

THE DNA OF THE WORLD'S LEADING CONSULTING FIRMS

*An approach to measuring it, and
what that tells us about how firms are
different from each other, and how well
aligned they are with clients' needs*



WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DNA?

Until now, “DNA” has been a term, borrowed from genetics, that has been applied loosely, and often irritatingly, to describe the culture of an organisation, especially with reference to what makes it unique. People have typically used it to explain the actions of their organisation, or to align themselves with a value or capability to which they think their customers will be attracted: “It’s in our DNA!”, they proclaim.

More often than not, this sort of talk is just fluff—rooted in nothing remotely scientific, and describing an aspiration rather than a reality. But that shouldn’t distract from the fact that the idea behind it is essentially a good one; that the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the building blocks of an organisation—and the sources of its differentiation—is a worthwhile activity. What’s needed, then, is a more scientific approach that is primarily concerned with understanding what exists, rather than with the view people inside an organisation have about themselves or what their organisation should be.

There’s no perfect way to do that: DNA isn’t actually a thing in an organisation in the way it is in an organism, so we have to find a proxy for it. In our view, that proxy is a range of 15 attributes that we know, from our research, to be important to the clients of professional services firms. And the way to measure the existence of those attributes is to ask clients about them.

The purpose of this white paper

This white paper represents the output of an idea about how we might approach the subject of measuring the DNA of a consulting firm. It does not represent the last word on the topic, but rather the first. Our hope is that it will stimulate debate, enquiry, and the pursuit of a deeper understanding about the brands of professional services firms. It is not perfect, neither is it complete, and nor is it meant to be.

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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