

EXTRACT

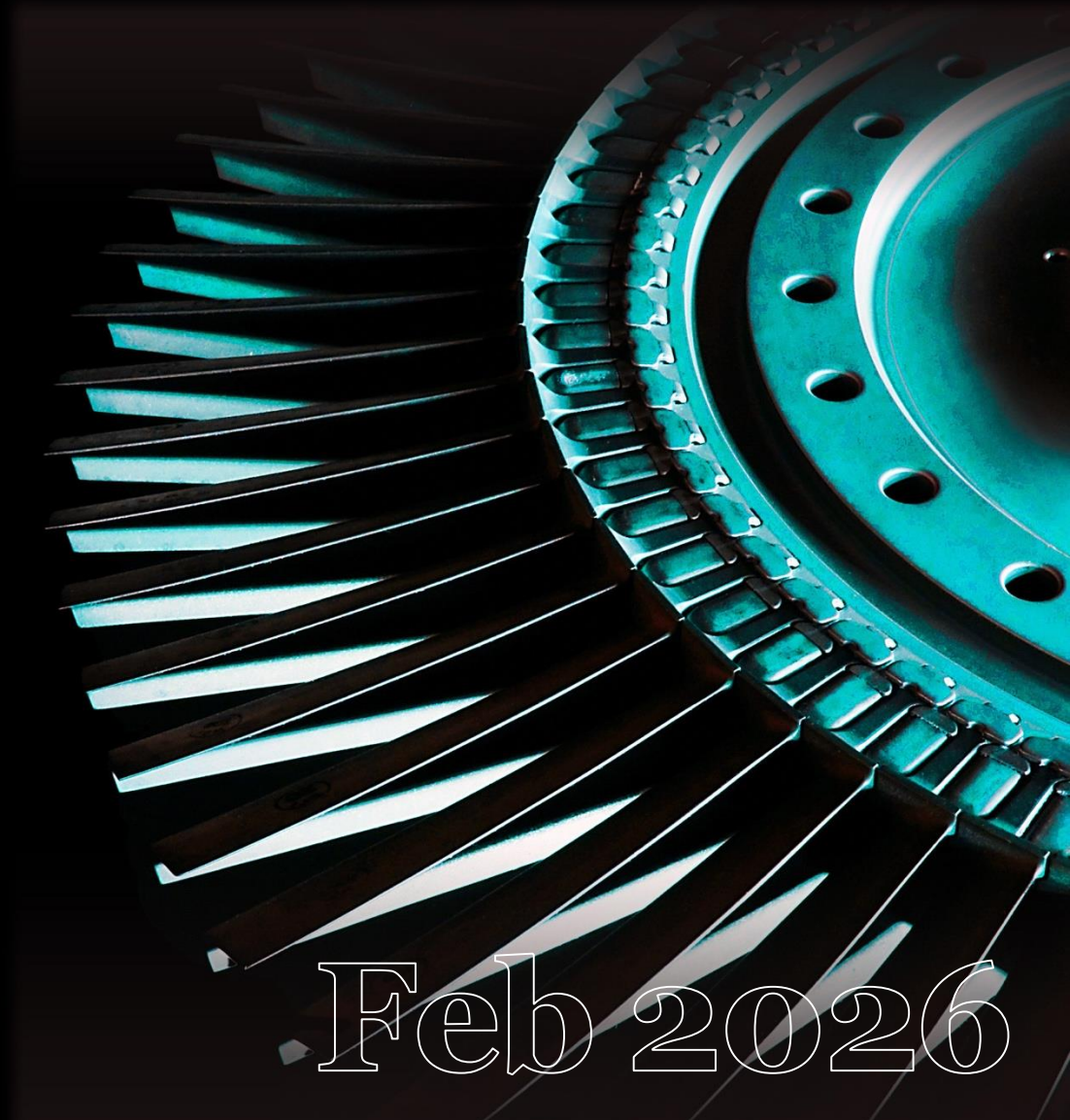


Market Trends

The UK Consulting Market in 2026

Report

Feb 2026



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 shape your firm's growth.

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 discover how we can further support your objectives, [get in touch](#).

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Contents

1

What really matters

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

The big answers

We ask Source’s experts what they think are the big opportunities and risks in today’s market.



2

Market overview

Bringing together our market data, forecasts, and analysis, we provide a comprehensive picture of the state of play from a geographical, sector, and line-of-business perspective.



3

Client priorities

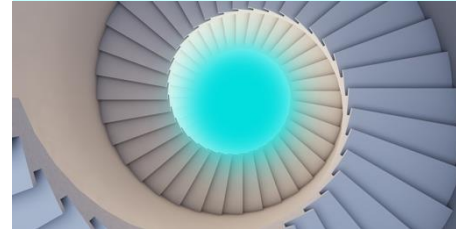
Using data from our survey of senior buyers of consulting, we explore the most important priorities, opportunities, and challenges for clients.



4

Implications for firms

We take a look at the factors influencing clients’ buying behaviours, and what this means for the services firms provide.



5

Insights from consultants

In this series of interviews, senior leaders from professional services firms offer their perspectives on what really matters in the market today.



About this report

Contact us and other reports

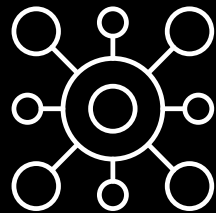
1

What really matters

“We are seeing a lot of organisations using GenAI chatbot tools to improve productivity. But the top tier of AI usage—smart agentic workflow systems—is still in the experimentation phase.”

Scott Logan, PwC

3 Shout about your **strategic partnerships**: It's an increasingly important factor in buying decisions.



44%

of clients say that one of the main reasons for working with a firm is the identity of its network of strategic partners

For 44% clients, the strength of a firm's strategic partnerships guides their decision about whom to work with. What's more, clients are willing to pay a premium when the work is strategically important, or when a firm can clearly demonstrate its specialist expertise. Partner networks offer a powerful way to distinguish one firm's capabilities from another's.

At a time when clients tell us they want to focus on implementation and execution, it is even more important for firms to have access to the right experts. In most cases, this expertise will centre around technology, so firms should build up stronger alliances with specialist software developers, cloud providers, AI services companies, R&D organisations, and potentially academic institutions for access to cutting-edge innovation.

Firms must not overlook the importance of building up a network of experts and shouting about it. In fact, as a criterion in firm choice, partnerships play a bigger role than track record. Clients seem to think that strategy firms and the Big Four have made strides to improve their networks of partners, but there's definitely further to go for consulting firms.

2

Market overview

“Across the UK consulting market, we saw a mixed picture in 2025. The double-digit growth continues to be in technology and implementing AI at scale.”

Lisa Fernihough, KPMG

3



Client priorities

“The narrative has flipped. Organisations recognise that cost reduction can only take them so far. To do something different, they must look at the topline, routes to market, and service or product offerings.”

Alan Frost, Forvis Mazars

How do clients feel about the current business landscape?

There is a renewed sense of confidence among clients, driven by a desire to invest and get ahead of competitors

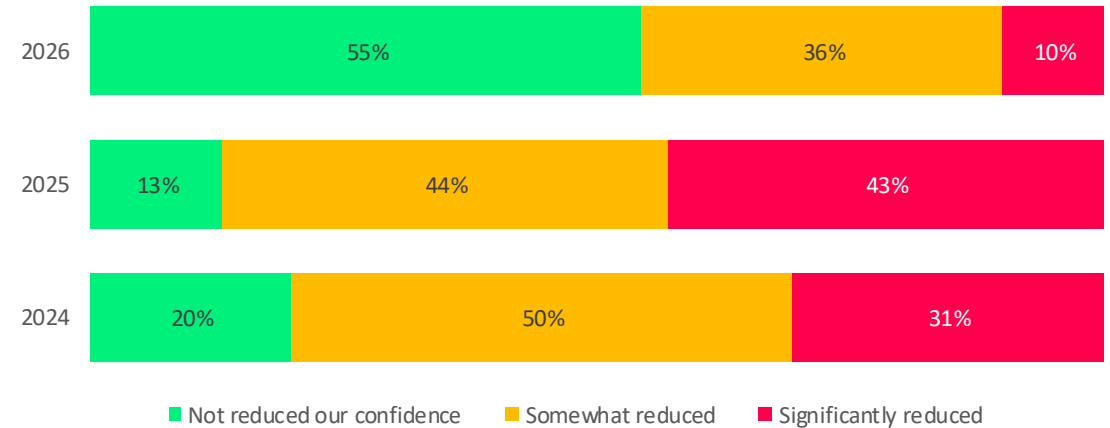
Clients are entering 2026 in a very different frame of mind compared to 12 months ago. A sense of caution, even fear, about the business landscape has morphed into one of determination and readiness to seize opportunities. Over half now say their confidence has not been reduced and just one in 10 tell us their confidence has declined significantly. This is a far cry from how clients answered this same question 12 months ago, when nearly 90% said their confidence had been reduced, either somewhat or significantly.

Interestingly, senior management is much more likely to feel confident about the UK landscape than those elsewhere in the organisation, especially HR, operations, and strategy departments. Given that budgets for larger, cross-functional, and more strategic projects tend to be signed off by senior management, this level of confidence is encouraging for firms.

Looking ahead to the next three years, the majority of clients (52%) say they are optimistic about the UK market and plan to prioritise domestic capital investment and new job creation during this timeframe, ahead of the 42% that are more cautious and will focus their investment instead on their international operations. Less than 10% will choose to be defensive and focus on consolidating their existing operations.

Figure 6

To what extent have macroeconomic and political tensions impacted your confidence when thinking about the future of your organisation?




52%

plan to prioritise capital investment and job creation



7%

plan to be on the defensive and focus on consolidation

4

Implications for firms

“Boutiques offer agility and innovation. They win work against big firms by having a niche focus, offering a depth of case history that broad-market firms cannot match.”

Marc Jantzen, The Consultancy Growth Network

5

Insights from consultants

“There is still work to be done in the UK and Europe to reach the levels of AI adoption we’re seeing in the US and Asia, particularly around how companies can use technologies to transform productivity.”

Chris Lewis, EY

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About this report

“It has been a very mixed year. The year started off quite well with a wave of optimism, but geopolitical events—particularly US policies—had a knock-on effect on the UK.”

Mark Veldon, AlixPartners

What's included in this report

Our reports offer a wealth of market sizing, growth, and forecast data alongside engaging, in-depth analysis of the trends that matter. Using our highly flexible, multidimensional model we provide firms with robust, trusted data to make informed decisions about strategic investments and plan for the future.



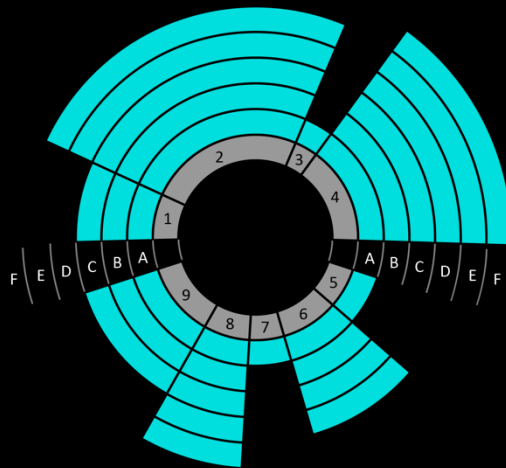
Geography model

Albania	Canada	Germany	Kenya	North Macedonia	Saudi Arabia	Tanzania
Algeria	Chile	Ghana	Kuwait	Norway	Serbia	Thailand
Angola	China	Greece	Lebanon	Oman	Singapore	Tunisia
Argentina	Colombia	Hong Kong	Libya	Pakistan	Slovakia	Turkey
Australia	Côte d'Ivoire	Hungary	Luxembourg	Papua New Guinea	Slovenia	UAE
Austria	Croatia	India	Malaysia	Peru	South Africa	Uganda
Bahrain	Cyprus	Indonesia	Mexico	Philippines	South Korea	Ukraine
Belarus	Czech Republic	Iran	Morocco	Poland	Spain	United Kingdom
Belgium	Denmark	Iraq	Mozambique	Portugal	Sri Lanka	United States
Bosnia	Egypt	Ireland	Myanmar	Qatar	Sudan	Venezuela
Brazil	Ethiopia	Israel	Netherlands	Romania	Sweden	Vietnam
Bulgaria	Finland	Italy	New Zealand	Russia	Switzerland	Zambia
Cameroon	France	Japan	Nigeria	Rwanda	Taiwan	

Sector model

Sectors

- 1 Energy & resources
- 2 Financial services
- 3 Healthcare
- 4 Manufacturing
- 5 Pharma & life sciences
- 6 Public sector
- 7 Retail
- 8 Services
- 9 Technology, media & telecoms

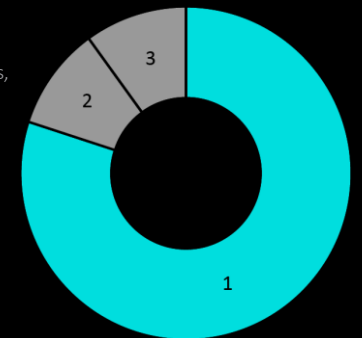


Sub-sectors

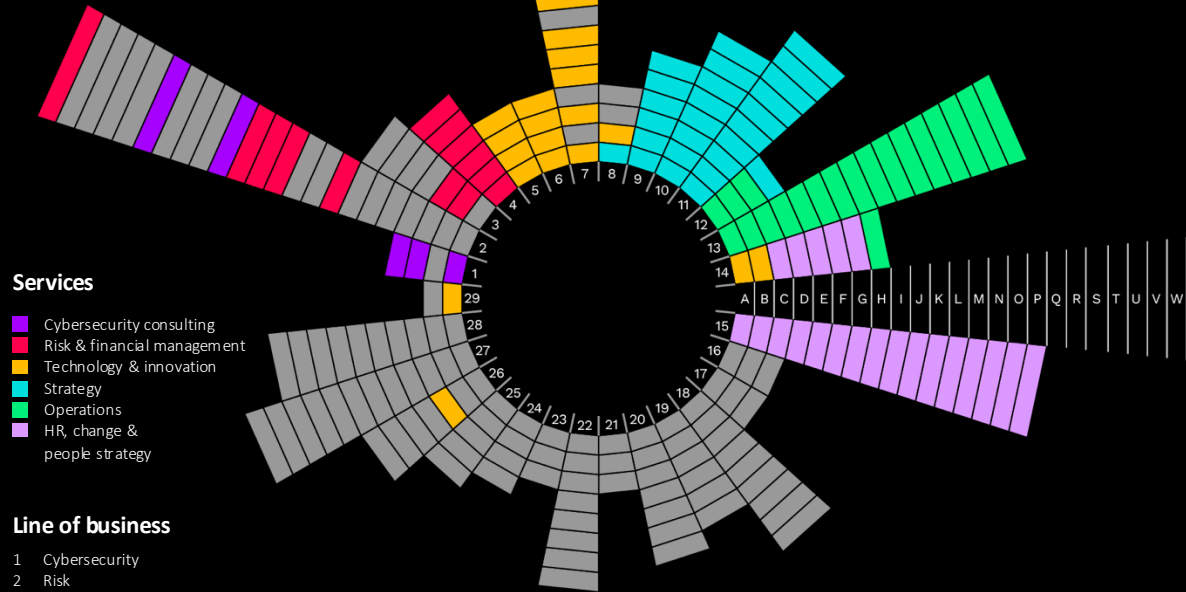
- 1 A Energy
- 1 B Primary resources
- 1 C Utilities
- 2 A Banking
- 2 B Capital markets
- 2 C Insurance
- 2 D Investment and wealth management
- 2 E Private equity
- 3 A Healthcare
- 4 A Aerospace
- 4 B Automotive
- 4 C Construction
- 4 D Consumer electronics
- 4 E Consumer packaged goods
- 4 F Industrial products
- 5 A Pharma
- 6 A Defence
- 6 B Education
- 6 C Not-for-profit
- 6 D Public sector
- 7 A Retail
- 8 A Business services
- 8 B Leisure
- 8 C Logistics
- 8 D Real estate
- 8 E Transportation
- 9 A High-tech
- 9 B Media
- 9 C Telecoms

The revenue-earning model

- 1 Consulting
- 2 Managed service
- 3 Other (contingent fees, software licensing, associate networks)



Line of business model



Services

- Cybersecurity consulting
- Risk & financial management
- Technology & innovation
- Strategy
- Operations
- HR, change & people strategy

Line of business

- 1 Cybersecurity
- 2 Risk
- 3 Forensic
- 4 Financial management
- 5 Design & UX
- 6 Innovation
- 7 Technology
- 8 Data & analytics
- 9 Research
- 10 Deals
- 11 Strategy
- 12 Real estate
- 13 Operations
- 14 Sustainability
- 15 HR & change
- 16 Architecture
- 17 Audit & assurance
- 18 Business process outsourcing
- 19 Civil engineering
- 20 Legal
- 21 Litigation
- 22 Marketing & creative
- 23 Network engineering
- 24 Product engineering & R&D
- 25 Recruitment
- 26 Software engineering
- 27 System integration
- 28 Tax
- 29 AI advice & implementation

Capabilities

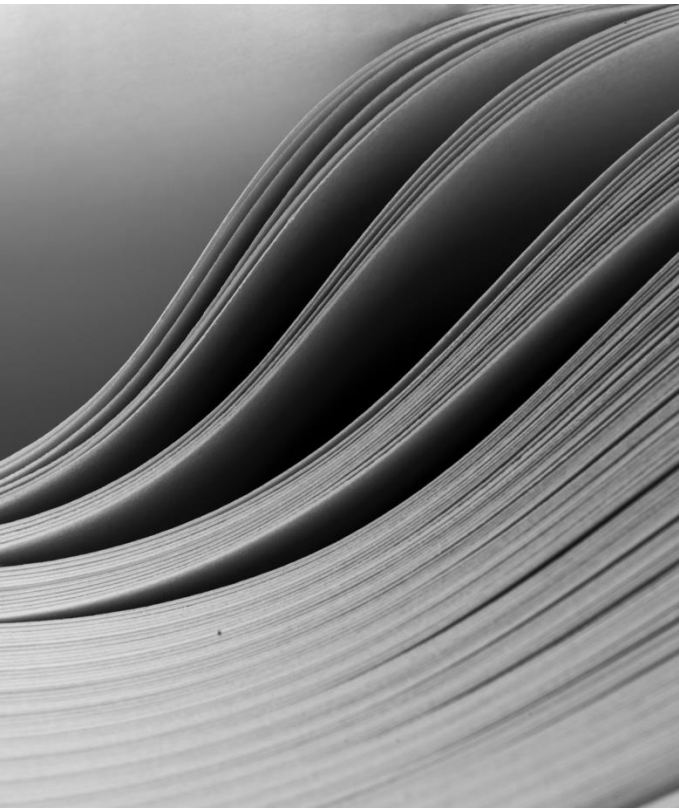
- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 A Cybersecurity advice | 3 U Financial risk |
| 1 B Cybersecurity implementation | 2 V Risk management systems |
| 1 C Cybersecurity incident response | 2 W Sustainability reporting |
| 1 D Penetration testing & wargaming | 3 A Anti-corruption services |
| 2 A Risk governance | 3 B eDiscovery |
| 2 B Actuarial | 3 C Forensic accounting |
| 2 C Compliance risk | 3 D Forensic technology solutions |
| 2 D Crisis & reputation management | 3 E Fraud mitigation |
| 2 E Environmental risk | 3 F Investigation services |
| 2 F Financial assurance | 3 G Anti-money laundering |
| 2 G Internal audit | 4 A Budgeting/financial planning process |
| 2 H Operational risk | 4 B Debt advisory |
| 2 I Physical security solutions | 4 C Finance function |
| 2 J Physical security strategy | 4 D Financial advisory |
| 2 K Programme risk | 4 E Financial restructuring & insolvency |
| 2 L Responding to regulation | 4 F Financial data management |
| 2 M Risk management | 5 A Corporate identity |
| 2 N Technology & security risk services | 5 B Graphic & UI design |
| 2 O Third-party assurance | 5 C UX design |
| 2 P Transactions-related risk | 5 D Customer experience & journey |
| 2 Q Treasury risk | 6 A Ideation |
| 2 R AI risk | 6 B Innovation management |
| 2 S Compliance management systems | 6 C Innovation strategy |
| 2 T Contract lifecycle management | 6 D Strategies for growth from innovation |

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 7 A Cloud advice | 13 O Supply chain management | 21 A Dispute advisory services |
| 7 B Cloud implementation | 13 P Target operating model | 21 B Expert witness |
| 7 C ERP consulting | 14 A Clean technology | 21 C Trial services |
| 7 D Geospatial advice & implementation | 14 B Green IT | 22 A Brand activation |
| 7 E IT strategy, planning & review | 14 C Purpose-led strategy & change | 22 B Brand strategy |
| 7 F IT training | 14 D Resource-efficiency implementation | 22 C Creative production |
| 7 G Programme management | 14 E Resource-efficiency strategy | 22 D Customer relationship management |
| 7 H Robotics advice & implementation | 14 F Social impact & trust | 22 E Marketing & communication production |
| 7 I Vendor selection | 14 G Sustainable investment | 22 F Marketing & communication strategy |
| 8 A Advanced analytics | 14 H Sustainable supply chain | 22 G Marketing mix optimisation |
| 8 B Data visualisation, business intelligence & semantic layer | 15 A Benefits, compensation & pensions, excluding actuarial & investment advice | 22 H Public relations & affairs |
| 8 C Data warehousing & database management | 15 B Change management | 23 A Network installation |
| 8 D Machine learning | 15 C Diversity & inclusion | 23 B Network optimisation |
| 9 A Customer feedback | 15 D Employee engagement | 23 C Network strategy & architecture |
| 9 B Customer segmentation | 15 E Governance & board effectiveness | 24 A Physical product quality assurance & testing |
| 9 C Employee feedback | 15 F HR strategy & effectiveness | 24 B Physical product R&D |
| 9 D Environmental & social impact research | 15 G Leadership | 24 C Product & industrial design |
| 9 E Macro/microeconomic research | 15 H Organisational design & culture | 24 D Technical feasibility assessment, prototyping & mock-ups |
| 9 F Market research | 15 I Organisational training & development | 25 A Contract staffing supply |
| 10 A Capital allocation strategy | 15 J Outplacement | 25 B Executive interim |
| 10 B Commercial due diligence & valuation | 15 K Pension fund evaluation & advice | 25 C Executive search |
| 10 C Financial due diligence | 15 L Performance management | 25 D Talent sourcing |
| 10 D M&A transaction strategy | 15 M Stakeholder management | 25 E Product lifecycle management |
| 10 E Operational due diligence | 15 N Talent management | 26 A Application development |
| 10 F Portfolio & investment strategy | 15 O Team effectiveness & collaboration | 26 B Digital product quality assurance & testing |
| 10 G Public-private partnerships | 15 P Human capital management | 26 C DevOps |
| 10 H Technology due diligence | 16 A Exterior building design | 26 D Digital product R&D |
| 11 A Business & financial modelling | 16 B Interior building design | 26 E IoT and connected devices |
| 11 B Category management | 16 C Landscape design | 26 F Solution architecture |
| 11 C Channel management | 17 A Accounting, Accounting operations & systems assurance | 26 G Virtual, augmented, and mixed reality |
| 11 D Corporate recovery & turnaround | 17 B Corporate restructuring | 27 A Functional & industry application integration |
| 11 E Corporate restructuring | 17 C IFRS & regulatory reporting | 27 B Microsoft |
| 11 F Corporate strategy | 18 A Contact centre outsourcing | 27 C Oracle |
| 11 G Market analysis & strategy | 18 B Document management outsourcing | 27 D Salesforce |
| 11 H Policy formulation | 18 C Finance accounting outsourcing | 27 E SAP |
| 11 I Pricing | 18 D Human resources outsourcing | 27 F Workday |
| 11 J Strategic sourcing/offshoring services | 18 E IT outsourcing | 27 G Coupa |
| 12 A Corporate, occupier services & facilities management | 18 F Other outsourcing | 27 H Hubspot |
| 12 B Integrated real estate developer services | 18 G Payroll outsourcing | 27 I Netsuite |
| 12 C Real estate deal/transaction services | 18 H Regulation & remediation outsourcing | 27 J ServiceNow |
| 12 D Real estate strategy | 18 I Supply chain management & distribution outsourcing | 27 K Zendesk |
| 13 A Benchmarking | 19 A Building & engineering analytics | 27 L Zoho |
| 13 B Business continuity & recovery | 19 B Engineering project management | 28 A Corporate tax |
| 13 C Cost cutting | 19 C Infrastructure design | 28 B Global employer/mobility services |
| 13 D Customer service | 19 D International development | 28 C Indirect tax |
| 13 E Distribution strategy | 19 E Transport infrastructure, planning & engineering | 28 D International tax |
| 13 F Lean & Six Sigma | 19 F Urban design & planning | 28 E Private wealth tax |
| 13 G Operational review | 20 A Corporate & transaction law | 28 F Tax dispute resolution & controversy |
| 13 H Outsourcing advice | 20 B Criminal law | 28 G Transaction tax |
| 13 I Post-M&A integration | 20 C Digital & technology law | 28 H Transfer pricing |
| 13 J Process design, re-engineering & automation | 20 D Domestic & family law | 28 I Tax compliance advisory |
| 13 K Procurement/purchasing | 20 E Intellectual property law | 28 J Partnership tax |
| 13 L Property & estate management | 20 F International trade, regulatory & government law | 29 A AI advice |
| 13 M Sales & distribution planning | 20 G Labour & employment law | 29 B AI implementation |
| 13 N Sales force effectiveness | | |

Our approach to gathering data

The market for professional services is vast and highly dynamic, with deep roots spread out across the business world. The Source MegaModel helps you get to grips with the facts.

The MegaModel is the largest and most comprehensive database of its kind, anywhere in the world. It's used by the world's leading firms to identify where growth is coming from, which markets to invest in, and which sectors are driving demand.



Methodology—The MegaModel

MegaModel: Our Global Data Model

The quantitative market data in this report comes from our unique model of the global professional services market.

Rather than making high-level assumptions, this model has been built from the bottom up, sizing the market capability by capability—assessing how much work a firm earns delivering each professional capability within each sector and country. This results in a robust view of the size of the supply-side market, which can then be broken down to view the size of the market by country, sector, line of business, capabilities, and service.

Alongside this market segmentation, we also limit our market sizing and analysis to what we at Source call “big consulting”—work done by mid- and large-sized firms (those with more than 50 people). Please note that we don't track the long, thin tail of work done by contractors and very small firms, as most readers of this report would not seek or be able to compete in this part of the market.

All of the data in the model is calibrated through extensive interviews with, and surveys of, professional services firms and their clients, allowing us to discuss broader trends in the market alongside detailed dimensions such as headcount. These interviews and surveys are supplemented with desk research, which allows us to assess the impact of wider macroeconomic trends on professional services. This, combined with our detailed modelling, results in a long-term view of the market that is able to support both historic and forecast data.

All figures given in this report are in UK pounds.

US dollar to British pound US\$1 = £0.78

US dollar to euro US\$1 = €0.92

The data in this report is rounded to the nearest whole number or stated decimal place. As a result, totals may display small discrepancies.

Who did we speak to

Client perspective

We carry out a client survey to help us build a rich picture of how different trends in the UK are affecting clients' organisations and their use of consulting. Our survey focuses on trends in the UK, providing detailed insights into the nuances of the market. For this, we surveyed 200 senior clients of consulting firms from across the UK, all of whom work in organisations with more than 1,000 employees. This survey focuses on the following areas:

- How they expect to use consultants during 2026 and the first half of 2027
- Factors that affect the way clients work with consulting firms
- The ways consulting firms market themselves to clients and the impact this has on client decision making.

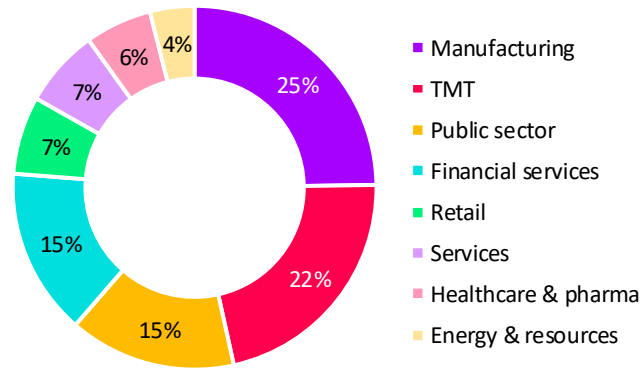
Insights from consultants

Throughout the year, Source analysts remain plugged in to the global consulting market through our bespoke research and consulting projects, adding further depth to our understanding of the consulting industry.

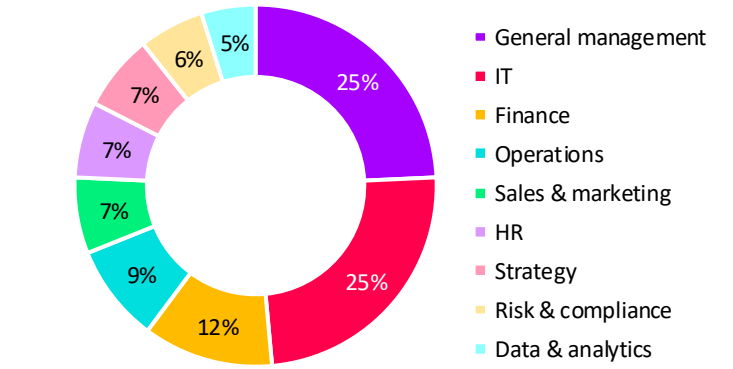
In-depth desk research

We also conducted a thorough PEST analysis in the UK that drills down into finer macroeconomic details on a holistic and sector-by-sector basis and allows us to fit our research into a wider macroeconomic picture.

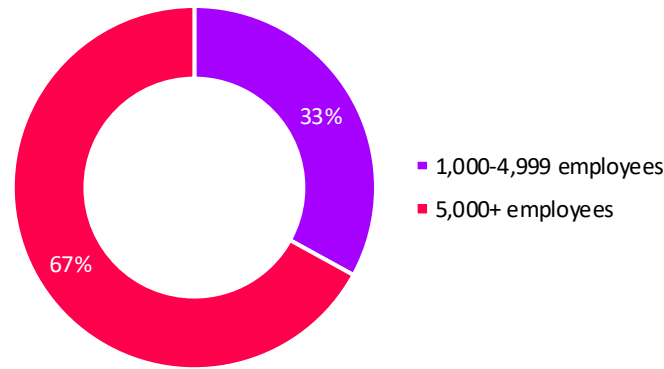
Respondents by sector



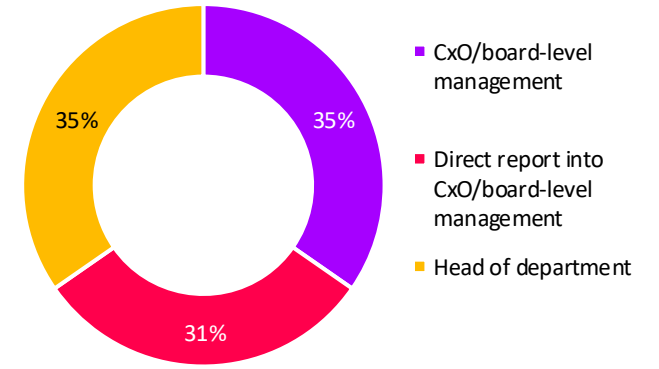
Respondents by function



Respondents by headcount



Respondents by seniority



Contributors

We are extremely grateful to all the people we spoke to for making this report possible. On this page is a list of individuals who have contributed (excluding those consultants who wished to remain anonymous).

Name	Job title	Organisation
Joanna Ahlstrom	Chief Markets Officer – Consulting	PwC
Robert Cullen	Managing Partner, UK Technology & Transformation	Deloitte
Lisa Fernihough	Head of Advisory	KPMG UK
Alan Frost	Partner – Management Consulting	Forvis Mazars
Jonathan House	Head of Consulting UK	PwC
Marc Jantzen	Founder	The Consultancy Growth Network
Chris Lewis	UK&I Consulting Markets Leader	EY
Scott Logan	Consulting Chief Technology Officer	PwC
Alex Slater	Executive Vice President	Capgemini Invent UK
Mark Veldon	Partner & Managing Director	AlixPartners
Scott Wheatley	UK Clients & Markets Leader, Technology & Transformation	Deloitte

Meet the expert

Nick Jotischky

Nick leads our Market Trends research programme, where he uses his sharp understanding of the professional services landscape to develop insightful analysis. Nick authors some of Source's key publications, such as our *Forecasts* and *Planning for Growth* reports, as well as reports on the UK, DACH, and technology professional services markets.

Nick regularly presents to clients on the Market Trends programme, highlighting the latest findings from surveys and interviews conducted with clients. Nick has over 20 years of experience in B2B research, working on macroeconomic and geopolitical risk projects.



Nick Jotischky

Head of Market Trends

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Our unique, proprietary research

We analyse how changes in the economy, business, and technology influence the way organisations utilise professional services, and the implications this has for firms.

This proprietary research underpins our reports, presentations, and briefings.

- Continuous exploration of long-term developments shaping the professional services landscape.
- Extensive cross-market tracking of client priorities and service use.
- A unique, multidimensional model sizing the global professional services market.
- The world's largest annual survey of client sentiment
- A renowned thought leadership quality ratings criteria.



Publication schedule for 2026

2026		Market Trends Reports	Market Trends Briefings	Client Perceptions Studies	Future Trends Programme	White Space Reports	White Space Insights
Q1	January	Forecasts for 2026 UK US GCC France		UK US GCC France			Featured Thought Leadership Quality Ratings Webinar
	February				Helping clients build a resilient future		
	March					Quality Ratings Report (QRR)	
Q2	April	Nordics DACH Australia East Asia South East Asia Financial Services	India South America	Germany Australia China Japan Healthcare & Pharma Energy & Resources Financial Services Technology, Media & Telecoms	Future Trends in... 2		Featured Thought Leadership Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership Webinar
	May						
	June				Future Trends in... 3	Client Perceptions of Thought Leadership	
Q3	July	Africa Energy & Resources Technology, Media & Telecoms Sustainability	Healthcare & Pharma	Risk Tax Audit	The Future of Audit 2026		Featured Thought Leadership
	August						
	September				Future Trends in... 4	Thought Leadership Innovation	
Q4	October	Tax Risk Technology Planning for Growth in 2027	Public Sector	Technology	Future Trends in... 5		Featured Thought Leadership Thought Leadership Innovation Webinar
	November				Future Trends in... 6		
	December						

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