

Types of Consulting Careers Guidebook

Blackmont Consulting | Careers Reference Guide

Consulting covers a wide range of career paths. This guide walks through the main types you will come across (management, corporate and independent consulting) and what each involves day to day.

The 15 careers at a glance

Management	Corporate	Independent
<i>Large firms, enterprise clients</i>	<i>Industry experience, in-house or B2B</i>	<i>Your own business, built on your expertise</i>
1 Strategy	1 IT	1 Marketing
2 Operations	2 Business	2 Financial
3 Financial Advisory	3 Environmental	3 Image
4 Human Resources	4 Software	4 Social Media
5 Risk & Compliance	5 Sales	5 Career Coaching

Key figures

\$759B	\$420B	15
US IT consulting industry revenue, 2025	US management consulting industry revenue, 2026	Career paths across three families, covered in this guide

Source: IBISWorld industry reports, United States (IT Consulting, 2025 estimate; Management Consulting, 2026 estimate). Figures are rounded and the two industries are defined differently, so treat them as indicative.

The 5 Main Types of Management Consulting

Management consulting is what most people picture when they hear "consulting". It is dominated by large firms such as McKinsey, Bain and Boston Consulting Group, which are hired to improve strategy and operations or to manage major events such as mergers and acquisitions. It is among the highest-paid and most competitive fields: you need top-tier grades, the right connections and strong interview performance, and progression follows a promote-or-be-fired system.

1 Strategy Consulting

What it is The top level of decision-making that drives a business. It is the domain of the C-suite, where the most fundamental directional choices are made. Consultants who specialise in an industry or type of decision give leaders a thorough, unbiased brief.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- What is our long-term vision and trajectory?
- Should we allocate resources to entering a new market?
- Should we drop certain departments or businesses, or keep our current portfolio?

HOW TO GET IN

The most prestigious and difficult track in management consulting.

You need to be at the top of the class in every conceivable metric and have an exceptional capacity for data analysis.

2 Operations Consulting

What it is Improving the processes that drive a business: process management, procurement, outsourcing and supply chain management. The aim is more efficiency, lower costs and better quality, and consultants often stay on through implementation and deployment.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- How can we reduce costs in this plant?
- How do we increase efficiency in this factory?
- How can we reduce bottlenecks in this supply chain?
- How do we improve quality control in this process?

HOW TO GET IN

Highly competitive, like all management consulting. You work closely with senior executives and need to be a strong problem solver.

3 Financial Advisory Consulting

What it is Objective, informed financial decisions for a specific company: corporate finance, transaction services, restructuring, risk management, forensics and litigation, and real estate.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- How can we improve cash flow in this business?
- How can we legally and ethically reduce the tax bill of this corporation?
- Which investments give the highest return for the least risk?

HOW TO GET IN

Specific qualifications and a licence are required. In the US, this means passing the FINRA exam to gain a Series 65 or 66 licence.

4 Human Resources Consulting

What it is Helping an organisation use its people as effectively as possible: training and development, employee engagement, conflict resolution, benefits and pensions, and talent mobility. It needs broad knowledge of accounting, marketing, IT, finance and labour law.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- Are our policies in line with laws and regulations?
- How can we best implement these HR policies?
- Do we need training sessions for HR programmes?
- How can we improve employee satisfaction and effectiveness?

HOW TO GET IN

A bachelor's degree in a subject such as human resources management or business administration. Plus a specialist HR certification from a body such as the HR Certification Institute (HRCI).

5 Risk & Compliance Consulting

What it is Making sure an organisation follows laws, regulations, standards and ethical practices. This helps detect and prevent fraud, abuse and discrimination, and protects the organisation from fines and lawsuits.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- How do our compliance programmes measure up against the regulations and ethical standards?
- Which business- or industry-specific risks need internal controls?
- How can we improve this compliance programme and integrate it into the company?

HOW TO GET IN

Almost always a bachelor's degree. Many also hold an advanced qualification such as an MBA or a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) designation.

The 5 Main Types of Corporate Consulting Careers

A catch-all category for people with a consulting job title in the corporate world, from in-house consulting to implementation teams and B2B consulting businesses. People here have usually pursued the corporate track and often have at least a decade of experience in their industry.

1 IT Consulting

What it is Advice on systems integration, enterprise architecture, software management and data analytics. Unlike management consulting, it is relevant and even essential for businesses of virtually every size.

"We live for our clients... Overtime, weekend work, and travel are all part of the job." Gerard Verweij, U.S. technology consulting leader, PricewaterhouseCoopers

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- How can we use new technology to help us reach our strategic goals?
- Can we optimise the existing IT setup, or do we need to replace it?
- How do we integrate changes into the existing framework?

HOW TO GET IN

A detailed knowledge of leading applications, analytics software and security practices, and keeping up with emerging technologies.

Demanding work, but ever-growing demand makes it relatively easy to break into.

2 Business Consulting

What it is An umbrella term, from employee training to difficult tasks such as laying off employees. Consultants analyse a business's practices and recommend improvements. Companies hire them for an objective view, specialist expertise, a neutral hand on controversial issues, or extra horsepower.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- What are this business's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)?
- Can we re-allocate resources to produce better returns?
- Should we focus on acquiring customers, raising order value (AOV) or retaining customers?

HOW TO GET IN

Hired for experience and track record, not credentials.

A minimum of a bachelor's degree, and usually decades of experience in an industry plus advanced expertise in a niche.

3 Environmental Consulting

What it is Predicting the environmental effects of a company's activities, limiting the damage and staying compliant with environmental law. Industries such as construction, waste management, energy and city planning must hire one before starting a project and submit the findings to local government.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- How will this business activity impact the environment?
- Does it comply with local, state and federal environmental laws?
- How can we reduce its negative impact?

HOW TO GET IN

Work for large consulting firms, smaller firms, government agencies or independently.

Success relies on getting proposals accepted by knowledgeable scientists, so you need a similar level of training.

4 Software Consulting

What it is Helping businesses implement and optimise large software suites, such as customer relationship management, enterprise resource planning, content management, supply chain management and human resource management. These are rarely effective out of the box.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- How can we solve workflow inefficiencies with this software?
- How do we implement it to solve this organisation's specific challenges?
- How can we best train employees to use it?

HOW TO GET IN

Highly skilled in a particular software niche, with strong analytical thinking and problem-solving.

Usually a bachelor's degree in software engineering or software development.

5 Sales Consulting

What it is Mostly training salespeople, but also advising on workflows, choosing or using a CRM, and managing the sales team more effectively.

"A sales trainer should be brought in when you need an outside party to bring your team a fresh perspective on how to qualify, progress, and close better." Matt Belitsky, SVP of Global Sales & Marketing, Komiko

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- How can we improve this business's current sales process?
- Which sales strategies work best, and how can we use them more?
- How can we better incentivise our sales team?
- How can we build and manage a sales team?

HOW TO GET IN

Excel at sales, then excel at managing a sales team.

The more sales teams you have managed successfully and the higher you have climbed, the more attractive you are as a hire.

The 5 Main Types of Independent Consulting Careers

Experts who build and run their own business around their expertise, mostly finding clients online and helped by the growing gig economy. All ten career types above can be pursued independently, and business consulting is a particularly popular choice. These five fields are especially popular among solo consultants.

1 Marketing Consulting

What it is Planning, improving or even running marketing campaigns across channels such as pay-per-click (PPC) advertising, content marketing, search engine optimisation (SEO), direct response marketing, and print, TV and radio. Channels keep changing, so the right choice can shift drastically in a year.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- Which marketing channels should this business pursue?
- How can we improve conversions to reduce customer acquisition cost (CAC)?
- How can upsells and cross-sells raise average order value (AOV)?
- How can we build brand loyalty to raise lifetime customer value (LTV)?

HOW TO GET IN

Degrees and certifications mean very little. Everything revolves around results.

Many consultants specialise in one or two digital channels, often offered as a turnkey service.

2 Financial Consulting

What it is Helping individuals and businesses manage expenses, taxes, insurance and investments, from life changes such as marriage or a new child to cash flow, hiring and benefit programmes. Also called financial advisors.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- How can this individual use 401(k)s, IRAs and similar vehicles to reach financial independence at retirement?
- How can we improve this business's cash flow to enable growth?
- Which investments suit this individual best: stocks, bonds, real estate?

HOW TO GET IN

In the US, a Series 65 or 66 licence, gained by passing the FINRA exam.

You work closely with accountants, insurance brokers and attorneys, so being organised, well networked and a good communicator matters.

3 Image Consulting

What it is Appearance strongly influences how others judge someone's intelligence, financial success, trustworthiness and authority. Image consultants help clients improve how they are perceived, through style, communication, body language and business etiquette.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- What style of clothing best represents how this individual wishes to be perceived?
- How can I help improve their communication skills?
- Which behaviour and body language techniques project the image they want?
- How can they improve their business etiquette?

HOW TO GET IN

Formal training has little influence on success.

Clients are attracted to the image the consultant presents. Some specialise in etiquette, communication or clothing. Lower-priced work is usually remote; high-end clients may be met in person.

4 Social Media Consulting

What it is Helping businesses use social media effectively: defining the target audience and the best strategies to reach it. For small and mid-size companies, the consultant may manage pages and campaigns directly.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- Which social media channels will give this brand the highest ROI?
- What content does this business need to post to increase engagement?
- How can we create an effective campaign for this new product line?

HOW TO GET IN

No official qualifications are needed.

You must produce tangible results with social media tools and stay up to date on tools, trends and marketing and branding best practice.

5 Career Coaching & Consulting

What it is Coaches help people early in their careers find a good fit. Consultants help people who have progressed and want to overcome a specific challenge, so their job is to understand the challenge itself.

QUESTIONS THEY ASK

- Which career path suits this individual's personality, preferences and talents?
- How can we position them for a promotion?
- What skills do they need to develop to reach their goals?

HOW TO GET IN

No specific qualifications, but you need to understand the career landscape.

Often a background in human resources or headhunting. Career consultants also tend to have advanced expertise in a specific industry.

How you get in: a quick comparison

Each career rewards something different. This view shows what matters most for entry into each one.

Grades, degree or licence	Skills and track record	Results over credentials
• Strategy • Operations • Financial Advisory • Human Resources • Risk & Compliance • Environmental • Software • Financial (independent)	• IT • Business • Sales	• Marketing • Image • Social Media • Career Coaching & Consulting

Where a path asks for a licence or formal qualification, such as the FINRA Series 65 or 66 in the US for financial advice, requirements vary by country, so check the rules where you plan to work.

WHERE BLACKMONT FITS

Start building a consulting career with Blackmont

Blackmont Consulting is a student-led consulting organisation. Our consultants work in teams on real projects for real organisations, building the problem solving, analysis and communication skills that every path in this guide relies on.

Ready to start? Join a Blackmont branch at blackmontconsulting.com/join-a-branch