

# *Shaping the Future*

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### ***Partnering with Internal Staff: Uneasy Truce or Collaborative Alliance ?***

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# *Purpose*

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- Explore Strengths and Client Perceptions of Internal and External Consultants
- Focus on:
  - Leveraging the contribution and value
  - Role Differences
  - Authority and Credibility
  - Supporting Partnerships

# Comparison of Internal and External Consulting Roles

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES	
	<i>INTERNALS</i>	<i>EXTERNALS</i>
Knowledge of human systems, organization and individual behavior	<i>Accepted as a member of the "group", congruent with culture</i>	Sees culture and organization with outsider perspective
Understanding the process of change	<i>Has credibility as an insider</i>	Has credibility as an outsider
Desire to be successful and recognized for the value they bring to the client	<i>Knows organization and business intimately</i>	Brings broader experience from other organizations

# Comparison of Internal and External Consulting Roles

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES	
	<i>INTERNALS</i>	EXTERNALS
Commitment to learning	<i>Can build long term relationships; establish rapport more easily</i>	Can confront, give feedback, take risks with senior management more easily
Passion about their work	<i>Coordination and integration of project into ongoing activities</i>	Focused involvement on a project which ends
Ability to influence and lead	<i>Opportunities to influence, gain access, sit at the table as an insider</i>	Once invited in as outsider, broader experience offers credibility, power and influence

"Partnering with Internal Staff: Uneasy Truce or Collaborative Alliance" by Jane Hascall and Bev Scott, IMC USA National Conference, May 2003, Chicago, IL

# Comparison of Internal and External Consulting Roles

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES	
	<i>INTERNALS</i>	EXTERNALS
Skills to analyze needs and design interventions	<i>Leverages and utilizes informal and formal organization structure</i>	Can avoid or ignore the organization structure, move around organizations to achieve results
Credibility or "Authority"	<i>Leads from position and character (trust)</i>	Leads from competence (expertise) and personality
	<i>Knows cultural norms that should not be violated</i>	Can acceptably challenge or violate the informal rules of the culture

## Comparison of Internal and External Consulting Roles

SIMILARITIES	DIFFERENCES	
	<i>INTERNALS</i>	EXTERNALS
	<i>Knows the history, traditions and where "bones are buried"</i>	Seen as objective and not part of the problem
	<i>Can take an advocacy role</i>	Brings more objectivity, neutrality
	<i>May be expected to be a broad generalist</i>	Often seen as a specialist with narrow expertise
	<i>As a "one client" consultant, has a lot more "skin in the game"</i>	If it doesn't work out here, can always move on to other clients

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# Partnerships

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- Successful
  - Flexibility and open communication
  - Sense of being in it together
  - Opportunity to leverage cost, efficiencies, knowledge and credibility

# Partnerships

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- Successful
  - Strengths of internal recognized and valued
  - Internal is open to learning
  - Pairing insider knowledge with outsider perspective and credibility
  - Appreciation and understanding of cultural differences

# Conditions that Undermine Productive Partnerships

- Internals may not be in position or have organizational influence to lead major change initiative.
- Senior management may not understand the value of the internal's organizational ties and thus fail to support partnership.
- Externals ignore or go around the internal function promoting themselves solely to senior management

# Conditions that Undermine Productive Partnerships

- Internals left out of the contracting process may feel resentful, threatened and marginalized resulting in a lack of commitment.
- Externals are often seen as arrogant, exclusive, judgmental; in turn, internals are perceived as ineffective, incompetent, and “poor losers”
- Weak internal functions that may be incapable of successfully leading change projects

# *Working with Large Consulting Firms*

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- Partnering is difficult:
  - Come with standard models and processes
  - Use American or Anglo model
  - Arrogance, high fees and inexperience alienates internals

# *Requirements for Productive Partnerships*

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## For Externals:

- Remember who your client is
- Recognize the enormous value of the internal as ally rather than neutral observer or, worse, enemy
- Respect the internal consultant's authority, expertise, and role in the organization
- Communicate honestly and frequently

# *Requirements for Productive Partnerships*

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## For Externals:

- Be clear about and deliver on your promises
- Value the internal's deep knowledge of the organization
- Become clear about and respect personal boundaries
- Stay apolitical and maintain objectivity

# *Requirements for Productive Partnerships*

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## For Externals:

- Maintain the highest of ethical standards
- Leave the organization better off when you depart than when you entered
- Transfer skills/knowledge to internals and the client system
- Bring the organization the benefits of your knowledge of the wider world

# *Requirements for Productive Partnerships*

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## Advice We Give Internals:

- Go after partnership with externals
- Ensure that management understands the value and expertise of internal consulting
- Don't be offended, don't whine about not being included, and don't act out resentment in petty ways
- Recognize that the external consultants become stakeholders in the organization; they are under the gun to perform also

# *Requirements for Productive Partnerships*

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## Advice We Give Internals:

- Be politically neutral or politically savvy
- Learn everything you can from externals
- Help clients understand that they need to play ball and join in the change process
- Be clear about your role and competencies before confronting the challenges of large-scale change, planned and managed by an external firm
- Consider using small firms that specialize in partnership with internal consultants

# *Requirements for Productive Partnerships*

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## Advice We Give Internals:

- When managing an external firm, some suggestions are:
  - Define expectations for the external and internal partners in the project
  - Discuss and determine how conflicts and differences will be resolved
  - Manage the scope of the project very carefully
  - Plan frequent communication; build in scheduled checkpoints