

# PERCEPTIONS OF CONSULTING IN THE NORDICS



Assesses the reputation of consulting firms,  
as seen by clients

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nordic clients aren't easily pleased. In no other major consulting market that we analyse in detail are clients less likely to be positive about the quality of service than they are in the Nordics. Looked at from the perspective of services, their ire seems to focus most strongly on strategy consulting, about which fewer than a third have anything positive to say. That's fewer than the number of people who speak negatively about quality overall, and that's rare. But in truth, trying to find any service about which Nordic clients aren't more negative than their counterparts elsewhere really isn't easy.

But why? It's tempting to invoke some sort of argument about long dark winters and Nordic introspection here, but while that may actually hold some truth (by contrast with Americans, who seem to like to shout about how great everybody is, we suspect there's a degree of Nordic reserve at play here), as analysts we probably ought to look a little deeper for the answer.

It may lie in Nordic clients' thoughts about the attributes of consulting firms. Once again they're fairly negative about everything, but what they're especially unlikely to say good things about (prices notwithstanding—everybody's always negative about those) are innovation and speed. They don't rate consulting firms either for their innovative approach to their work or for the speed at which they deliver their services. The implication is this: If you want to impress Nordic clients, you need to offer them something new and you need to offer them something fast.

Where you're likely to have much greater success is in convincing Nordic clients that you're delivering value over and above the fees you charge. By this measure, Nordic clients are more likely to be impressed than their counterparts anywhere else in the world other than the GCC. That might appear paradoxical to anyone who assumes there's a simple formula involving quality and prices that can be used to determine value, but our research suggests no such thing exists. Rather, perceptions of value appear to be influenced by what it's like to work with a firm. They depend on things like responsiveness and flexibility and a firm's ability to put suitably qualified people on a project. Not that any of those are things about which Nordic clients are particularly impressed, either. Which leaves us concluding not only that Nordic clients have been squeezing their consulting suppliers for everything they've got recently, but that they're quite pleased with the results. And we can't quite work out whether that's good news (because they recognise that they're getting a lot from consulting firms) or bad news (because they may be encouraged to continue squeezing).

At any rate, those contrasting views about quality and value need to be taken into account when considering how two of the stars of this report—The Boston Consulting Group and Aon Hewitt—are doing. Without wishing to pour cold water on The Boston Consulting Group's achievement in being the top-rated firm for quality, we need to understand that it does so without impressing to the degree you might expect. Indeed, its quality score of 53 would only be enough to lift it one place off the bottom of the quality ranking table in the US (a table it would need to score 76 to top).

By contrast, Aon Hewitt's achievement in being the top-ranked firm for delivering value in the Nordics must be seen as a huge achievement in a region already enamoured with the value it gets from consultants. In the US (where views about value are more negative), its score of 63 would be enough to see it top the value ranking by an impressive 13 points.

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# METHODOLOGY

## Who did we talk to?

We have 284 responses from our survey of executives, directors, and senior managers in the Nordics in November 2015 through to January 2016, all of whom have either been responsible for buying substantial volumes of consulting services in the previous year, or are prospective clients with exposure to consultants. They represent a wide range of industries and business functions, and 76% work in organisations that generate more than \$500m in revenue.

Figure 1

Respondents' level of responsibility

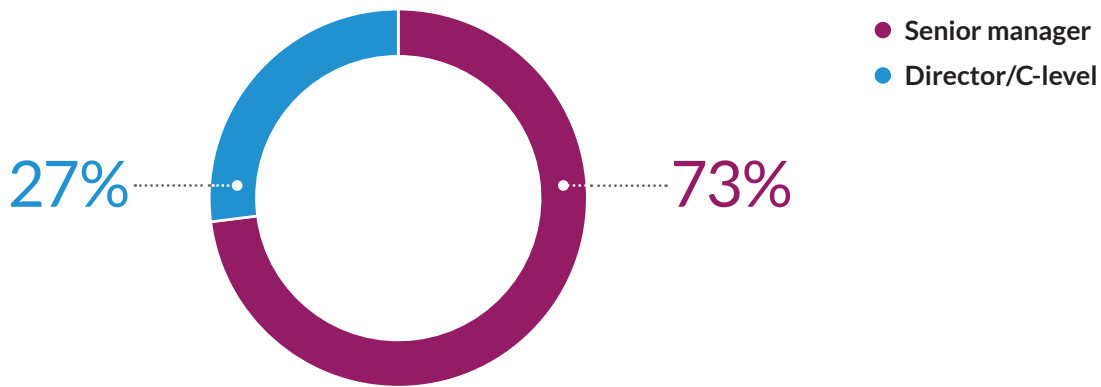


Figure 2

Respondents by industry

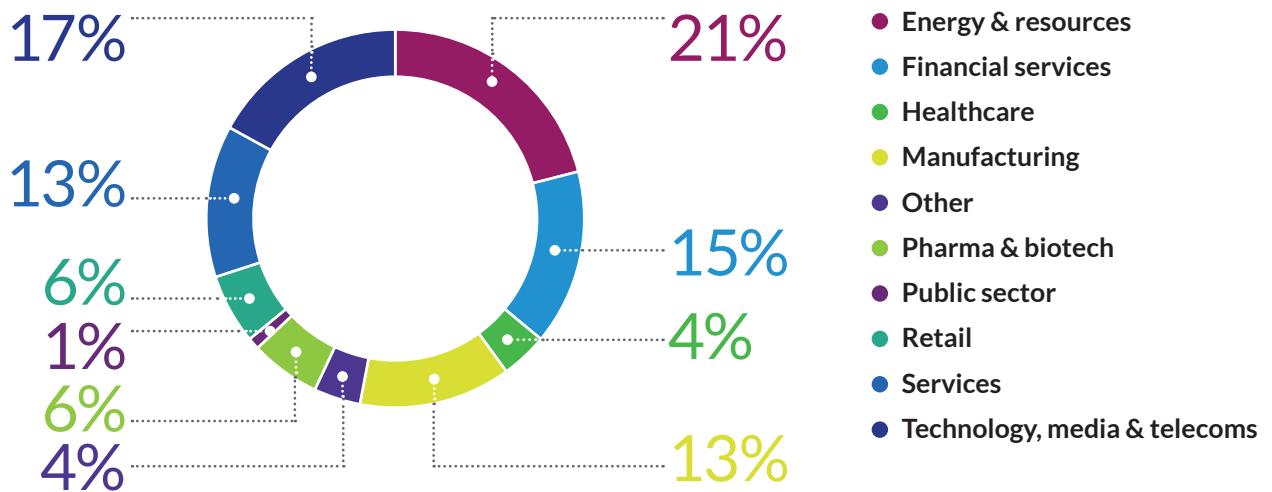
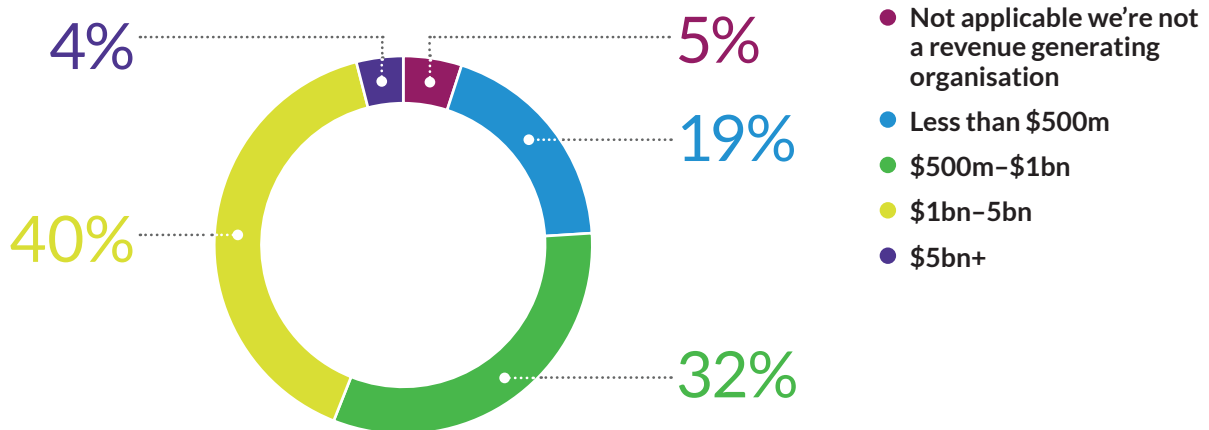


Figure 3

Respondents by organisation size (revenue)



### What did we ask them?

Each respondent was asked to tell us about three consulting firms and was presented with a list of the leading consulting firms in the Nordics. Clients did have the opportunity to tell us about consulting firms that weren't on the list, but this report focuses on the firms for which the number of responses was sufficient for us to carry out detailed analysis.

We asked each respondent to share their views on each of the three firms selected, focusing on the following areas:

- **Quality:** Their perception of the quality of service provided by each firm in ten different consulting services
- **Value:** Their view of how much value each firm added in relation to the fees paid for their services
- **Attributes:** How they rate each firm across a range of attributes.

## Which firms are included in this report?

Firm	Did we ask about this firm in this market?	Included in general analysis?	Detailed profile available?
Accenture	✓	✓	✓
Aon Hewitt	✓	✓	✓
A.T. Kearney	✓	✓	✗
Bain & Company	✓	✓	✓
BearingPoint	✗	✗	✗
The Boston Consulting Group	✓	✓	✓
Capgemini Consulting	✓	✓	✓
Deloitte	✓	✓	✓
EY	✓	✓	✓
Hay Group <sup>1</sup>	✓	✓	✗
IBM Global Business Services	✓	✓	✓
KPMG	✓	✓	✓
L.E.K.	✗	✗	✗
McKinsey & Company	✓	✓	✓
Mercer	✓	✗	✗
Oliver Wyman	✓	✓	✓
PA Consulting	✓	✓	✓
PwC	✓	✓	✓
Roland Berger	✓	✓	✗
Strategy&	✓	✓	✓
Towers Watson	✓	✓	✗

## How we rank firms in this report

In this report, we reveal the top-ranked firms in three areas: mindshare, quality, and value. We look at the top-ranked firms overall as well as in each consulting service.

**Mindshare:** We base our rankings on the numbers of respondents talking about each firm, relative to each other. To calculate that, we awarded a score of 100 to the most-mentioned firm, and work out how many times each other firm was mentioned in relation to it.

**Quality:** We base our rankings (and ratings) on the sum of the proportion of people who describe quality as either “high” or “very high”. Where that produces an equal result between two firms we take into account the share who have described quality as “very high” to determine the order in which they are ranked.

**Value:** We base our rankings (and ratings) on the sum of the proportion of people who say that the value a firm delivers is greater (to any extent) than the fees it charges. Where that produces an equal result between two firms, we take into account the extent to which value is seen to be greater than fees (respondents had the choice of saying it was twice, five times, or ten times greater than fees) to determine the order in which they are ranked.

<sup>1</sup> Our survey was launched before Korn Ferry’s acquisition of Hay Group completed in December 2015.

**New for 2016:**



The Source badge—an award given to those firms that have been rated number one by clients in a given region/industry for mindshare, quality, and value. If your firm has a badge next to its name and you'd like to find out more about how to use it externally please contact [Ella-Sian Jolley](mailto:ella-sian.jolley@sourceglobalresearch.com).

*Discover more online*

The data contained and referred to within this report is also available online, where it can be sorted and filtered according to your preferences. In fact, some of the charts contained in the report link directly through to the online database. Note that wherever you see a quickcode next to the title of a chart, that code can be entered into the search function of the database to reproduce exactly the same chart. To find out how you can get access to the online database, please contact the person in your organisation who bought the report or email [ella-sian.jolley@sourceglobalresearch.com](mailto:ella-sian.jolley@sourceglobalresearch.com)

# Definitions of industries and services

## Industries



### Energy & resources

#### Energy

*Includes the exploration and production of energy, including oil, gas, coal, and renewables.*

#### Utilities

*Includes the delivery of electricity, gas, water, sanitation, and other related services.*

#### Primary resources

*Includes agriculture, chemicals and chemical products, commodities, forestry, fishing, metals, mining, and plastics.*



### Financial services

#### Banking

*Includes retail banking, commercial banking, and lending.*

#### Insurance

*Includes general insurance (e.g., motor, home, pets, health—anything on an annual contract), life insurance, pension products, retirement planning.*

#### Private equity

*Includes both consulting work for private equity firms and consulting work with private equity portfolio businesses.*

#### Capital markets

*Includes investment banking, trading of stocks and financial products, corporate finance, and broking.*

#### Investment and wealth management

*Includes private banking, high net-worth banking, investment management, trust funds, the management of pension funds, and asset management.*



### Manufacturing

#### Aerospace

*Includes space research and technology, the manufacture of aircraft, aircraft parts, rockets and other space equipment, and tanks and ammunition.*

#### Automotive

*Includes the manufacture of motor vehicles, industrial vehicles, and vehicle supplies and parts.*

#### Construction

*Includes surveying, architectural, and engineering services, heavy construction, house building, and the building of infrastructure.*

#### Consumer packaged goods

*Includes the manufacture of clothes, foods, alcohol, tobacco, furniture, home furnishings, cleaning products, small arms, children's toys, and sports equipment.*

#### Consumer and industrial electronics

*Includes electrical components, household and industrial appliances, commercial and professional equipment.*

#### Industrial products

*Includes industrial machinery, steel and metal products, and plastic products.*



### Pharma & biotech

*Includes research into and the production of drugs, biological products, medicinal chemicals, and life sciences.*



### Healthcare

*Includes private- and publicly-funded healthcare, hospitals, laboratories, and medical equipment.*



### Public sector

#### Government

*Includes federal/national, state/regional, local government, emergency services, justice, social services, public transport, and conservation.*

#### Education

*Includes public and private schools, universities, and libraries.*

#### Defense

*Includes national security and consulting around defense issues.*



### Retail

*Includes the selling of clothes, food, consumer goods, and automobiles.*



### Services

#### Logistics

*Includes warehousing, storage, packing and crating, and distribution including cargo, freight, and haulage.*

#### Business services

*Includes services relating to law, accountancy, IT maintenance, security systems, advertising, employment agencies, and vehicle leasing.*

#### Leisure

*Includes museums, art galleries, theatre, golf courses, hotels, hospitality, travel agencies, restaurants, and bars.*

#### Real estate

*Includes estate agencies and operators of residential and commercial buildings.*

#### Transportation

*Includes private and people-related transportation, including airlines, airport management, train operators, rail infrastructure management, water transportation, courier services, and private bus services.*



### Technology, media & telecoms

#### Telecoms

*Includes telephone, mobile, digital, and other communication services.*

#### High-tech

*Includes IT related devices, computer and computer related devices, audio and video equipment, broadcasting and communication equipment.*

#### Media

*Includes radio, television and digital broadcasting stations and services as well as printing and the publishing of newspapers, periodicals, and books.*



## Services



### Financial management

*Includes finance function and budgeting/financial planning process.*



### Risk & regulatory

*Includes responding to regulation, technology and security risk services, operational risk, financial risk, programme risk.*



### HR & change management

*Includes HR strategy and effectiveness, benefits, compensation and pensions, change management, internal communications, organisational design and culture, stakeholder management, team effectiveness and collaboration, leadership and governance, performance management, talent management/training and development.*



### Operational improvement

*Includes business continuity and recovery, knowledge management, Lean and Six Sigma, property and estate management, quality and performance management, supply chain management, cost-cutting, innovation, M&A integration, managing quality, post-M&A integration, process design and re-engineering, procurement/purchasing, research and development, benchmarking, distribution strategy, environmental, sustainability and CSR, and operational review.*



### Strategy

*Includes business and financial modelling, corporate re-structuring, corporate recovery and turnaround, corporate strategy, market analysis and strategy, market research, policy formulation, strategic sourcing/offshoring strategy, due diligence and valuation, infrastructure/asset financing and management, PFI, mergers and acquisitions, customer service, new product development, branding, marketing and channel management, customer relationship management, pricing, sales force effectiveness, category management, sales and distribution planning.*

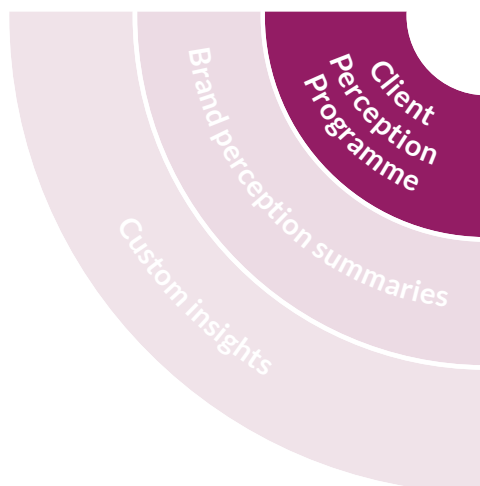


### Technology

*Includes ERP consulting, IT training, application of new technology, hardware/software selection, IT design and build, IT strategy, planning and review, IT testing and integration, management information and business intelligence, requirements definition, web and internet consulting, project and programme management (e.g., where consulting firm has been engaged to run a specific project that it is otherwise not involved in).*

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The newest of our major research programmes, our *Client Perception Programme* is a suite of eleven reports which assess the reputation of consulting firms, as seen by clients.

At the heart of the programme are two important questions:

- What is the reputation of a consulting firm?
- What do clients think about the quality of service and the value added by consulting firms?

The first section of each report looks at the perceptions of clients in the market as a whole (either by geography or industry) and ranks the top three firms in each of the following areas: mindshare (how likely clients are to be thinking about a consulting firm), quality, value added, and likelihood to be recommended. The report then looks at perceptions by consulting service (and where relevant, by industry), ranking the top three firms for each. In our analysis we draw on our extensive knowledge of the consulting market to explain why particular firms are perceived as they are, and highlight interesting stories within the data along the way.

Finally, the report looks at clients' perceptions of individual firms in the relevant market. It compares each firm's mindshare, quality, and value perceptions with those of the leading firms, as well as comparing the views of direct and indirect clients to highlight the challenges that need to be addressed either during a project, or by marketing. The report also highlights which services clients are recommending each firm for, and what they perceive to be each firm's strongest attributes.

## The *Client Perception Programme* can help you to:

- Understand how your consulting firm compares with competitors in the market
- Understand what clients and prospects see as your core strengths
- Where your clients think you can improve, and where they want you to make improvements

### Geographies and industries covered in this Programme:

GCC

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The Nordics

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## About Source

Source Global Research is a leading provider of information about the market for management consulting. Set up in 2007 with offices in London and Dubai, Source serves both consulting firms and their clients with expert analysis, research, and reporting. We draw not only on our extensive in-house experience but also on the breadth of our relationships with both suppliers and buyers. All of our work is underpinned by our core values of intelligence, integrity, efficiency, and transparency.

Source was founded by Fiona Czerniawska and Joy Burnford. Fiona is one of the world's leading experts on the consulting industry. She has written [numerous books](#) on the industry including: [The Intelligent Client](#) and [The Economist](#) books, [Business Consulting: A Guide to How it Works and How to Make it Work](#) and [Buying Professional Services](#).

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