

Perceptions of Consulting in the US

Client Perception Studies



Our values and integrity

Our purpose is to help you grow your business. We aim to provide you with the best data and analysis to help you make the right decisions for your firm.

To that end, Source Global Research is completely independent of any professional services firm we work with or comment on. The views about each firm expressed in this report come from senior end-users of professional services—your clients and prospects, in other words. All analysis is our own—as experts in interpreting client data, our aim is to help you make sense of it and bring the important messages to your attention quickly.

It is not possible to influence our rankings either by subscribing to our research or by paying us money—it never has been and it never will be.

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How to use this Client Perception Study

It's very important to be clear about what our Client Perception Studies are, and are not:

What they're not are exhaustive studies of clients' opinions about specific firms that remain statistically robust when filtered to provide detailed data about views at a very granular level of the market. So if, for instance, you want statistically robust data about what clients in the pharma sector in Germany think about McKinsey's operational improvement capabilities, you won't find it in these reports. We do profile individual firms in our reports to the extent we can—indeed this remains one of the most popular parts of the reports with readers—and we do, separately, provide tailored presentations to firms that buy this report, contextualizing the results for that individual firm. However, our Client Perception Studies are not designed to replace the sort of in-depth client research that many firms carry out (and often ask us to carry out for them) or the more wide-ranging, global view of perceptions provided by our Consulting Brand Barometer.

What they are designed to do is provide a snapshot of views within a particular consulting market at a point in time. What they lack in detail about individual firms they make up for in three important ways:

- **A multi-firm view.** Our reports enable consulting firms to see how they stack up against their competitors in the minds of clients.
- **A view from prospects, not just existing clients.** We include the views of people who aren't current active clients of the firm they're telling us about, enabling us to understand what we tend to think of as a firm's brand pipeline, and to compare the views of prospective and active clients. In doing this, we're able to assess the extent to which clients' expectation of a firm are met in reality, and how well a firm's marketing and delivery capabilities are aligned.
- **Independence and expertise.** The trouble with conducting your own client research is that clients are often reluctant to express negative views about firms (and people) with whom they've worked closely. They have no such concerns when they're telling us. Added to which, we're able to bring the expertise we've gained over years of analyzing the consulting market to bear, helping to interpret the results within the context of the wider market and the strategic priorities of consulting firms.

It's important to remember that this is a study of client perceptions; a summarized view of what we're hearing from the market. It's not Source's view, nor is it a comment on market share or a recommendation to clients about which firms to buy from. The audience of these reports is very much the firms featured in them, and those interested in the strength of the competition in any given market.

Methodology

Who did we talk to?

We have 675 responses from our survey of executives, directors, and senior managers in the US undertaken from October to December 2020, all of whom have been responsible for buying substantial volumes of consulting services in the past two years. We ask all respondents about three firms they're familiar with, giving us 2,025 responses about different firms. They represent a wide range of sectors and business functions, and 86% work in organizations that generate more than \$500m in revenue.

For more information about the people we surveyed, please see the extended methodology section at the back of this report.

The difference between direct clients and prospects

We talk about two types of clients in this report: direct clients and prospects.

Direct clients are clients who have bought services from a firm on a reasonably regular basis. They're current clients, or ones with an ongoing relationship with a firm.

Prospects are clients who feel qualified to share an opinion about a firm but aren't among the firm's direct clients. They may have had exposure to the work the firm has done elsewhere in their organisation or have simply formed an impression based on reading a firm's thought leadership or being exposed to its marketing in some other form. In this research, we segment this group into those that are simply aware of a firm, and those that have shortlisted a firm but decided not to proceed with that firm.

The differences between the opinions of these two types of clients tell us a lot about the differences between expectation (prospects) and reality (direct clients). But they also tell us something about the differences between a firm's marketing and what it actually delivers.



Programme schedule for 2021

Reports 2021		Market Trends Programme	Client Perception Studies	Emerging Trends Programme
Q1	January	Forecasts for 2021 US	UK US	
	February	GCC UK Nordics	Germany Financial Services	Buying and Selling
	March	DACH Canada France	Healthcare & Pharma GCC France	
Q2	April	South America Australia China Japan	Nordics Energy & Resources Technology, Media & Telecoms	
	May	South East Asia Benelux India	China Japan	Beyond Digital
	June	Southern Europe Eastern Europe & Russia		
Q3	July			
	August	Africa Energy & Resources Financial Services	Perceptions of Risk Firms Perceptions of Tax Firms	Investing for Growth
	September		Perceptions of Audit Firms	
Q4	October	The Global Tax Advisory Market The Global Risk & Cybersecurity Services Market		Building a Trusted Brand
	November	Healthcare & Pharma Technology, Media & Telecoms Consumer Products & Retail		
	December	Planning for Growth in 2022		

Please note that with the purchase of all Market Trends reports in 2021, you will also gain access to a monthly video summary on the global market, presented by Fiona Czerniawska.

White Space

A powerful research tool that allows subscribers to keep up to date with the latest content being produced and maximise their return on investment. A series of reports that analyse the quality and effectiveness of thought leadership are published throughout the year.

About us

Source analyses the way in which economic, business, behavioural, and technology change drives how organisations use professional services, and the implications that has for professional services firms.

Since its inception in 2007, Source has invested in sophisticated, proprietary research techniques that not only provide unique insights on current and future trends in the market, but also provide a better and faster solution than you would be able to reach yourself.

Our analysis and recommendations are derived from data and experience, and we use our team's extensive knowledge of the industry to provide actionable and clear conclusions on the best course of action for you and your firm. Our insights have underpinned some of the biggest strategic investment decisions made by professional services firms around the world.

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