Working With McKinsey

Insights on working with / for current / former management consultants

Saturday, March 9, 2013

5 Traits of Client-Ready Decks (PowerPoint Presentations)

Just as there are "**client-ready**" consultants, there are client-ready PowerPoint presentations. In this post, I'll briefly cover what it means for a McKinsey deck to be client ready and 5 traits that client-ready decks share...

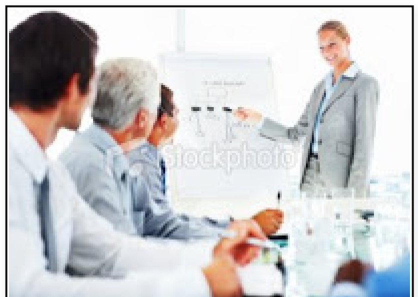

Image from abdulvasi.com

What does it mean to have a client-ready deck?

McKinsey consultants (see also the related post on client-ready consultants) create many PowerPoint pages and decks (presentations) but only a fraction of them ever end up **in front of a client**. Sometimes it's by design - McKinsey teams prepare many decks that are only used for team problem solving or internal project management. Others are made as part of the iterative process to get from the initial, ghost deck to the final, client-ready deck.

For a deck to be considered client-ready, the team must be confident that it will a) **represent the Firm well** and b) meet the **high expectations** of senior client executives

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who are often the same people paying the Firm's fees.

Five traits of client-ready decks

Decks that are deemed ready to be presented to clients typically exhibit these traits:

1. Carefully crafted storyline

The storyline of a deck is its narrative arc. If the purpose of a deck is to **get a client from point A to point B**, the storyline is the roadmap for that journey. A good storyline **takes into account the audience** - where they're starting, where you want to take them, and what you have to show them to get them there. It should also avoid or **defuse any potential landmines**. One storyline might go through dozens of **iterations** over the course of weeks, reflecting many team problem-solving sessions and hundreds of hours of consultant, Partner, and client time.

2. Effective pages

Each page of the deck should have a **clear purpose** and play a role in **advancing the storyline**. The important elements, or **key "takeaways"** of each page should be clear and supported with exhibits and/or data. If a page does not meet these criteria, it should be considered for removal or relocation into the Appendix.

3. Clear exhibits

Regardless of their format - graphs, tables, and maps are some of the most common - exhibits should be **easy to understand**. The best exhibits **synthesize** large amounts of data into simple figures that demonstrate and/or support **crisp, valuable insights**.

4. Bulletproof analyses

Decks must always be **fact-based** - that often requires **analyzing data** to find the insights that **support the key takeaways**. This can be challenging as client data is not always available, robust, or easy to analyze. It is not uncommon for clients to be missing or unable to gather fundamental pieces of data. Even when data can be found, it must often be "cleaned" to address various data quality issues before it can be used. Sometimes it has to be adjusted to be comparable to industry standards or even benchmarked across departments within the same company.

Once the data is ready, the **analysis is often complex and difficult**. There are countless opportunities for errors to be made in designing, creating, populating, and executing models. The more complicated the model, the more chances for mistakes to

About Me

Former McKinsey Consultant

MBA, former McKinsey management consultant, and alum of several Fortune 500 companies with a passion for coaching and development. I'd like to share what I've learned to (a) help others - especially entrepreneurs, small business owners, and startups - understand business concepts and (b) better cope with the McKinsey (or Bain or BCG) consultants in their lives

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7 years ago

be made. These problems increase in likelihood if a model requires multiple people working on it, opening the door to hand off and version control issues.

Even the slightest error in any of these steps of the analysis can result in **faulty data and insights** that will **damage the believability** of the deck and **credibility** of the team and Firm.

5. Proofread and polished

While a misspelled word or sloppily formatted table does not impact the quality of the analysis, it might cause a client to **doubt the competence** of the team and Firm. Even minor mistakes can damage credibility, especially if they occur before the team has a chance to establish a track record with a client. Also keep in mind that clients might keep using decks long after the engagement has ended - your work will **continue representing the Firm**, warts and all, long after the team has moved on.

Posted by Former McKinsey Consultant at 4:49 PM

Labels: Aspiring Consultant, Consultant, Direct report

10 comments:

Unknown December 13, 2013 at 9:23 AM

"clients might keep using decks long after the engagement has ended - you work will continue representing the Firm, warts and all, long after the team has moved on." ---YOUR WORK...not you work....Please proofread your Proofread step.

Reply

Former McKinsey Consultant December 13, 2013 at 4:24 PM

How delightfully ironic - a typo in the section about proofreading. Thank you for pointing that out. It's good to know someone's actually reading these posts - and at that level of detail no less. Hope you're finding the blog helpful despite the errors!

Reply

aliyaa April 23, 2017 at 3:50 AM

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Anonymous September 28, 2017 at 3:39 AM

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Unknown October 16, 2017 at 10:03 PM

Good Blog.

Reply

Unknown October 16, 2017 at 10:04 PM

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Unknown October 21, 2017 at 3:28 AM

You talk about power-point presentation which is very helpful for the Information Technology student. They can learn from that post. I am very happy to visit this website to learn many things.

Reply

Anonymous October 22, 2017 at 4:23 AM

I like this type of work. 5 Traits of Client-Ready Decks (PowerPoint Presentations) is a good post I like this post so much that I can not say. I want to know more about this.

Reply

Mahesh February 17, 2018 at 4:51 AM

Thanks, Learned a lot of new things like as industrial training & internship from your post!
Good creation and HATS OFF to the creativity of your mind.
Very interesting and useful blog!
Summer Training in Gurgaon

Reply

GG. November 20, 2018 at 7:48 AM

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