

Emerging Trends

EXTRACT



EMERGING

**The new consulting frontier:
Adapting to global
economic change**

Report

Oct 2025

About us

We partner with professional services firms to turn insight into strategic advantage. Our proprietary research and tailored, firm-specific studies provide clear, actionable guidance to inform your firm's strategic decisions.

Through our work, we help professional services firms to:

- Anticipate key industry trends
- Identify and evaluate growth opportunities in existing and emerging markets
- Understand client perceptions and competitive positioning
- Refine propositions and messaging to better align with client needs
- Maximise the reach, impact, and commercial value of thought leadership

To dig deeper into the insights in this report, explore our other publications, or learn more about bespoke research for your firm, please [get in touch](#).

Who is this report for and how will it help?

This report is for **client & markets teams**: The imposition of tariffs raises questions about the future of globalised trade. It also challenges the assumptions most large organisations make about their operations, organisational structures, and business models. Firms should be thinking about macro trends and tariffs because these are currently two of the biggest influences on client needs and their demand for professional services right now.

This creates new opportunities for consulting and professional services firms, but winning work won't just depend on your expertise in this field, but on the extent to which you can offer—and be a role model for—the new blueprint for multinationalism.

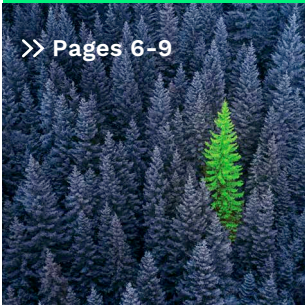
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We identify the things that really matter for firms—a snapshot of the most important dynamics in the market.

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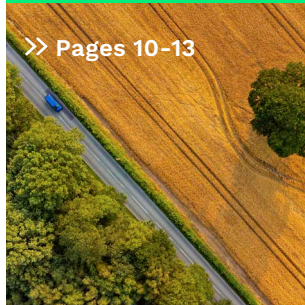


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How is globalisation impacting clients?

We explore how globalisation trends are impacting clients and their propensity to invest into international expansion.

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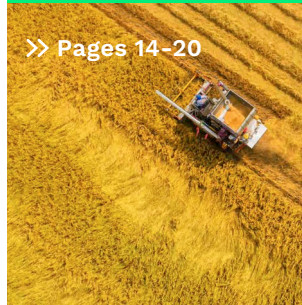


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Why will international investment require consulting support?

We dive into the three key ways that globalisation is driving up consulting demand.

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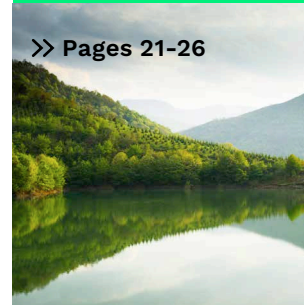


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What does this opportunity look like?

We profile the two broad client types emerging in relation to globalisation and how their needs and behaviours differ.

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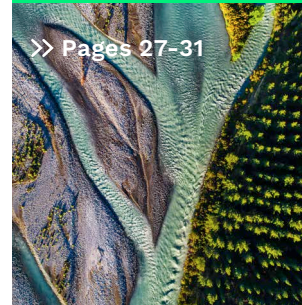


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The new geographic delivery model

We explore how and why you should adapt your firm's geographic delivery model to meet your clients' needs.

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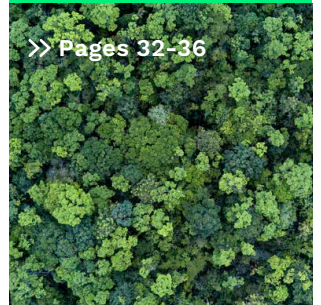


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Do what really matters: What do firms need to do to exploit this opportunity?

Practical recommendations to help you understand and create the value that really matters to clients.

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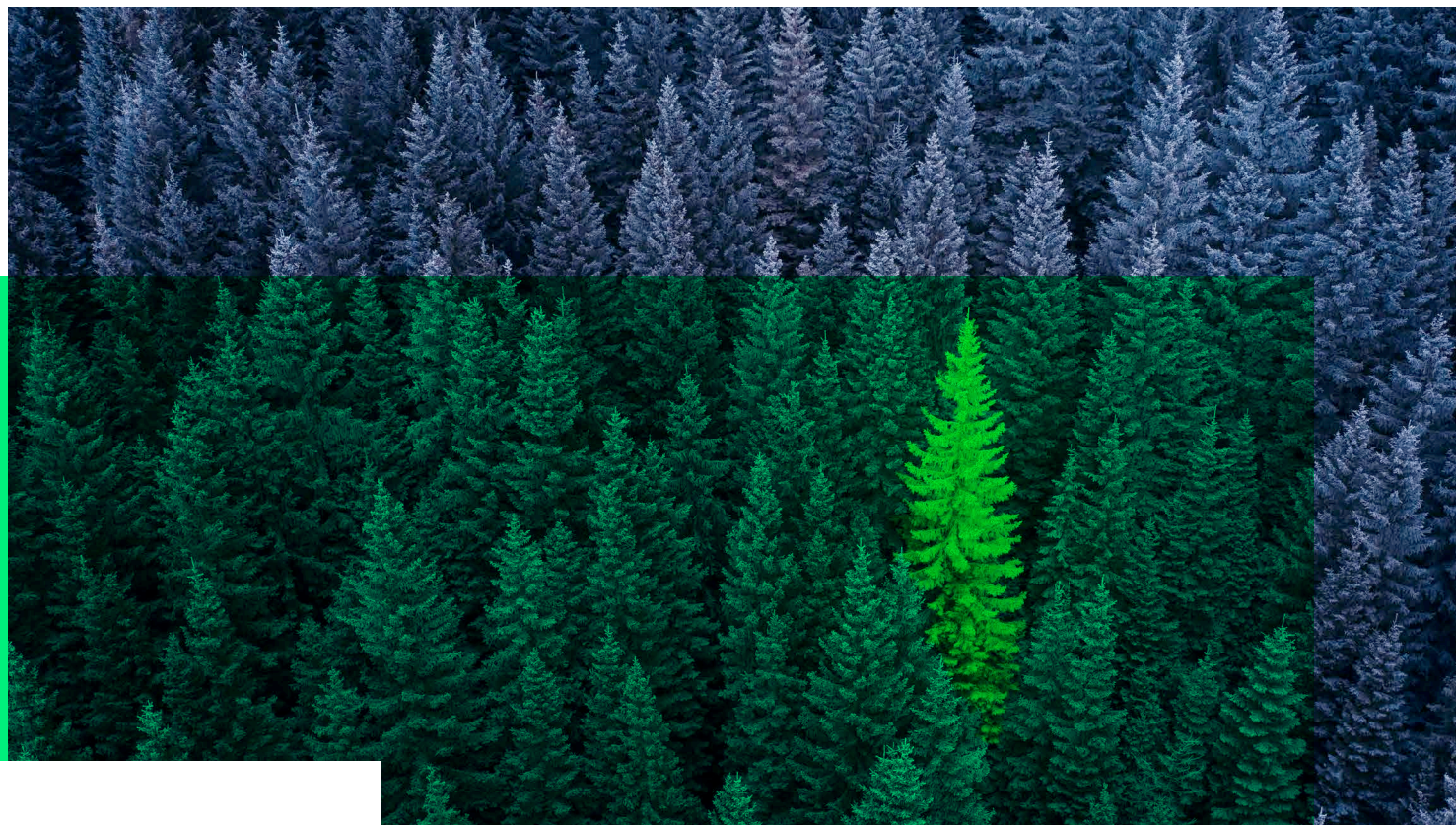
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1



**“Globalisation will
continue because it makes
economic sense.”**

Senior vice president, manufacturing, China

What really matters

The march towards globalisation is inexorable 7
Clients are changing their approach to globalisation 8
Clients will need outside help to transition to the new world order 9

2



“We’re caught between a rock and a hard place. Our entire business is based on a highly complex, global supply chain that involves multiple, very specialised suppliers. Creating a more resilient version of this would result in poorer-quality products for our customers at a higher price. Is that the future?”

COO, manufacturing, Japan

How is globalisation impacting clients?

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Increased investment in international markets is central to future success	12
International investment will also drive increased expenditure on consulting services.....	13

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“While in theory we’ll always try to use in-house support before turning to external suppliers, it is inconceivable that we can manage a change of this scale and complexity without outside help.”

COO, pharmaceutical company, US

Why will international investment require consulting support?

- 1 The right level of change 15
- 2 There is no certainty about the future structure of trade 18
- 3 Companies that are continuing to globalise face challenges 20

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“We are also dealing with several crises, so we want to somehow be more resilient to reduce the impact of these crises, especially in logistics. Sometimes it’s a geopolitical conflict like what is happening today. Sometimes it’s just a border dispute between the US and Mexico, which results in trucks getting stuck at the border, so they can’t do their jobs.”

IT executive, manufacturing, Sweden

What does this opportunity look like?

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“It’s no longer a question of global versus local. Part of the fallout from tariffs has been that we need to think about our geographic footprint in different ways. There are some activities that we’ll need to continue thinking about on a global basis but, in expanding into new markets they may benefit from a country-specific approach. Other activities may well happen on a regional basis.”

CEO, consumer products, Japan

The new geographic delivery model

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Opportunists see firms’ technology as a key way to help their expansion overseas	30
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“We need to work with firms that understand that the choices we face aren’t between all-out globalisation and localist retrenchment, but a complex combination of the two. We want to work with firms that get this and are already capable of operating in both ways”

COO, automotive, Germany

Do what really matters: What do firms need to do to exploit this opportunity?

Develop a structure that’s capable of delivering globally,
regionally, and locally.....33

Have—and be seen to have—boots on the ground 34

Be a role model for what a global business of the future
could look like36

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“What might happen with the geopolitical situation of China and Taiwan, that’s impacting us to open up to the rest of the world, just in case we, as Japan, are blocked. So, we need to extract revenue from other areas. So, on the contrary, I would say it’s not stopping our plans. It’s accelerating our plans.”

COO, retail, Japan

About this report

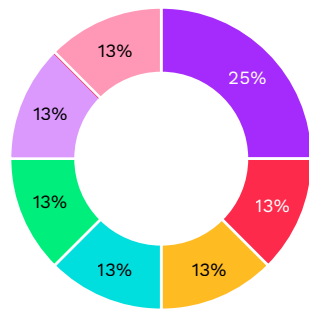
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Methodology

We surveyed 160 senior buyers of consulting in August 2025. Respondents worked in seven geographies, all of which are important in terms of scale and/or growth potential—the US, Australia, France, Germany, India, the Netherlands, and the UK. They were also drawn from a representative mix of sectors and functions. Approximately two thirds came from organisations with more than 10,000.

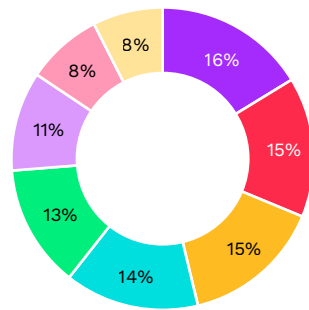
We have also drawn on the findings of our 2025 global Client Perceptions survey of 3,868 senior buyers of consulting where useful, and particularly for the insights shared in Figure 31, as well as our Quarterly Client Survey of 200 senior buyers (Figure 1 and Figure 3).

Respondents by geography



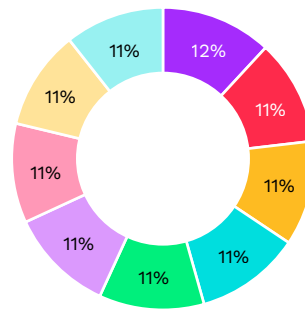
- US
- Australia
- France
- Germany
- India
- The Netherlands
- UK

Respondents by sector



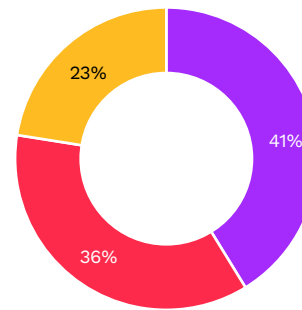
- Retail
- Financial services
- TMT
- Pharma & life sciences
- Energy & resources
- Manufacturing
- Services
- Healthcare

Respondents by function



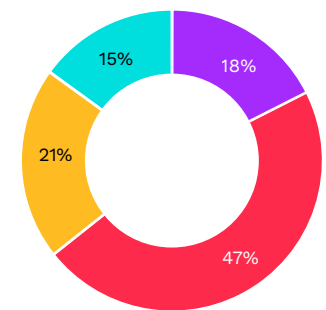
- Risk/compliance
- Finance
- General management
- IT, data & analytics
- Marketing & sales
- Operations
- Human resources
- Procurement
- Strategy

Respondents by responsibility



- CxO/board-level management
- Head of department
- Direct report into CxO/board-level management

Respondents by headcount



- 20,000+ people
- 10,000-19,999 people
- 5,000-9,999 people
- 1,000-4,999 people

Meet the experts

Fiona Czerniawska

Fiona is the Founder and CEO of Source. She's one of the world's foremost commentators on the global professional services and consulting industry.

Before starting Source, she had almost 20 years' experience as a management consultant, primarily working in the areas of marketing and strategy, initially with PwC, before moving on to be Head of Strategy and Business Planning for EY in the UK.

She's the author of a dozen books, including *Business Consulting: A Guide to How it Works and How to Make it Work* and *Buying Professional Services*, both of which were published by The Economist.

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Martin is a Principal Consultant in our Client & Brand Insights team. He is an experienced writer and analyst, specialising in client perceptions, and helps professional services firms to understand how they are perceived in the market across multiple lines of business, including consulting, risk advisory, tax advisory, and audit.

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Publication schedule for 2025

2025	Market Trends Reports	Market Trends Briefings	Client Perceptions Studies	Emerging Trends Programme	White Space Reports	White Space Insights
Q1	January		UK US GCC France			Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	February			Pricing: Expectations vs. Reality		
	March				Quality Ratings Report (QRR)	
Q2	April	India South America	Germany Australia China Japan Retail Energy & Resources Financial Services Technology, Media & Telecoms	What's next for people, HR & change consulting?		Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	May					
	June			Client attitudes to AI and barriers to implementation today	Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership	
Q3	July	Healthcare & Pharma	Risk Tax			Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	August			How to talk to your clients about value		
	September				Thought Leadership Innovation	
Q4	October	Public Sector	Audit Technology	The new consulting frontier: Adapting to global economic change		Featured thought leadership (monthly) Quarterly webinar series
	November					
	December			Predictions for 2026	Hot Topic Report	