

EXTRACT



Emerging Trends

EMERGING

The Future of Consulting

Report

July 2024



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What really matters

We identify the things that really matter to firms—a snapshot of the most important dynamics in the market.

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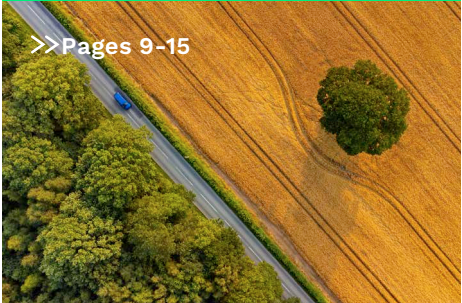


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What support do clients say they'll need?

An exploration of the issues clients expect to be grappling with in future and the role technology will play in creating and delivering solutions to these.

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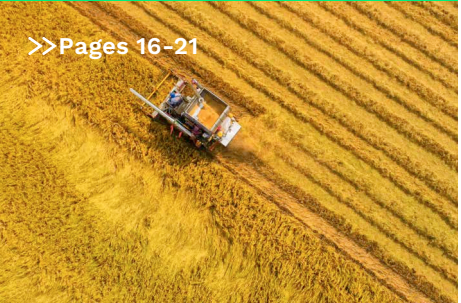


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How will the client-consulting relationship evolve?

We look at how clients want to evolve in their own organisations and what this will mean for their interactions with consultants.

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What skills will a consultant need in the future?

A view of how the skills of future consultants match up to those needed today, and where clients expect to gain the most value from individual consultants.

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Introduction

In our last Emerging Trends report, we talked about how clients were in a moment of change, looking around at other providers of consulting support and deciding whether to stick or twist.

This time around we're still looking at change, but how consulting needs to change to keep up with client demands.

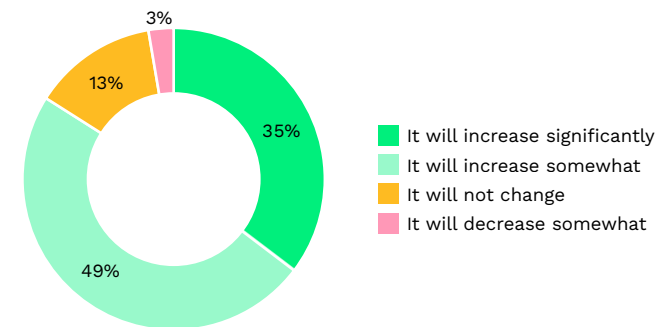
We're considering a short time frame—the next two to three years—because if the last few years have taught us anything, it's that trying to look beyond that is pretty much impossible. Clients are expecting to increase their use of consulting support, but firms need to be nimble, and those that can respond at speed to a dynamic marketplace will be best placed to succeed.

It's not the first time we've looked at this topic. Towards the end of 2020 we published *The Consultant of Tomorrow*, a report that looked back at how the role of the consultant had evolved over the previous few years and how that would influence the future of the industry. At that point, consulting had been upended by the pandemic, but we all thought calmer times would return. Now, clients exist in an age of crises, and change happens much faster and more regularly. There may no longer be any such thing as a typical consultant, but we should still be able to find patterns in what clients want from firms.

This report will explore what support clients say they'll need, how the client-consulting relationship will evolve, and what skills consultants will need in future.

Figure 1

How will your organisation's use of external consulting services change in the next two years?



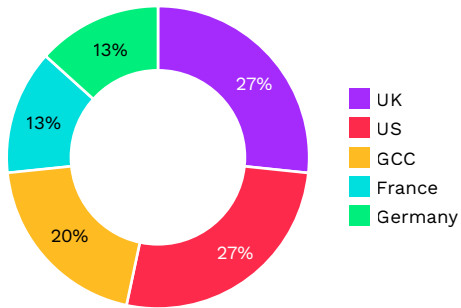
“We don’t know what the future is going to look like, but we have to plan for it anyway.”

CHRO, consumer products

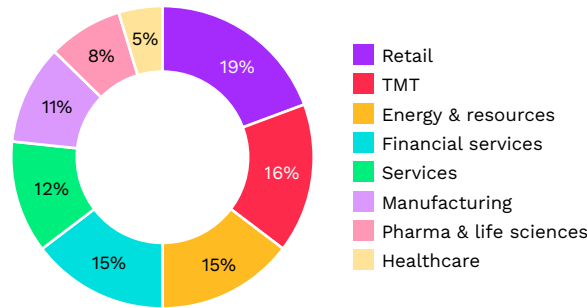
Methodology

We surveyed 150 senior executives in June 2024, all of whom are responsible for buying consulting services. Respondents came from five geographies, all of which are important in terms of scale and/or growth potential—the US, the UK, Germany, France, and the GCC. They were also drawn from a representative mix of sectors and functions. Two thirds came from organisations with more than 5,000 people.

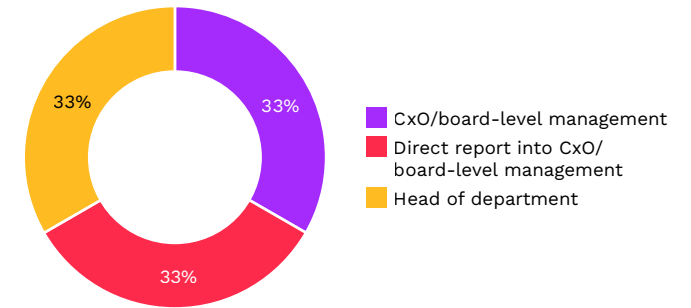
Respondents by geography



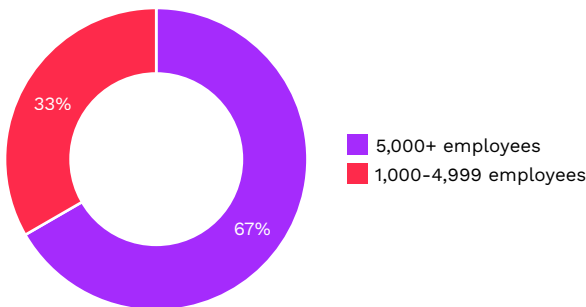
Respondents by sector



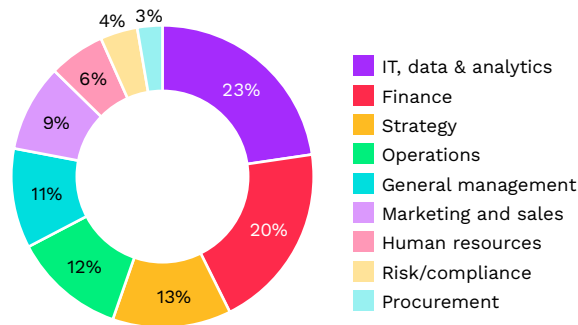
Respondents by responsibility



Respondents by headcount



Respondents by function





What really matters

- Expertise underscores everything that clients want—whether they need capacity or capability6
- Is this the end of transformation? 7
- Clients will continue to scrutinise value—and that goes further than financial returns8

2



“What we really need to know is how new technologies will impact our workforce, what skills we are going to need in future, but more importantly how we can use that to our advantage and maintain our position in the market.”

CMO, TMT

What support do clients say they’ll need?

- Technology is front of mind for clients and is set to remain so— but they may no longer be focused on digital transformation 10
- Clients need capability more than capacity, but the latter will also drive demand 11
- Capability means clients need partners who can help them understand how technology will support their ambitions...12
- ...but also partners who will use that technology expertise to change how they deliver13
- Although there will be some issues with technology-enhanced delivery that need to be ironed out.....15

3



“Consultants allow us to think about the future in a way we wouldn’t be able to do on our own, but we aim to do a lot more of this work ourselves.”

CIO, manufacturing

How will the client-consulting relationship evolve?

- Clients see a future where they can do much more themselves... .. 17**
- ...but the client-consultant relationship is stuck between that of a service provider and a true partnership..... 18**
- Clients are getting the expertise they need, but not the practical support 19**
- Access to global experts is an enduring pandemic legacy..... 20**
- Has remote working had its day? 21**

4



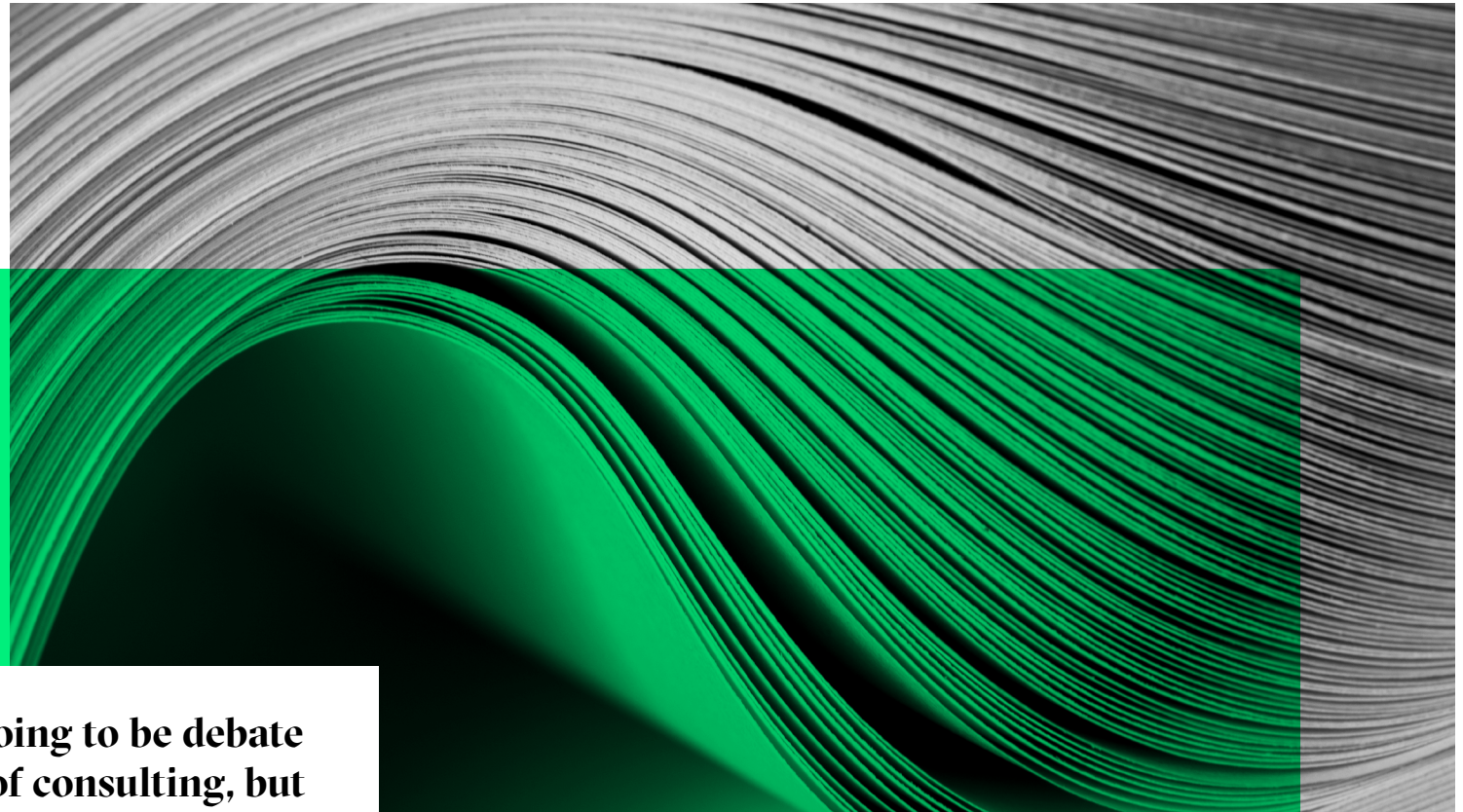
“When I’m looking for insights, I go to the specialists.”

CFO, energy & resources

What skills will a consultant need in the future?

- The future consultant needs to be tech savvy, organised, and an expert... 23
- ...but clients need something different in the short term... 24
- Relationships are strengthened when the focus is on the client organisation... 25
- There’s no easy way of knowing the value that clients will seek in future... 26

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“There’s always going to be debate about the future of consulting, but one thing is certain: It has a future. There’s a reason the profession exists, and that’s because consultants have expertise in areas we often don’t realise we need.”

CIO, financial services

About this report

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Meet the expert

Catherine Anderson

Catherine is Director of Market Trends & Analysis. She turns qualitative and quantitative data into meaningful, strategic insights on topics across the professional services market, from sustainability to managed services.

Catherine Anderson

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About us

We help professional services firms **understand what really matters** when facing decisions of vital importance.

The best decisions are based on evidence, objectivity, and a willingness to change. That's why, at Source, we tell you what you need to hear, rather than what you want to hear.

We draw upon our deep roots within the professional services sector to provide firms with a clear picture of their clients' worlds. Through comprehensive research and meticulous analysis, we pinpoint what truly matters and deliver actionable insights that help firms map out the right way forward.

We believe in thriving individually and succeeding together. And we would love to help your firm crack its latest conundrum.

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Publication schedule for 2024

2024	Market Trends Reports	Market Trends Briefings	Client Perceptions Studies	Emerging Trends Programme	White Space Reports	White Space Insights			
Q1	January	India			Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership	Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series			
	February						Forecasts for 2024 UK GCC France	ET1 Ecosystems	
	March							UK US Germany	
Q2	April		Financial Services GCC France			Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series			
	May						Nordics US DACH Australia East Asia	Retail Australia Energy & Resources	
	June						South East Asia	Technology, Media & Telecoms China Japan	ET2 Go-to-Market Strategy
Q3	July	South America Healthcare & Pharma		ET3 The Future of Consulting		Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series			
	August						Africa Energy & Resources Financial Services Technology, Media & Telecoms		
	September						Sustainability	Risk Tax	ET4 AI in Professional Services
Q4	October		Audit Technology		Hot Topic Report	Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series			
	November						Tax Risk Technology		ET5 Expertise
	December						Planning for Growth in 2025		ET6 What Clients Will Want in 2025