need to set a higher bar for consultants, in this non credentialed industry. These seven questions should set the bar that a good consultant can clear. Try one or all of these seven questions and give me your feedback I would love to hear from you.

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**About the Author**



Michael S. Kenny is the Managing Partner of Kenny & Company and has over 20 years consulting experience with Accenture, Deloitte and EDS planning and leading large complex initiatives at Fortune 500 companies with C-Level executives. He has led projects in Business and IT Strategy, Business Process, Re-engineering, Enterprise Architecture, Systems Integration, Business Intelligence and Supply Chain. Michael is a former Partner in Accenture.

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### Partner Led

Our Partners are personally committed to our clients and lead every engagement.

### Experience, Perspective and Passion

We average over 20 years in professional services and bring tailored approaches to every client engagement.

### Focused, Collaborative, High-Impact

We work side-by-side with our clients in highly focused teams to solve complex business problems.

### Client First

Our highest priority is our client's professional and personal success. We believe clients should expect more.

### Guarantee Our Work

We guarantee our clients complete satisfaction every engagement every time.

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