
by Stuart Corrigan

How to get more change, more respect and more authority as an internal (or external) consultant

“Internal and external consultants need to get change, but are typically unable to get sufficient authority and respect to make that change. This report gives a step-by-step approach to getting more change as a consultant.”
Important information

Disclaimer

Our e-books are designed to provide information about the subject matter covered. They are sold with the understanding that the author and the publisher are not engaged in rendering legal, accounting, or other professional services. If legal advice or other professional assistance is required, the services of a competent professional person should be sought.

Every effort has been made to make our e-books as complete and accurate as possible. However, there may be mistakes both typographical and in content. Therefore, the texts should be used only as general guides and not as the ultimate sources on the subject matters covered.

The author and the publisher shall have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused or alleged to be caused directly or indirectly by the information covered in the e-books.

The results you see in this e-book may be different from the results you will achieve. Results will vary and depend on the time and effort individuals invest.

Copyright

Copyright © 2010 Stuart Corrigan (Vanguard Scotland Ltd). All rights reserved. No part of this e-book may be copied, sold, altered or rewritten without consent from Stuart Corrigan.

However,

You may email and re-distribute this e-book to friends and colleagues. You may also publish it online.

If you wish to find out about how you can personalise this e-book with your own logo, get in touch by emailing stuart@vanguardscotland.co.uk
It’s sad but true that the life of an internal consultant can be tough. You have all the responsibility of getting change but none of the authority to make it happen, and to make matters worse you don’t get paid the money that the external guys get.

Which begs the question: can you change your reality?

Is it possible to remain an internal consultant, get taken seriously and create long lasting change?

Yes is the answer, and this report contains everything you need to know to become a top flight internal consultant.

Last week I took a call from a consultant working in a local authority, here’s how the conversation went:

’I’m sick fed up’ he said ‘no one takes me seriously, I have to literally beg for a meeting with anyone with power, I try to talk them into making change and at best I’m allowed to try to sniff out a few quick wins and write a report that never gets read!’

Does it sound familiar?
I asked the consultant the following questions:

Think of the last time you needed really important advice.

1. Who or what made you aware that you needed help?
2. Who did you call?
3. Why did you call them?

After a bit of coaxing he explained that he’d recently got into a bit of debt, he wanted some advice about how to solve the problem and break the cycle before it became a serious problem.

He became aware of the problem over a period of time, little things like always being short of money, constantly using his credit card and never carrying cash built up until one day he opened his credit card bill and bang he’s up to his limit on his card.

Then he called a trusted financial adviser. He called the adviser because he had a relationship with them. He’d never actually met the woman in person but he’d been reading tips and advice from her on-line for a while. He wrote to her, she wrote back and eventually offered to help but only if he agreed to follow her plan.

Let’s analyse this a bit further because the clues are in there.

1. He became aware of the problem over time. He became aware of the problem, the adviser didn’t turn up at his door and say “hey, you’ve got this problem, you need my help.”
2. He called the adviser because she’d established a relationship.
3. They agreed to work together on her terms, she didn’t plead to do business with my friend.

Now think of the parallels for internal consultants. Isn’t it the case that even though most of your potential clients may need your help, most of them simply don’t realise it, and turning up at their door with the newest thing won’t matter a jot if the client doesn’t think they need what you’re selling?

Second, even if they do realise that they need help, do they have a relationship with you where you are seen as a figure with status and authority? This is important so I’ll re-state it using an analogy: I don’t care how bad my tooth is hurting, if you’re not wearing a white coat and have a certificate of dentistry on your wall you aren’t getting to pull it out!

Hence to answer the original question; internal consultants get no respect because they lack status, authority and have not built a strong enough relationship with their potential client before they ever speak to them face to face.

The good news is that if you’re willing to put in a bit of effort you can change how you’re seen in your organisation, create amazing results for your clients and in turn take big leaps in your career. And all you need to know is how to enhance your status and build a relationship with a client, and having a bit of the X-factor always helps.
People do crazy things in the presence of authority figures. In the book ‘Influence: Science and Practice’ \(^1\) an American psychologist, Stanley Milgram, posed the question, ‘To what extent would people comply with requests, no matter how outlandish, if the request came from an authority figure.’ What he found shocked him and the rest of the world.

Milgram invited students to take part in what they thought was an experiment to test the circumstances under which people learn best. The participants sat on
one side of a glass window through which they could see what they thought was another participant. In-fact their opposite number (named the confederate) was in on the game.

The confederate was asked to spell words. If they got one wrong, which they inevitably would, the participant was to administer a small electric shock. Standing next to the participant was Milgram dressed in a white coat and clipboard, in other words all the trimmings of an authority figure.

The experiment got underway and soon the confederate started to make mistakes. Milgram asked the participant to administer a shock, everyone complied. This continued and the shocks increased until almost 60% of the participants were administering lethal doses of electricity and despite the confederates screaming and begging for mercy the shocks continued.

The twist is that there was no electric shock, the confederates were acting. It will come as no surprise that the participants were distressed and emotionally shocked when they found out that they’d administered what would have been lethal doses of electricity.

What does this teach us you might ask? It’s not that you can manipulate people into doing things they don’t want to do by becoming an authority figure but that unless you are first perceived as an authority people won’t trust you to let you help them do things outside of their comfort zone, like making change. Without the perception of authority you will simply not be taken seriously and so many of us simply get the basics wrong. For example if you want to be taken

...seriously by chief executives and directors then you must start by dressing and acting like a senior manager in your industry.

What about you, do you have the basics in place?

And think of what’s been achieved in the world as a result of an authority figure taking on a cause. Would Sir Bob Geldof have raised billions for starving children in Africa had he not had industry/public status? What about the late Princess Diana, would she have been so successful in raising awareness of landmines had she not been such a revered public figure? Being an authority figure and acquiring status is a good thing which can and should be used to achieve great things.

But in order to truly influence people and help them make long term change you need to have more than just authority, you also need to be seen as a trusted adviser, which means you need to establish a relationship.

---

Authority is not enough...

Over the past twelve months our consulting business has gone mad. I’ve worked, spoken and consulted in the UK, Europe and the US; this is a good thing, but I’m exhausted and yesterday I took a trip to the Doctors. My usual doctor was busy but the new doctor was free (I now know why), she was rude, off-hand and made me feel like I was wasting her time; her authority had become arrogance. As a result I stopped listening and before I’d even left her room was already planning when to make an appointment with my usual Doctor.

Think about it like this, your client may desperately need what you have to offer but if they neither like you nor respect you, your big idea will die and wither on the vine.

One of my good friends is a consultant. By his own admission he’s not the most technically gifted consultant in the world but he’s very busy, whenever there’s a new project on the go his name is always top or near the top of the list. Also once he’s worked with a client they always ask him back, every time! Like Geldof and
Princess Di he has the ability to connect with people; they love being in his company because he’s fun to be around and can laugh at himself and with others.

Connecting with others however doesn’t necessarily have to happen face to face. In fact later in this report I’ll show you how to connect with people before you’ve even met them, thus enhancing your status and paving the way for a remarkable first meeting where you are treated like the trusted adviser not instantly dismissed as a snake oil salesman.

A number of years ago I attended a seminar where I saw an amazing speaker. I later attended all of his courses and bought all of his materials. I often thought about how cool it would be to have lunch with him and get some advice. I wrote and asked for a lunch appointment, as you can imagine he was busy. However through chance he found out that I was an expert on using the internet as a means of marketing a business. One night in a hotel room my phone rang, it was the guy and he wanted advice from me! We spent an amazing day together sharing advice, but we’d connected long before we’d ever met in person. It happened because we were both able to create value for the other person.

So connection can happen through a face to face relationship but it can also happen over a period of time via the creation of value for another individual. And the strange thing is that the more you create value for others the more you enhance your status.

You may have noticed that we’re building an equation for success as a change agent.

Here’s how I see it:

\[ A + R = GC \]

A stands for Authority and R for Relationship, which equals GC, or Great Change. But there’s a third part to the equation, a second R which stands for Remarkable.

\[ A + R + R = GC \]
Over the twelve years I’ve been a consultant I’ve worked with a few remarkable people and the funny thing is that their ability to be amazing as an individual seemed to seep through every aspect of the job, meaning that in every case we delivered far more than I ever thought possible.

Here are two examples:

- **Rachel Mackenzie** (Senior Manager at EON) has an amazing passion for learning and implementation. She put me to shame with the hours she worked in order to deliver a change.

- **Laurence Barrett** (Operations Director at VELUX) stands out because even though VELUX in the UK were at the time truly world class, he still wanted to take the organisation further. We achieved a 40% increase in customer satisfaction rating as well as saving and making the business a load of money.

In every case Laurence and Rachel wanted more, wanted to achieve something bigger; just getting 10 or 20 percent improvement was not good enough for them, they wanted 100 or 200 percent.
Unfortunately I can’t teach you the art of being remarkable because it’s an attitude not a skill. Seth Godin has written about this in his amazing book called ‘Purple Cow: Transform your business by being remarkable’.

Through constant attention to attitude you are forced to learn new skills and push through new pain barriers. So at the end of this report rather than trying to tell you what to do to be remarkable I’ll ask you a few questions that I think will give you an indication as to whether you (meaning me too) need to try harder.

However, achieving status and connecting with others is definitely more science than black art. So in the next section of the report I’ll share specific strategies and tactics you can use to gain more authority, build better relationships and achieve more in your change programme.

Seth Godin’s ‘Purple Cow: Transform your business by being remarkable’.
Strategies and tactics for building authority and connecting with others

Concept 1: Building Authority and connecting via reports, articles and blogging

Facebook has over 500,000,000 users; it’s now bigger than Google. There are around 85,000 new blogs started every day. And the hottest type of website right now is where the users generate the content. In contrast the circulation of traditional media such as newspapers continues to drop. The Huffington Post, a top media blog, reports that the top 25 newspapers in New York are all reporting quarterly falls in distribution of around 7%.

So what is this telling us? People want information; but they want it now and from people with whom they have a connection - a tribe of like minded individuals.
This means that there’s an opportunity for you to build your authority and connection by giving people in your tribe relevant, anticipated and helpful information.

But there’s a price to pay - you have to be willing to put in the work and deal with the naysayers. The good news for you is that most folks can’t be bothered to put their thoughts down on paper or take the risk that they’ll be criticised for their opinions.

In late 70s and 80s the competition between middle distance runners Sebastian Coe and Steve Ovette was at its peak. I remember watching a documentary leading up their famous showdown in the Moscow Olympics in 1980 where Seb Coe’s training schedule was studied for the TV show. He trained on Christmas day and when he was asked why his reply was simple yet profound, “because, apart from Steve, most of my competitors will have the day off”. It’s maybe no surprise then that both men won Gold at those games. And there’s a simple lesson for us as consultants, if you want the power and the authority, you have to be willing to put in the work.

Challenging Assumptions

By far the biggest hurdle in building authority is to get your opinion pieces read. Trying to please people by giving them information that backs up their current beliefs won’t help you much, on the other hand rubbishling everything that they do might simply get you turfed out on your ear.

So here’s the process:

1. Start with common ground and get agreement on the problem.

2. Highlight common assumptions about how to overcome the problem.

3. State why those assumptions are wrong.

4. Provide a solution.

5. Ask for the opt-in then signpost the reader to take the next step.

Start with common ground

Imagine you’re standing at a bus stop wearing your new suit, tie and shoes, then someone you’ve never met walks up to you and says “your outfit doesn’t match, you should go and change”. How would you react? I’d certainly be upset.

So doesn’t it make sense to start with points on which you agree? In this case the common ground should be agreement on the problem. Neil Rackham, author of seminal text on why people buy – ‘SPIN selling’, states that in order to get people to buy your ideas and concepts they first have to recognise that they have a problem, and if you’re asking them to make a big change then you’d better agree that there’s a big problem.

The key is in how you frame the problem and that depends on who you’re trying to convince. For example if you’re ‘selling’ your ideas for how to improve things to an operations manager they might be interested in issues related to poor throughput and high operating expense; whereas a director or CEO may be more
interested in brand, customer retention or governance issues.

It’s also better if you can frame the problem from two perspectives, the first being from the market or industry viewpoint and the second from the perspective of the company. For example if you were writing about the public sector at the moment you might mention the imminent public spending review and that this might mean public sector bodies may have to reduce their budgets by as much as 25%. Then to increase the relevancy you could translate this into actual numbers or headcount reduction for the individual department. Now you’ll have the reader nodding in agreement, they’ll be with you, so now you have that opportunity to turn up the heat and challenge their assumptions.

Highlight and challenge common assumptions

The objective at this stage is to build more common ground before de-bunking common assumptions, the goal is three-fold: to position you as an expert, to create curiosity and to get them to want to know more.

Think about it, if someone you trust is suggesting that you swim against the tide wouldn’t you want to know more? And remember you’ve already done some work on building trust by building common ground in the early part of the article or the report. Professor of Sociology, Robert Cialdini, in his book ‘Influence’ calls this the commitment and consistency principle. What’s happening in the mind of the manager you’re trying to reach is that they’ve made a mental commitment to agreeing with you in the early part of the report so they’re more likely to want to read the rest. Of course if what you’re saying is rubbish or your report is badly written no amount of psychological mumbo-jumbo can save your bacon.

Here’s what you do:

1. Make a list of all the common bad assumptions about how to tackle the problem you’ve highlighted in the first section of your report.

2. State why those assumptions are wrong.

For example if you were writing a report about how to save money in an organisation, a common assumption/method would be to set a target for increased productivity. You’d then use examples, facts and case studies to show how setting a target for more productivity might make staff cheat, cut corners or do things that will actually increase costs. I demonstrated this recently in a housing repairs system. By setting a target for getting more repairs done, the tradesmen left more repairs incomplete, hence they were able to claim that they were doing more jobs. Costs increased as a result of more visits and less output.
Provide the solution

By now you should have positioned yourself as the expert; you’re the one who has demonstrated that you understand the problem and you have a different take on the solution. So make sure you layout exactly what to do.

By the way those who have a scarcity mentality disagree with me on this. They believe that by telling the client exactly what to do and how to do it, there’s less chance that they’ll call you in to help.

My experience is exactly the opposite. I’ve found that the more you try to help, the more you’ll bond with the client and the greater the likelihood that they’ll contact you and ask for more help. The Chef, Gordon Ramsay, his written eighteen books on cooking but when he does a show it’s still always sold out.

Ask for the opt-in and signpost the reader to the next step

Right, if you’ve only been half awake whilst reading this report then sit up and take note now! The biggest mistake authors make when writing an opinion piece (which is what you’re going to do) is to sit back and wait for the phone to ring. Trust me it won’t.

A few years ago I talked John Seddon (The founder of the Vanguard method) into giving away one of his books for free; he was reluctant but agreed. I figured that if I gifted the book the phone would be ringing off the hook. At the last count the book was downloaded three thousand (yes thousand) times. No-one called, and worse still we had no idea who had downloaded the book; it was a major opportunity wasted.

Here’s what I learnt from the experience. If your material is valuable then potential clients should have no problem trading their email address for the information. That way you know who has taken up the report and can contact them later.

But just so you don’t get accused of spamming use these guidelines:

1. Make sure the reader knows you’ll never share their e-mail address and honour that.

2. Tell them up front if you are going to contact them after they’ve got the first download and how often that’ll happen.

3. Always do everything you can to make sure that your information creates value.

If you’re an external consultant you can use an auto-responder service which allows you to load up messages and have them delivered to everyone who signs up when it best suits you or your clients. This means you can go on holiday and still have messages sent. Auto-responders can also act as a convenient live database service, updating as people subscribe or unsubscribe so there’s no need for you to manually update and delete names from your database in order to keep up with Data Protection rules.

If you’re an internal consultant why not try setting up your auto-responder for a Facebook fan page?
The best auto-responder I have found is AWeber as it is incredibly easy to use. Visit the AWeber site if you want to find out more about how it can automate your message broadcasting and more.

**Variations on the theme**

Here are a few ideas you can use to appeal to the different learning styles of your audience.

1. Write a few articles on a particular theme and then put them together into an e-book or report. If you do decide to write an e-book, get it an ISBN number and suddenly you’re a published author!

2. Upload your book to e-book sharing sites such as ebookshare.net or scribd.com

3. Record yourself reading your e-book and now you also have an audio programme which your busy potential client can listen to in their car/train/plane.

4. Take each chapter of your e-book and make a slide to cover the main points. Use video software to turn your the presentation about your e-book into a video.

5. Upload your articles to an article sharing site and they’ll be indexed by Google. Try EzineArticles.com

6. Use your articles to start a blog (or vice versa).

**Summary**

Getting taken seriously as an internal or external consultant starts with building authority and you do this by getting information out to your potential clients. (It doesn’t matter if you are internal or external the principle is the same.)

You can put information out by: writing articles, writing a blog or producing reports. The articles can then be turned into reports and the reports turned into audio, video or you can do interviews. The only thing limiting how far you can take it is your own imagination. Authority however is nothing without connection.

**Concept 2: Connecting with people**

Consultants often have a particular challenge; they have all of the responsibility for change but none of the established power to make that change happen. So even if you have now positioned yourself to have more authority you’ll still have to get people on your side to make change happen. In other words authority without connection is just arrogance in a suit. And connection without power is just a comedian.

In my mind right now I’m imaging three consultants. The first has lots of authority, they dress for complete success, they’re aloof (they do that thing with their hands, steepling!), they’re a bit rude, and they’re always talking about themselves. They start by getting lots of attention but before long no-one wants to be in their company so they achieve little.
They typically get sacked because they’re unpopular.

The second type is great to be around. Maybe they’re a bit scruffy, fantastic on a night out, always cracking jokes, always having a laugh at themselves. The client loves them but no-one takes them seriously, they never get the power to deliver and they never get change.

The third can hold their own with senior executives, but can also connect with front line staff. They can make a business presentation and can use humour to lighten a situation if necessary. They make everyone feel important, they say please, thank you, deliver on time and finish what they started.

We can always be the third type all the time but too far to the left or the right is a disaster. If you need a concrete example of number three here’s few examples of people who come to mind.

1. Number one on the list has to be the late politician Mo Mowlam. Had complete authority but also had the ability to diffuse a situation. She was famous for removing her wig during the negotiations for the Northern Ireland peace process and throwing it on the boardroom table as a way of disrupting the futile arguments of warring politicians. She connected with the masses and got things done.

2. Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple also has both these qualities. His annual address at the Macworld conference is legendary due to his ability to connect with the audience. A few years ago he had an actor imitate him and had a go at the actor for not capturing some of his ‘geeky’ qualities properly. He also has massive authority and not just because he’s a billionaire (though I’m sure it helps); every product he designs is about simplicity, speed of use and beauty. At the launch of the Apple browser Safari he made a big thing about the 6 seconds it saved in loading time compared to Microsoft’s Internet Explorer. His insight on what matters to customers and ability to deliver it makes him a man with authority.

Here are a few ideas to help you connect with others:

1. When you write make sure you write in the first person. Nothing will kill your ability to connect more than using third person language. It may be appropriate for a corporate report but it’s no good if you want to affect people emotionally.

2. Spell out the benefits of your ideas. Make sure your audience knows what they get if they deal with you. Ask yourself ‘what makes me unique’ and how you can use that ability to help others.

3. Turn up at first meetings having done your homework. Never turn up at a first meeting and ask ‘So what do you do then?’ Instead say ‘Here’s what I know about your company /department /you’. The client will be bowled over with your research and relieved not to have waste their time on it.

4. Use the nine principles Dale Carnegie taught in the world’s second bestselling book – ‘How to win friends and influence people’
a. Don’t criticise, condemn or complain

b. Show sincere appreciation

c. Ask questions instead of giving your opinion all the time

d. Be interested in other people

e. Smile

f. Use the other person’s name

g. Talk in terms of the other person’s interests

h. Listen intently

i. Make others feel important

Try making a commitment to use these principles for 30-days. They will transform both your business and personal life.

**Helping others**

But there’s one other way you can connect with people and that’s in your ability to unselfishly teach and educate others. I like to think that if I can help by sharing my skills and knowledge I will. But I have a caveat, if the person really wants to learn and will implement what I have to teach then I’ll share. I do however get fed up with those who just want free stuff and treat others with disrespect (all authority and no connection). So make a commitment to help the genuine folks. Of course to help others you have to keep learning yourself.

I want to share something with you, not to impress you but to impress upon you the importance of learning. Last year I spent over £20k of my own money on my own personal development. And I don’t regret a penny of it, because every penny I spent makes me more valuable to my clients. What about you? Are you investing in your own learning or are you waiting for your boss or your organisation to arrange it for you? Think of it not so much as spending but more as investing in your future. Zig Ziglar, author and motivational speaker says ‘the way to get more of what you want is to help others get more of what they want’ and if you want to help others then you have to have something to give, which means you have to keep learning.

**Summary**

You can connect with people before you’ve even met them, this can be done via written media or whatever other different methods you want to use to share your message, but always you have to make sure your own voice shines through.

You can connect with others face to face with your behaviour, be authoritative but with the ability to laugh at yourself and have some fun.

You can connect with others through your interactions, Dale Carnegie has already given you all the principles you’ll need to get a deeper personal connection.

Finally you can connect through an insatiable desire to keep learning and to share your new ideas with others.
Concept 3: The X-factor

Let’s return to the final part of the equation, being remarkable. As I said before, as an internal consultant you can have authority, connection and still lack something...the X-factor. And honestly I don’t know how to teach what makes the difference between those that are remarkable and aren’t but I can ask a few questions that can help point you in the right direction and you can decide for yourself if you need to try harder.

Q1: When was the last time you invested time and effort on your own learning?

Q2: How much time and effort did you spend investing in yourself?

Q3: How much improvement do you suggest your clients can achieve? Do you shoot for a few percent or do you push for dramatic results?

Q4: Do you always deliver on time, in-full and on-budget?

Q5: Are you always polite to front line staff?

Q6: Are you assertive with managers?

Q7: Do you always turn up on time?

Q8: Are you always immaculately turned out?

Q9: When was the last time you produced an article, idea or report that wasn’t asked for by your manager or client?

Q10: Do you meticulously plan and rehearse your presentations?

I’m sure that there’s more but these come to mind right now. And just in-case you’re thinking that I’m thinking I’m the finished article I reckon I have to work on 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9 and 10.
Conclusion

In conclusion, to achieve anything great as a consultant (or in life) you have to be able to influence others and this requires the ability to create authority and connect with people, but also needs a little bit of the X-factor. I hope this report has given you a few ideas to help you get going and make more change in your organisation.

As usual if you have comments or questions you can contact me on stuart@vanguardscotland.co.uk